

ACROSS GREENLAND'S ICE-FIELDS

M. DOUGLAS



AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM.

St. Ambrose School

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ACROSS GREENLAND'S ICE-FIELDS.



FRIDTJOF NANSEN.

See page 31.

ACROSS GREENLAND'S ICE-FIELDS

*The Adventures of Nansen and Peary
on the Great Ice-Cap*

BY

M. DOUGLAS

Author of "For Duty's Sake," etc.

"Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more, Sempronius :
We'll deserve it."

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS

London, Edinburgh, and New York

1899

INTRODUCTION.

THE record of Polar discovery teems with romantic stories of adventure, the relation of which is most useful as a means of preserving an interest among us in the exploration of the unknown parts of our globe, and of arousing that spirit of emulation which, in the years that are gone, built up the greatness of our country. Richard Hakluyt wrote "the prose epic of the British nation." He preserved, for future generations, a record of the mighty deeds of gallant adventurers which would otherwise have been forgotten. He set an example which, fortunately for our country, has been followed, century after century, by many diligent compilers. Their labours are most valuable, for they spread and make popular a branch of knowledge than which none is more important.

"Across Greenland's Ice-Fields" is a volume which well serves this useful purpose. The author has

selected those heart-stirring narratives for her theme which relate the difficulties and perils attendant on the exploration of the Inland Ice of Greenland. Miss Douglas conducts her readers over those trackless wastes of snow and ice, in the footsteps of Norden-skiöld, of Nansen, and of Peary; and certainly those who begin the journey with her will, in continuing it to the end, derive no small amount of pleasure and instruction.

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM,

President of the Royal Geographical Society.

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

For most of the facts contained in the following pages, the Author desires to acknowledge her indebtedness to Nansen's "The First Crossing of Greenland," translated by H. M. Gepp, and Mrs. Peary's "My Arctic Journal," both published by Messrs. Longmans, Green, and Co., London.

M. DOUGLAS.

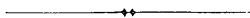
JANUARY, 1897.

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ACROSS GREENLAND'S ICE-FIELDS.

CHAPTER I.

PIONEERING ON THE ICE-CAP.

“THERE are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy,”
said Hamlet; and if he included in the category the
reason why one of the most icy and snowy countries
on earth should be called Greenland, he was probably
not far wrong. Certainly the name was bestowed
more than a thousand years ago by the sea-rovers
from Norway, who discovered and colonized the
country; and they, if the early chronicles are to be
believed, used to grow corn on their farms, and hunt
white bears in extensive woods where wonderful oak
trees produced no less marvellous acorns, as large as
apples and as pleasant of flavour as chestnuts! The
bears, it is true, still remain; but the woods, the oaks,
the acorns, and the corn have all disappeared, and

Greenland would not have the ghost of a title to its name were it not that, on a narrow strip around the coast, a few dwarf shrubs and sundry grasses and flowering plants contrive to make a very decent show during the short, hot summer. This strip is the only habitable part of the country; but the east coast is left entirely to a few wandering Eskimos, and all the fixed settlements are on the west, where the Danes own a few struggling colonies.

A short distance from each coast the green fringe disappears, and gives place to a stern, ice-clad mountain chain. These mountains form the boundary of the Inland Ice which stretches over the whole interior, and, with the exception of occasional rocky peaks—very few, by the way, and far between—covers every vestige of land as with a shroud of deathly whiteness. Here and there, the ice, not content with holding sway in the interior, finds convenient gaps in the mountains, and creeps down to the sea in the form of huge glaciers, each of which, by reason of its unceasing advance seawards, becomes the parent of numerous icebergs. Whiteland would be a much more appropriate title than Greenland for such a country.

For a long time both natives and settlers confined themselves almost entirely to the coast, and no attempt worth mentioning was made at exploring the

Inland Ice. The Eskimos were afraid to go, being firmly persuaded that the ice was the home of a demon who had a particular liking for human flesh, and would be sure to eat up any one who ventured into his domains. This unamiable demon was supposed to be in the habit of howling loudly when he had partaken of a satisfactory meal, and as some of the natives had heard him shriek—during a blizzard, or a particularly high wind, this sometimes happened—there could, of course, be no doubt of his existence. Demons are seldom agreeable acquaintances, and as this one was credited with specially unpleasant habits and tastes, it is not surprising that the Eskimos gave the ice as wide a berth as they could.

The Danish settlers did not believe in the demon, yet they do not appear to have had any desire to investigate King Frost's territory behind the mountains. Probably they had quite enough of ice and snow in the winter to satisfy them, and so did not see the fun of going to a place where, by all accounts, there was nothing else all the year round.

One man, however, did not believe in the existence of an ice-cap over the whole country. This was a Swedish explorer named Nordenskiöld. He had travelled a great deal in the north, and was the first who managed to sail from Europe along the north coast of Asia to Japan. For thus finding the "North-

East Passage" to the Pacific Ocean, the king of Sweden raised Nordenskiöld to the rank of baron.

On his return from this voyage Nordenskiöld, who could not be idle long, turned his attention to Greenland. He had found out what the north coast of Asia was like, and now he wanted to know what sort of place the interior of Greenland might be. He had been there once before, in 1870, and had made a short trip on the Inland Ice, but though on that occasion he saw nothing but ice where there was not snow, and nothing but snow where there was not ice, he declared that it was impossible that this state of things should exist all over the interior. Unless Greenland was unlike any other known country, Nordenskiöld felt sure, he said, that although no one knew where to find it, somewhere inside the icy barrier which shut it off from the rest of the world there must be a sort of Arctic oasis which might have some right to the name of Greenland.

The more Nordenskiöld thought, the more reasonable seemed this idea; and not only did he believe it himself, but he explained it so clearly that many others believed it also, and one or two of them who had plenty of money helped him to fit out an expedition to explore Greenland. A steamer was chartered to take him and his companions to the North, and, on May 23, 1883, Nordenskiöld, with a carefully-selected

party, sailed from Gothenburg. As the object of the expedition was scientific discovery, several of the explorers were specialists in some branch of science, and the party included also some sailors who had seen a good deal of service in whaling vessels, and last, though not least, if their value is estimated in the amount of work done, a couple of Lapps. These last were accustomed to a nomadic life among ice and snow, and as they were expert in the art of using "ski" or Norwegian snowshoes, Nordenskiöld expected great things from them when once the Inland Ice was reached.

Ski are a most important institution in Norway. In form they bear no resemblance whatever to the Canadian snowshoe, being simply strips of wood eight feet or so in length and three or four inches wide except at the ends, which taper to a point, and, in front at least, curve upwards. A leather loop for the toe is affixed to the ski somewhere near the middle, and from this a band passes round the wearer's heel, an arrangement which not only secures the ski but also allows the foot free play.

A shoe eight feet long does not suggest the idea of a very handy article, but "skilöbning" is a favourite sport in Norway, and many people are so expert that they can go uphill or downhill or on level ground—in fact, wherever snow can lie, a "skilöber" can travel;

some of them can even leap on their ski. Children of three or four years old begin to practise on ski suited to their size, and, as every winter ice and snow are plentiful in Norway, by the time the young skilöbers have reached years of discretion they are about as much at home on their unwieldy footgear as on ordinary shoes.

Nordenskiöld's plan of campaign was to go up the west coast of Greenland to Auleitsivik Fiord, which lies a little to the south of Disco Island. Here the party was to separate, and while Nordenskiöld, the Lapps, and a few others, made an assault on the Inland Ice, the ship, with the rest of the expedition on board, was to coast northwards to Cape York, where the explorers were to collect fossils and other interesting specimens of all kinds, as well as to make scientific observations.

On the sixth of June the expedition reached Reykjavik. Here they heard the good news that the sea was unusually clear of ice, and that there was every reason to expect a speedy and prosperous voyage. This was pleasant news, as the less delay on the road, the more time there would be for work when the two parties respectively reached their destination.

The Inland Ice party were first set ashore, as Auleitsivik Fiord is a long way south of Cape York. Nordenskiöld had taken care to lay in an ample

supply of provisions and stores of every kind, so, though ice is perhaps not the pleasantest thing in the world over which to travel, they had no reason to expect a very disagreeable journey. Early in July they said good-bye to their northward-bound comrades, and turning their faces inland, began to scale the icy walls of King Frost's citadel. For some time they found very little snow, and though the ice was rougher than they could have wished, it did not prevent them from dragging the sledges on which the stores were packed. It was hard work, for it was all uphill; but they found no real difficulty, and met with no special adventure. Certainly there was no sign, so far, of the "oasis" which Nordenskiöld hoped to find; but as Greenland is a big place, and he already knew that there was no such thing anywhere near the coast, he pushed on hopefully.

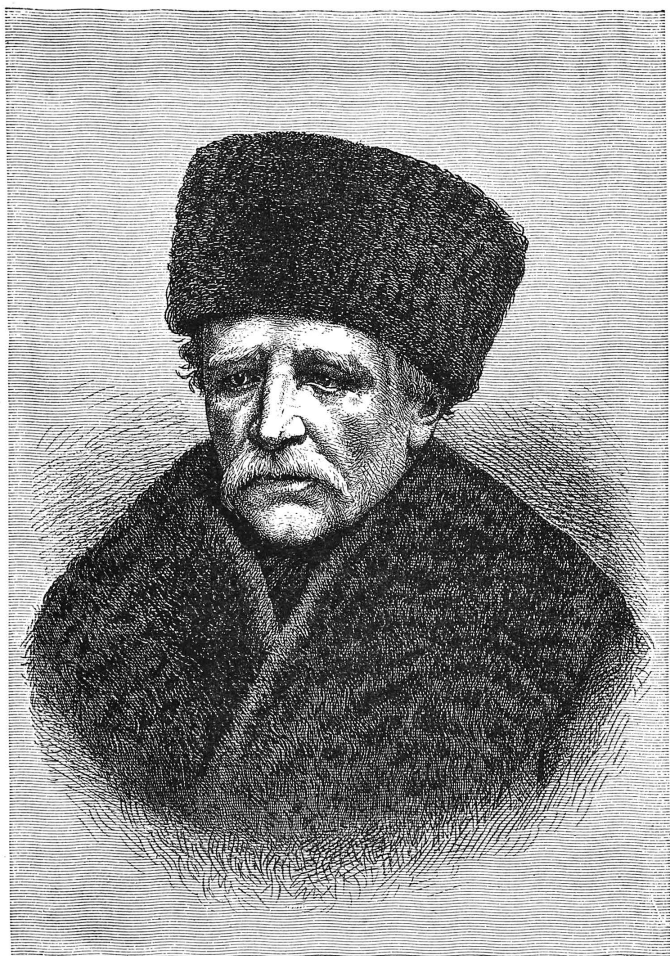
After a while a check came. Nearly ninety miles of rough ice had been crossed, and the party had reached the height of about 5,000 feet, when they came upon a tract of soft snow over which, try as they might, they could make no progress with the sledges.

What was to be done now? It was manifestly impossible to go on without provisions, tents, wraps, and such-like necessities: it was equally impossible to unpack the sledges and shoulder the loads—the

weight would be far too heavy. Yet, on the other hand, it was unendurable to own themselves beaten so soon, and to turn back. The position was very awkward, but a bright idea occurred to some one, and was at once put into practice.

This was the plan. Though the whole party could not proceed, why not send the Lapps ahead on their ski? On these they could travel rapidly over the snow, carrying a small stock of food; and accustomed as they were to cold, to sleep a night or two in the snow would be no special hardship to them. There was every chance that they would be able to push on for some distance, far enough, at all events, to see if Nordenskiöld's happy valley had any existence in fact.

To this scheme the Lapps made no objection, and taking their rations with them, they set out over the snow. The route still lay upward, but though they advanced more than 140 miles, and reached an elevation of 7,000 feet, they found no sign of life, either animal or vegetable. All around them, so far as the eye could reach, was one vast, trackless waste of ice and snow, and the pioneers returned with the disappointing news. It was clear that Nordenskiöld's theory had been a mistake, and that the Inland Ice was not the mere coast barrier he had supposed, but a veritable ice-cap, covering the mountains and filling the valleys of the interior.



PROFESSOR NORDENSKIÖLD.

Towards the middle of August both exploring parties returned to the spot which had been chosen as a meeting-place. Each of them had done good work, for the Cape York expedition had met with complete success, and had brought back a valuable assortment of specimens. Nordenskiöld, too, though his results were not what he had hoped, had obtained a great deal of important knowledge, and had decided the question as to the habitability of the interior of Greenland.

There was still time to spare before the ice closed in for the winter, so Nordenskiöld determined to attempt some exploration of the east coast of Greenland. It was generally believed that when the Vikings colonized the country their principal settlements had been on that side, but since their time, though several explorers had tried to land on the east coast, no one had succeeded in doing so. It remained to be seen whether Nordenskiöld would be more successful than his predecessors; at any rate, he was not a man who would be easily beaten.

The reunited expedition therefore coasted southwards, and after calling at one or two of the Danish settlements, attempted to force their way through the narrow sound on the north of Cape Farewell. Here they met with their first rebuff, for the channel was choked with ice, and after three ineffectual attempts

to force a passage, the explorers were fain to turn to the southward and skirt the edge of the pack. It was ignominious, no doubt, but unavoidable, unless they chose to give in and own themselves beaten, which would have been worse.

Having rounded the cape and turned northwards, more than once the party were tantalized by being almost able to land, but every time the vessel approached the coast the ice closed up before her and forced her to retreat. No doubt boats might have pushed through at some places, but the risk would have been considerable, so this was not attempted, and the ship continued to steam northwards along the edge of the pack in full view of the coast.

On the morning of the fourth of September she reached a promontory called Cape Dan, under the lee of which Nordenskiöld thought it probable that the ice would be less closely packed than on the more open parts of the coast. His idea proved to be correct, for the pack was so far open that the ship was able to force her way through the floes, and about 1.30 p.m. she dropped anchor in a small creek. This was in itself a most satisfactory achievement, for even if Nordenskiöld and his comrades were not

"The first that ever burst,
Into that silent sea,"

at any rate they were the first who had done so for hundreds of years.

The movements of the ice were much too uncertain for it to be wise to stay long at the anchorage, so only a few hours could be allowed for exploration. But a great deal can sometimes be done in a little while, especially by a judicious division of labour; and accordingly, while some members of the party made scientific observations, others spread themselves over the shore and the neighbouring hillsides. No Eskimos were seen, but footprints and other traces were found, which showed that it was not long since some of them had been on the spot.

One very interesting discovery was made, which showed that the explorers had hit on the site of an early Norse settlement. Not far from the place where the ship was anchored, some of the party found a small fiord which had evidently been used as a harbour, for on the hills above it were two stone walls which could have served no purpose but that of guides to sailors entering the haven. The hint was promptly taken, and the vessel was moved from her anchorage near Cape Dan to a safer one in King Oscar's Haven, as Nordenskiöld named the fiord. It was a pleasant spot, and spoke well for the taste of the former colonists, for the hillsides were covered with grass and shrubs, and one of the valleys was

watered by a stream which flowed over golden-coloured sands.

The explorers would, no doubt, have liked to stay for some time, but remembering that "discretion is the better part of valour," Nordenskiöld resisted the temptation, and after twenty-four hours' stay the expedition once more put to sea. It was well that they did so, for in that short space of time the condition of the ice had entirely changed, and their stout little ship and her crew had to do all they knew to force a passage through the fast-closing pack. More than once the vessel was almost crushed, and the pressure of the ice caused her timbers to crack and groan in the most alarming manner; but foot by foot she fought her way onward, while her crew kept guard over the propeller, and by dint of sheer hard shoving with poles prevented the floes from closing in and crushing it. After this had gone on for some time the engines suddenly came to a standstill, and the ship lay helpless and motionless in the power of the merciless ice. Things looked black indeed, but fortunately in a few moments the ship slowly forged ahead and came into open water.

One more attempt was made to reach land at a spot where the hills were quite free from snow, but again the ice barred the way. By this time the stock of coal was getting low, so prudent counsels

prevailed, and instead of risking a repetition of their late adventures, the explorers turned their vessel homewards, and, after a prosperous voyage, reached Europe in safety, having done much good work in the cause of science.

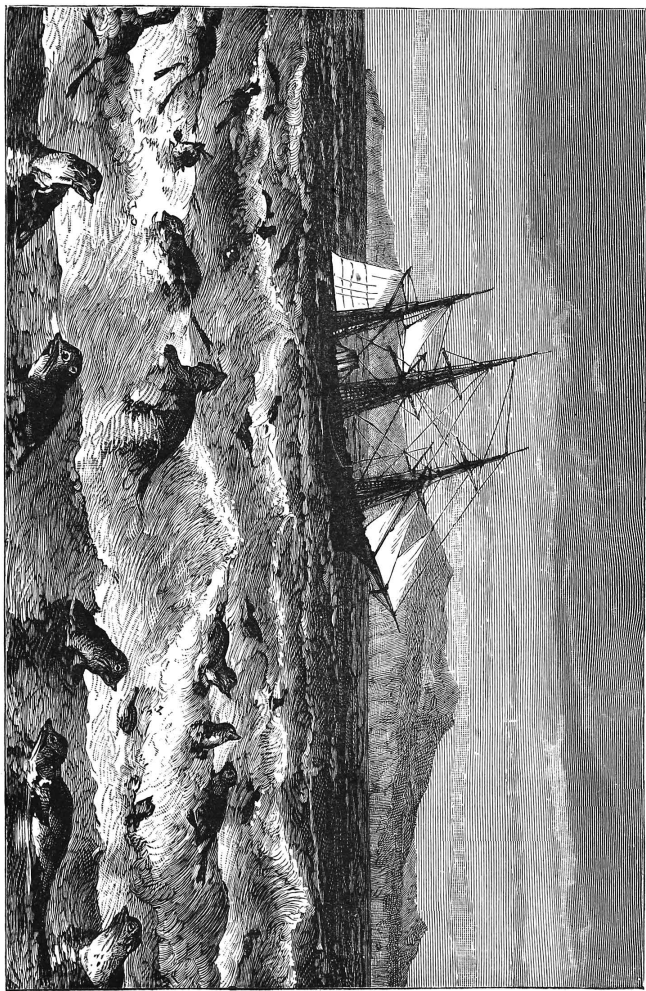
Three years later, in 1886, Lieutenant Robert E. Peary, of the Engineering Department of the United States Navy, having obtained leave of absence for the purpose of trying his luck on the Inland Ice, took his passage in a whaler, the *Falcon*, to Disco. He came alone, intending to engage the services of some of the civilized Eskimos as guides, but they having, no doubt, the fear of the demon before their eyes, distinctly refused to take any part in the undertaking. One of the Danish officials, however, was more valiant, and at the risk of incurring the wrath of the outraged demon, he volunteered to accompany Peary; so the two set out together, taking with them such provisions as they could convey. Whether their non-success was due to the malice of the ice-demon may be matter for speculation, but at all events they were not more fortunate than Nordenskiöld had been, and after pushing eastwards for about a hundred miles, they too had to retrace their steps, having seen nothing but ice and snow since they left the coast. This was another proof of the all-prevailing character of the Inland Ice, but, as

they had met with no special difficulties, Peary became convinced that if ever any one succeeded in penetrating the icy recesses of the far north, it would be by travelling on ski, or otherwise, over the stationary land-ice, and not by endeavouring to force a passage through the ever-shifting ocean pack.

CHAPTER II.

SEALING, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

OF all the animals which inhabit the Polar regions, none—not even the reindeer—is more generally useful than the seal. It is true, one never hears of his being employed to draw sledges, but nevertheless he is invaluable to the Eskimos: his skin provides them with clothing, his flesh with food, his blubber with fuel and light, his tendons with thread; in fact, every bit of him is turned to account in some way or other. His fame has spread far beyond his own icy haunts, and many people who would be mightily disgusted if asked to sit down to a dinner of seal-meat, or to partake of train-oil in Eskimo fashion, are remarkably well pleased to possess a garment of the beautiful, soft fur of the seal. Not that the fur seal is the fellow who is so useful to the Eskimos—far from it. His home is far away from Greenland, in Behring Sea on the opposite side of America, and during the last few years he



SEALS IN BEHRING SEA.

and his affairs have been the source of a vast amount of argument, not to say unpleasantness, between Britain and the United States.

The chief seat of the fur-seal fishery is in the Pribylov Islands, off the coast of Alaska, where millions of seals come annually for breeding purposes. "Fishery" is rather a misleading term. One naturally connects fisheries with water, but the sealers of the Pribylov Islands do almost all their work on land.

The finest skins are those of the young males of three or four years old, and it is with these almost exclusively that the market is supplied. These youngsters, or "bachelor seals," are never allowed by their elders, who are fathers of families, to approach the breeding grounds, but have to take a back seat and retire to quarters of their own a little farther inland.

Unfortunately for the seals, these bachelor quarters are well known to the sealers, and during the months of June, July, and August thousands of the animals are killed. At the first glimmer of dawn the men come down, and selecting a drove of, perhaps, two or three thousand seals, drive them off to the killing grounds near the villages, some of which are several miles inland. After breakfast the captors return in force, and having selected what they call a "pod" of, say, a hundred seals, they surround the doomed

animals, to whom resistance never seems to occur, though they can fight fiercely among themselves. The men are armed with heavy clubs, and these, at a given signal, descend with crushing force on the heads of the luckless seals, each man killing, or at all events stunning, his victim with one blow. When the whole "pod" is thus disposed of, the sealers draw their long knives, and by stabbing each seal to the heart, guard effectually against any which may only have been stunned making their escape. Then, if the weather is not too hot, another and another "pod" is driven out and slaughtered, and after this the skinning process begins.

In their natural condition the sealskins bear very little resemblance to the glossy brown fur known by that name, which, so long as it remains on the back of its original owner, is merely an inner coat over which the seal wears an outer garment of stiff, greyish-brown hair. This is removed during the curing of the skin, a most important process, on which, quite as much as on the seal, the future value of the fur depends.

The Greenland seals belong to quite another branch of the family—it would be nearer the mark to say to other branches, as several different varieties inhabit the seas around that country. One of the chief of these is the bladder-nose seal, so called from a personal

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peculiarity in the shape of an inflatable hood which overhangs the nose. The bladder-nose is a big fellow, and though his coat is not of much account to any one but himself and the Eskimos, his blubber yields a rich supply of oil, in consequence of which he is ruthlessly hunted down. The Norwegians were the first to discover his value, and in 1876 and the seven following years about 500,000 seals were destroyed.

The Greenland seal-fishery is carried on in a manner totally different from that in vogue on the Pribylov Islands. To begin with, in the Greenland Sea there are no islands, and as the seals have in consequence no special haunts they are pursued by water. The ships usually arrive in Denmark Strait in June, and cruise about among the ice, while the lookout man, stationed in the crow's-nest, has to be very wide awake indeed. At length the long-desired prey is seen, basking perhaps, on a distant floe, and at once all is excitement. If the ice will allow of so much energy, steam is got up, and no time is lost in approaching the spot, although the most direct course is not always selected. In sealing, as in some other things, the usual motto is "Every man for himself," and if several ships happen to be near together, the captain of the vessel which first sights the quarry is seldom above a little manœuvring to mislead his fellows and arrive before them at the scene of action.

Meanwhile, active preparations are going on. Some of the men are busy getting the boats ready, while others are fetching up supplies of cartridges for the benefit of the seals, and food and drink for themselves, cleaning rifles, and sharpening knives, all to an accompaniment of swirling water and crashing ice as the ship forces her way among the floes, striking occasionally with a shock that makes the crew stagger. But, as an empty stomach is a poor preparation for heavy work among the ice, in spite of the commotion a hot meal is made ready, and every one finds time to partake heartily. At length the ship is fairly among the seals, but so far they seem little alarmed, and continue to bask lazily on the ice in the sunshine, shewing a lack of energy which will ere long cost many of them their lives.

Then the boats are lowered, and off they go, the "shooter," rifle in hand, standing in the bows while the crew bend their backs to the oars. It is necessary to keep as much as possible in open water. There is seldom any question of "stalking" a seal, for, should a boat shoot unexpectedly from behind the ice, the chances are that the seals will take fright and retreat to the water, while if the boat is in full view all the time they seldom take any notice of it, until, indeed, the near approach of the unknown monster fills them with alarm and causes them to think of flight. But

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at the first symptom of a retreat the men set up a yell, which strikes a new terror to the hearts of the seals, and instead of dropping into the water where, did they but know it, they would be safe, they remain on the ice. In another minute or two the boats are within easy range, and the shooter, taking careful aim, fires, being specially desirous that his first few shots should be successful ones, and take effect in the brain or some other vital spot. Should the first seals be merely wounded and leap about on the ice, or fall with a splash into the water, the chances are that the others will at once take fright and disappear, while, if the seals first shot are killed instantly and therefore lie quiet, the limited intelligence of their brethren does not comprehend the real reason of this quiescence, and the live seals lie gazing calmly at the dead ones until their turn also comes to go over to the majority. Thus in an amazingly short time as many seals may be shot as it is possible to take back to the ship.

The work, however, is not yet finished. The bladder-nose is sometimes ten or twelve feet in length, and weighs over two thousand pounds. It would be impossible to take many such monsters in any boat, so as soon as a sufficient number are slain, the boat's crew spring on to the ice, and with a few dexterous cuts relieve the seals of their skins and the thick layer of blubber which lines them. Practice makes

perfect in this art as in any other, and some of the men become wonderfully skilful. Speed is very desirable, as it is always a matter of competition among the boats' crews to be the first to reach the ship with a load of skins and blubber. The rest of the carcass is left on the ice for the benefit of the bears and sea-birds.

Though the pursuit and capture of the fur-seal in the Pribylov Islands, and of his bladder-nosed cousin in Denmark Strait, have apparently very little connection with adventures among "Greenland's icy mountains," the chase of the bladder-nose was an indirect agent in the evolution of a most important scheme of exploration. It happened in this wise.

In 1882 the *Viking*, a Norwegian sealer, was caught in the ice on the east coast of Greenland. Properly speaking, sealers are not intended to carry passengers, but this particular one had on board a young Norwegian zoologist named Fridtjof Nansen, whose business in the Arctic seas was the investigation of the manners and habits of the bladder-nose and his relations. Nansen was not by any means a man of one idea, and as, day after day, the ship, still fast gripped by the ice, drifted closer and closer to the rocky, inhospitable shore, a strong desire to explore the hitherto untrodden waste beyond it took possession of his mind. The more he pondered over

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the matter, and scanned with his glass the shining peaks and glaciers rising high above the floating ice-fields which still separated the *Viking* from the shore, the more was his imagination fired and his curiosity whetted. The ice around the ship was thick and strong, and so closely packed that it did not seem likely that there would be any special difficulty in walking over it. "Why should not I go?" thought Nansen, for as yet no European had set foot on the east coast, and to be the first to do so would be a most desirable feather in the young fellow's cap. The plan really seemed quite feasible, and one day Nansen propounded it to the captain, who, somewhat to his passenger's disgust, instantly vetoed it. He did not, he said, feel justified in allowing any one to go far from the ship, as the condition of the ice changed so rapidly that at any moment it might open and allow her to continue her voyage. To this there was of course nothing to be said, and Nansen was reluctantly obliged to stay where he was, but though his project was scotched for a time, it certainly was not killed.

On his return to Norway Nansen betook himself to scientific work of a less adventurous kind, and accepted the appointment of curator to the Bergen museum. Though only a little over twenty-one years of age he had already made his mark in science, and soon after he reached home he was asked to con-

tribute an article to a Danish geographical magazine. He did so, and took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded him to make known his scheme for reaching the east coast of Greenland by penetrating as far as possible in a sealer, and then either crossing the ice on foot or pushing through it in boats to the shore as circumstances might suggest. Nobody, however, seemed disposed to make the attempt, and as at the time Nansen himself had no serious plan, the matter dropped.

A year or so later a short account of Nordenskiöld's assault on the Inland Ice appeared in some of the Norwegian papers. Quite by chance Nansen heard this read aloud, and once more his dormant interest was aroused. Nordenskiöld's party, it appeared, had easily covered a long distance on ski, and it at once struck Nansen that the solution of the difficulty had been found. He was himself an expert skilöber, and surely, thought he, an expedition well mounted on ski should find no great difficulty in crossing the Inland Ice. But the idea still remained in embryo, and four years passed before Nansen, who still held the post of zoologist and curator of the Bergen museum, gave serious attention to the matter.

Such an expedition as he had in view would not be a very expensive one, and he at first thought of fitting it out privately. Friends, however, urged that,

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as the results would be interesting to the whole world, the expedition itself might well be carried out at the national expense. In this view Nansen concurred, and he applied to the authorities of the Norwegian university for a grant of 5,000 kroner—about £275 in English money. The university warmly approved, and passed on the proposition to the storting or parliament. The government, however, declined to take up the matter, and one newspaper, being more economically than scientifically or adventurously disposed, inquired why the nation should provide a private individual with funds for a holiday trip in Greenland. But what public economy in Norway denied, private generosity in Denmark provided, and Nansen one day received a letter bearing the Copenhagen postmark. It proved to be from a gentleman named Herr Gamél, who generously offered to provide Nansen with the very moderate sum for which, in his own country, he had asked in vain. This brought the expedition at one bound from the realms of fancy to those of fact, and Nansen immediately began his preparations.

His plan was to secure the companionship of three or four of the best and most powerful skilöbers he could find, and then to press a sealer into the service, and get her captain to take him and his companions, with their supplies of every kind, as near to the east

coast of Greenland as the ice would permit. From that point he proposed that they should make their way to land as best they could, either in boats or dragging their stores on sledges over the ice. If he could have had things quite his own way, Nansen would have liked to land somewhere in the neighbourhood of Scoresby Fiord, but this was entirely out of the sealer's range, and to go there he would have had to charter a special vessel. This was out of the question on the score of expense, and he had to content himself with some point within easy reach of the usual sealing grounds. The northern side of Cape Dan was very attractive; but, after all, whatever plans he might make, Nansen was well aware that very probably he and his comrades would have to land, not where they liked, but where they could. Once ashore, the programme was simple enough—merely to cross the ice-cap to the west coast, probably to Christianshaab or its neighbourhood. This part of the journey, according to Nansen's reckoning, ought not, under any circumstances, to take more than a month, so he considered that if they were provisioned for double that time success was ensured.

In one particular at least Nansen's plan was unique. Every one else who had tried to cross the Inland Ice had started from the west coast and travelled eastward towards the uninhabited shore of Denmark

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Strait. Nobody had managed to get so far, but had any done so, they would have been obliged at once to turn round and do the whole thing over again. Thus they would not only have double distance to travel, but also double weight of stores to convey. Nansen's plan avoided all this extra work, for by starting from the east coast and travelling westward to the settlements it would only be necessary to cross the ice once, and provisions for the single journey would therefore suffice.

CHAPTER III.

A MAD-BRAINED SCHEME.

NO sooner did Nansen propound his scheme than a storm of adverse opinions descended on him. Some people declared that he was mad, and others, though they expressed their opinion in less forcible terms, considered success, to say the least, doubtful. A few were more sanguine, and Nansen received more than forty applications from would-be explorers; and many others said they would have applied if they had had a chance of being accepted. The applicants were of various occupations and nations, but only Norwegians were considered qualified; not that Nansen had any objection to foreigners as such, but it was essential that every member of the expedition should be expert in the use of ski, and this is an art which is seldom acquired outside of Norway. This practically put all but Norwegians out of the running, and Nansen finally selected three of his own countrymen—Otto Sverdrup, Oluf Dietrichson, and

Kristian Kristiansen—all experienced skilöbers, and strong, handy men, whose previous lives had been a good training for the work in hand.

Sverdrup, the eldest of the three, was thirty-three years of age, and had been accustomed from his childhood to a free life among the forests and mountains. Like many other Norwegians, he had been at sea for some years, and once, while mate of a schooner, was wrecked on the west coast of Scotland. No doubt his varied experiences on flood and field had taught him to have his wits about him, and on this occasion he used them to some purpose, for it was mainly owing to his pluck and coolness that his shipmates escaped with their lives.

Latterly, however, he had left the sea and gone to help his father, who owned a large farm. Here young Sverdrup found plenty to occupy his time; and certainly he could not complain of monotony in his work, for sometimes he took a turn at sea-fishing, then at timber cutting and floating, and occasionally he was hard at work at the blacksmith's forge.

With Sverdrup came Kristian Kristiansen, a young fellow only twenty-three years of age, whose home was close to that of the Sverdrups—in fact, was on their land. He was below the age which Nansen considered desirable, but he was strong and willing,

and perhaps his acquaintance with Sverdrup helped him to obtain the coveted position. His qualifications were similar to those of Sverdrup, for he also had been to sea, and could turn his hand to a good many kinds of rough work on shore.

The fourth member of the party, Oluf Dietrichson, was thirty-two years old, a lieutenant in the Norwegian army, an eager sportsman, and a particularly expert skilöber. He was to be the meteorologist, surveyor, and map-maker of the expedition—an important but not particularly desirable post in a country where the thermometer frequently registers from 50° to 70° of frost.

In addition to his three Norwegian companions Nansen, after some trouble, obtained the services of a couple of Lapps, as, judging from Nordenskiöld's experience, it was likely that they might prove very useful members of the expedition. At all events it would be no novelty or hardship to them to live among ice and snow. When the two, Ole Ravna and Samuel Balto, made their appearance, however, Nansen was a little disappointed, as, being unable to go to Finmark himself, he had been obliged to entrust the matter to some one else, whose selection was not quite to his mind, as Ravna was a good deal older and Balto a good deal younger than he had desired. Moreover, he specially wished to obtain the services

of "Mountain Lapps," the only true nomads of the race; and though Ravna fulfilled this requirement, Balto was a "River Lapp," of mixed Lapp and Finnish race. Ravna was much the smaller of the two, but he was immensely strong when he chose to exert himself, which was not always the case.

Another most important consideration was the selection of equipments and stores, for on this the welfare and success of the expedition largely depended. Nansen's first intention had been to take reindeer or dogs to draw his sledges, but on further thought he gave up this idea. Reindeer would be difficult to transport, and the necessity of carrying fodder for them would add seriously to the difficulties of the journey, especially in crossing the ice-floes. Dogs would be less trouble to convey and to feed, but it was impossible to obtain good ones in the time available, and Nansen and his comrades therefore made up their minds to be their own beasts of burden.

Under these circumstances every unnecessary pound of weight was to be avoided. First and foremost on the list came the sledges, which were made of tough, light ash, and were provided with broad runners of elm or maple, both of which glide easily over snow. Each sledge was about nine feet six inches long by twenty inches broad. All the joints were lashed, and the

whole thing was very strong and elastic, though the total weight, including steel plates for the runners, did not exceed twenty-eight pounds. Such sledges, even when loaded, were not too heavy to be drawn by one man; but it was arranged that only five should be taken, in order that there might always be some one free to give a hand wherever help was needed. When not required elsewhere, the spare man would help with the leading sledge, which, especially in soft snow, was likely to run more heavily than those which followed in its track.

Ski of the best make were provided, and in addition to them several pairs of "truger," another variety of Norwegian foot-gear specially adapted for work in snow, were taken. Lest these should be insufficient, each man was supplied with Canadian snow-shoes; but these were viewed with scorn by the Lapps, and the Norwegians, who had never before had any occasion to use such articles, had many tumbles before they acquired the art.

Next in importance was the tent. This was of waterproof canvas, and was so constructed that, when not in use, it could be divided into five sections, one for each sledge. By way of bedding, two sleeping-bags were provided. These were made of reindeer-skin, and each was big enough for three men. The expedition could not go in for luxury; but though

the bags might not be exactly luxurious couches, they were, at any rate, warm and dry.

For clothing, the Lapps' ordinary reindeer-skin tunics were suitable enough, but the others preferred short coats, which, as well as their knickerbockers and gaiters, were of thick, strong, Norwegian home-spun. As undergarments each man had a thin woollen shirt and drawers, and a stout, rough jersey. Waterproof suits were also prepared—at least they were suits which, until worn in the rain, were supposed to be waterproof; then they were found to be a snare and a delusion, though they did very well to keep off wind and driving snow. In the matter of foot-gear opinions were divided. The Norwegians used thick stockings and goat's-hair over-socks, with either ordinary boots or "lauparsko," the peculiarity of which is that the soles are made of pliant leather which folds over the uppers, and is fastened to them on the top of the foot. The Lapps, who were nothing if not conservative in their ideas, used "finnesko," made of specially-prepared reindeer-skin, and stuffed with dry grass, into which the bare feet were thrust. The arrangement does not seem the ideal of comfort, but people whose home is among snow may be supposed to know what kind of clothing is most suitable to it. Perhaps they were not far wrong, as Nansen found a pair of finnesko, given to him by

one of the Lapps, remarkably warm and comfortable. Other miscellaneous garments were caps of the costermonger type, hoods of cloth and canvas, fingerless woollen and dog-skin gloves, and goggles to protect the eyes from the glare of the snow.

Alcohol is the most portable form of fuel, so the cooker consisted of a spirit-lamp, above which was a cylindrical boiler, in which the food was cooked, while a flue passed up the centre of the boiler, and conveyed hot air to another vessel above, which served to melt snow for drinking purposes. The whole thing was cased with thick felt.

Last, but not least, came the food. This was a most important item, especially as the quantity taken must of necessity be limited. Nansen reckoned that each man would require daily about half a pound of pemmican or dried meat, the same amount of bread or biscuit, and of some kind of fatty food, as hard work in a very cold climate makes a demand on the system which can only be met by an unusually large amount of fat. In addition to these articles the stores included chocolate, sugar, peptonized meat, pea-soup, butter, potted calf's liver, cheese, and an assortment of tinned goods presented by the Stavanger Preserving Company.

All these goods were procured from the best firms, but in the composition of the pemmican an unfortu-

nate mistake was made. This edible usually consists of lean meat, pounded and mixed with an equal weight of melted fat, and seasoned with dried fruits, etc.; but in preparing Nansen's pemmican the fat was omitted, no doubt with the view of improving the compound. The omission was an unlucky one, as the pemmican was to be used in a climate where any amount of fat could be eaten, but the error was not discovered until the whole consignment was delivered, and it was then too late to make more. Fortunately the potted liver was very rich, so Nansen hoped this would make up for the deficiency of fat in the pemmican.

The commissariat arrangements were conducted on strictly scientific principles, and therefore, except for the cooker, which could not be induced to conform to teetotal habits, no spirits of any kind were taken, as Nansen was of opinion that when men are exposed to great cold, the use of alcohol does more harm than good. A glass of hot grog may be very pleasant at the time of drinking, but it leaves those who use it less capable of resisting cold than they would be if they drank nothing of the sort. For similar reasons, though all the party except himself and Ravna were smokers, he took only a small quantity of tobacco for an occasional treat. Tea, coffee, and chocolate were the drinkables provided, and of these chocolate became

first favourite, probably because it might fairly be considered food as well as drink. Coffee, for some reason or other, did not agree with any of the party ; and if they ventured on this luxury for supper, the usual result was a wakeful night.

Besides the above-mentioned articles the expedition was provided with guns and ammunition, scientific instruments, including a complete photographic apparatus, a few tools, ropes, bamboos for tent-poles, walking-sticks, etc., a spade, ice-axes, sketching materials, nautical almanacs, a small medicine chest, and a variety of other miscellaneous articles likely to be required in a country of which the only natural productions are ice and snow, and where, as there are no inhabitants, shops do not exist.

CHAPTER IV.

“THERE’S MANY A SLIP.”

LONG as Nansen’s scheme had lain dormant, when it at last awoke to life its progress to maturity was rapid, for its originator did not believe in letting the grass grow under his feet. By April 1888 all was ready, and on the second of May Nansen started from Christiania to travel *viâ* Copenhagen and London to Leith, where he had arranged to meet the rest of the party, who set out a day later by a more direct route and took with them all the baggage. Some people still shook their heads wisely, evidently thinking no good could come of so mad-brained an expedition; but in spite of these gloomy forebodings a considerable amount of enthusiasm was excited, and crowds assembled to cheer the plucky explorers as they went on board.

A few days later the whole party met at Leith, and on the ninth of May they again embarked on the Danish steamer *Thyra* for Iceland, where Nansen had

arranged to meet a Norwegian sealer, the *Jason*, which was to land the explorers and their traps on the east coast of Greenland, if possible; or if this should be impracticable, to take them as near land as the ice would allow.

At the Faröes the *Thyra* was delayed for a couple of days by bad weather. Here unwelcome news awaited the explorers. The ice, said the islanders, was worse than usual—worse, indeed, and extended farther, than any one could remember its ever doing before—in fact, there would probably be no possibility of approaching the coast anywhere on the eastern side of Iceland. The prophecy was fulfilled; the ice completely blocked the way, and the *Thyra* was compelled to turn her head southwards and coast along the southern shore in full view of the glaciers and snowclad peaks which are a prevailing feature of that inhospitable island. At Reykjavik the passengers were allowed a ramble ashore, and then the *Thyra* once more got up steam, and started for Isafjord in the north-west of Iceland, where Nansen had arranged to meet the *Jason*. On arriving, however, he was told that the ice had come as far south as North Cape, a few miles from the mouth of the fiord, and that, should a southerly wind set in, it was quite possible that all ingress might be stopped, and the *Jason* be thus prevented from coming for him. Such

a thing as the blocking of the fiord seldom happened, said the natives—still, it had been known to occur. It would not do to risk it, and therefore, leaving a note for the captain of the *Jason*, should he arrive, Nansen and his friends went southwards to Dyrafiord which had already been agreed upon as an alternative meeting-place if Isafiord should prove impracticable. This time no hitch occurred.

A few days after the arrival of the party at Dyrafiord a small steamer made its appearance. This seemed mysterious—what could she be? and what could she want?—but soon the puzzle was solved, for she cast anchor and lowered a boat; a few minutes later the captain of the *Jason* stepped on shore. He had succeeded in reaching Isafiord, and finding his passengers had gone southwards had intended to follow them with his ship; but in the teeth of a strong contrary wind this would have been a work of time with a big vessel, and he gladly accepted an offer to lend him a small steamboat with which to go in pursuit. The explorers and their property, to which had now been added an Iceland pony, were soon on board, though the pony, poor little fellow, strenuously resisted. Perhaps he had an inkling that evil was in store for him, and, if so, he was not mistaken. It was impossible to take sufficient provender to last him for the whole journey, and though his new

masters intended that he should help to draw the sledges as long as possible, they intended also to eat him as soon as his own food ran short. This fate overtook him even sooner than was expected, for it does not appear that he ever set foot on land again.

The day after leaving Iceland (June 5) the *Jason* encountered ice, which was not a promising beginning, but stout hearts are not easily daunted, and Nansen and his comrades were of the number of those who, if they do not always achieve success, at any rate do their best to deserve it.

There is no fixed ice in Denmark Strait, and for a day or two the *Jason* cruised along the edge of the pack in the hope of finding an opening by which she might get near the land, but no such luck awaited her. This was aggravating; but before long a diversion occurred in the shape of a number of seals calmly basking on the ice at a little distance from the ship. It was an unexpected piece of good luck, for it was still rather early in the season, and the crew were proportionately delighted as they were personally interested in the catch, on account of the existence of a system of payment by results which affected a portion, at least, of their earnings. Sealing was a new excitement for Sverdrup and Dietrichson, who were, in consequence, as excited as any one on board, and rejoiced greatly at the captain’s permission to accompany the

boats and try their hand at the work. Nansen, to whom sealing was nothing new, stayed on board and amused himself by potting the seals from the deck.

Altogether one hundred and eighty-seven seals were taken that day.

Days passed, and still the ice showed no sign of opening, though the current had carried the vessel a considerable distance to the southward. This inability to reach the coast was disappointing to all, for the exploring party naturally wanted to begin work, and the sealers felt they were losing time. Nansen had long before agreed that his expedition should not be allowed to interfere with the sealer's natural business, so, after due consultation, it was arranged that the *Jason* should turn northward to the usual sealing grounds, and that the attempt to land should be abandoned for the present. It was a disappointment, but it could not be helped, and the inevitable was cheerfully accepted.

The following day the weather, which had been thick and foggy, cleared up, and, for the first time, the coast of Greenland loomed in view about sixty miles away. Soon afterwards a deep inlet appeared in the ice. It looked promising, and the *Jason* steamed in. She had not gone far, however, when the ice once more blocked the way; but obstacles exist for the purpose of being overcome, and, forcing her way

onwards, the *Jason* once more found herself in open water with, apparently, a clear passage before her. Hope rose rapidly, and Nansen and his comrades began to think they were to land without further difficulty. Unfortunately for them the ice-pack was as changeable as a weathercock, and after about two hours’ clear steaming ice was again sighted. Very soon a closer approach showed that though the pack was too close for the ship to pass through it, it was also too rough for the sledges to be dragged over it. Further, there was some risk that the ship might be nipped, and, once caught, it might be weeks before the *Jason* was free again. The danger was too great, and she once more headed for the open sea and made her way to the sealing grounds.

It was now the end of June, and the next fortnight was spent in cruising about in search of seal. Plenty were to be seen, but this must have been rather annoying than pleasing, for it was impossible to get near them, as the ice-pack was too thick for boating to be practicable. One day, indeed, the *Jason* herself nearly came to grief, being struck by a big floe which carried away her rudder, but did no further damage. Had she been struck full in the side the case might have been much more serious; but she had a spare rudder on board, and when that was shipped she was as seaworthy as ever.

The season was now far advanced, and there was not much chance of getting more seals. The captain therefore decided to leave the sealing ground and make another attempt to reach the coast. The following day, towards evening, land was sighted, and, the next morning, was still visible at no great distance. Later in the day, however, the weather became foggy, and nothing could be seen; but the water was open, and the *Jason* cautiously continued to feel her way shoreward. It was certain that she could not be far distant from the coast, and the explorers made all preparations for landing, and wrote their last letters to friends at home.

Towards dinner-time the fog cleared off, and the shout of “Land!” brought Nansen hurriedly up from his desk. A glorious panorama of snowclad peaks glittering in the sunshine met his eyes, but the sea-ice extended much farther from the shore than had been supposed. To land that day was impossible, and on the morrow matters were little better; but on the third day the ship was only ten or twelve miles from the coast, near Sermilikfiord, above which the mountains rose in a most inviting manner—even the Inland Ice was to be seen in the distance. It was the best chance of reaching land which had yet presented itself, and Nansen at once determined that it should not be lost. In order to get a better view he went to

the mast-head, whence he saw that, though near the ship the ice seemed practicable enough, farther in it was rather closely packed; beyond the close belt there was evidently fairly open water.

No doubt a stout boat like the *Jason* could have forced her way through the ice, but there would have been a certain amount of risk in the attempt. Supposing that harm should come to her, her insurance would probably be forfeited, as effecting a landing in Greenland was no part of her legitimate business; moreover, if she were cast away, or so severely damaged that she had to be abandoned, how were her crew to make their way to any inhabited district? No such contingency had been reckoned for in provisioning the vessel. All these considerations determined Nansen not to ask the captain to attempt the passage of the ice; but, believing that he and his comrades could get through without help, he gave orders that the boats should be got ready. Be it observed, the expedition had now advanced to the dignity of owning *boats*. Only one had been brought from Christiania, but seeing that when loaded it would be a very tight fit for six men, the captain of the *Jason* had kindly given them one of his smaller sealing boats.

Towards evening all was ready. “Good-bye” is always a sad word; and eager as the explorers were

to begin their work, they could not without sorrow bid farewell to the many friends they had made on the *Jason*. But delay was useless; hearty good wishes and good-byes were exchanged, and Nansen and his companions pulled away to the music of three hearty cheers, while the deep voices of the *Jason’s* guns rang out in a last salute.

CHAPTER V.

FIGHTING THE ICE.

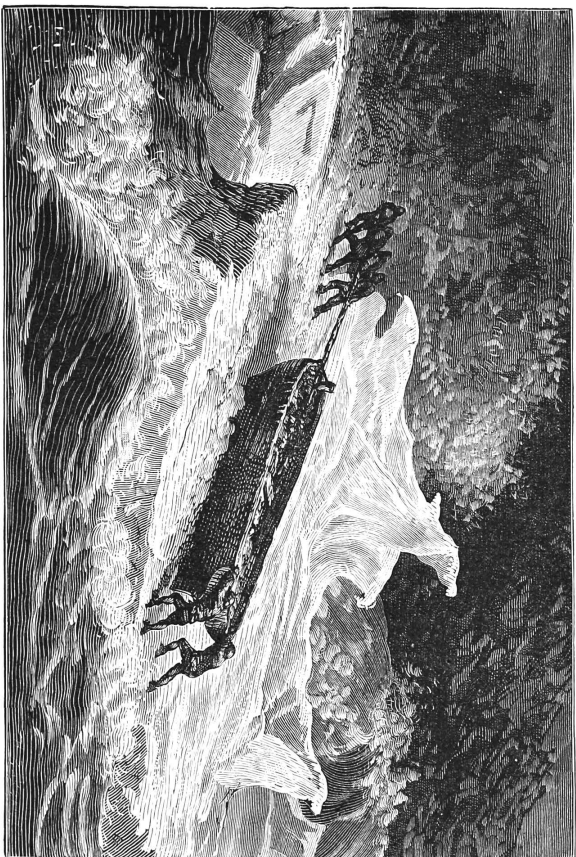
THE two boats had not gone far when the sound of oars was heard, and presently a third boat shot alongside. It proved to be in the charge of the second mate of the *Jason*, who, with a dozen men, had been sent by the captain to help in forcing a passage through the ice. For this attention Nansen was duly grateful, but finding after a while that his own boats got on quite as fast as the mate's, he did not think it worth while to take the men farther from their ship, and thanking them heartily he sent them back.

For a while things went swimmingly—the ice was thick certainly, but not so thick as to prevent the boats being forced through it, with or without the aid of crowbars. Here and there an obstinate floe obliged the men to drag their boats over it instead of rowing them round it, but on the whole good progress was made for some time. Then came a change for the

worse, and the pack became closer and more troublesome. Soon afterwards both boats were found to be drifting rapidly—they were evidently under the influence of one of the strong and little-known currents which swirl and rush down the Greenland coast. So great was the force of the current that, in spite of the efforts of the crews, the boats were carried considerably to the westward of their proper course.

Still they were moving shorewards; but suddenly the swirl of waters increased, huge blocks of ice were dashed one upon another, sometimes splitting in fragments, at others being piled together by the force of their impact. To be caught in that icy grip would be certain destruction. Sverdrup dragged his boat up on to a floe large enough to avoid immediate danger; Nansen, at imminent risk, forced his through the ice to a pool of open water under the lee of a huge iceberg. For the time safety was ensured, and Sverdrup and his companions made their way to the pool where the other boat awaited them. Beyond this the ice was more open, and they made rapid progress until they were so near the shore that Nansen could clearly distinguish the rocks on the mountain side. At last, he thought, success was assured.

But “there’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip,” and even while the explorers were discussing when and where they should land, disappointment was



HAULING THE BOAT UP ON THE ICE.

dogging their heels. Once more the floes closed up, making it necessary to drag the boats on to the ice or into some safe inlet, and once more Sverdrup succeeded admirably in placing his boat beyond reach of danger. Nansen was less fortunate, for though he managed to get into an inlet where there was little risk of being crushed, the mouth was so narrow that in taking the boat out a sharp point of ice penetrated her side and she began to sink. Here was a dilemma! There was nothing for it but to haul her up on the ice and set Sverdrup and Kristiansen, the two practical sailors of the party, to work to repair the damage. This they did very successfully, considering the extreme paucity of suitable materials. No provision had been made for such a contingency, and the amateur boatbuilders had to make shift as best they could with a piece of deal which had been one of the bottom boards, a few nails, a hatchet, and a wooden mallet.

The job was quickly finished, but during that short delay the ice had again packed so closely that further progress was impossible. Rain was falling heavily, so, by way of making the best of a bad job, the tent was pitched, and the explorers settled down for a much-needed rest. In order that no chance of getting on might be lost, a watch was set, the men agreeing to take a two hours' spell each; but the precaution

was unavailing, for the ice carefully abstained from opening. All that could be done was to wait for better luck, and in the meantime, to keep the floor of the tent as clear as possible of the rain-water which made its way in on all sides.

After about twenty-four hours of this interesting occupation the pack began to open, but owing to the drift of the ice the unlucky explorers were now about twice as far from land as when they left the *Jason*. It was disheartening work ; for though they contrived to advance for a time, before long they were forced to haul their boats up on a floe, and submit to be again carried seawards by the current. When night came on there was evidently no hope of any change, so the whole party for some hours slept soundly. Towards morning a violent shock awoke Nansen, who got up to see what was the cause of the commotion. On going outside this soon became evident ; the floe had split in two, and though tent and boats were safe, the rocking of the greatly reduced floe was so unpleasant, and the sea broke over it so frequently, that it was deemed advisable to remove the camp to a larger and safer floe.

By this time the poor Lapps were fairly frightened. Neither of them had ever been far from home before, and they had joined the expedition without knowing much about it ; further, they had not the slightest

interest in the interior of Greenland, and did not care whether it was ever explored or not. Had all gone smoothly, they would, no doubt, have been happy enough; but the difficulties at the outset demoralized them, and they now believed firmly that their last hour had come. Under this impression they retired to one of the boats, covered it in with a tarpaulin, and in this improvised shelter Balto read aloud to his friend from a little Lappish New Testament. Poor fellows! they were preparing as best they could for the death which they believed awaited them, and their companions left them undisturbed.

Matters were not so desperate as the Lapps imagined, and the Norwegians, who were of a less despondent turn of mind, cooked a hot dinner of pea-soup. Even in the midst of their alarm, the Lapps were not indifferent to creature comforts, and the prospect of the soup somewhat raised their spirits: they had not the least objection to eating their share, though they still pulled long faces, and evidently thought that the jokes in which their companions indulged were very much out of place on so serious an occasion.

There was no denying that the situation was a grave one, as hour by hour the floe drifted slowly but surely towards the breakers. Once in their power it might well be ground to powder among the heaving,

crashing ice, and what then would be the fate of its human freight? It was more than doubtful if the boats could live in such a seething caldron, and every man knew that death stared him in the face, though no one intended to succumb without making a good fight for his life. Everything was made ready for an immediate start in the boats if this should become necessary; then, as it was impossible to say when they might have another chance of resting, all except Sverdrup, who was the watchman, lay down to sleep, Balto, for greater security, electing to lie in one of the boats. It may be doubted whether his selection of a sleeping-place was judicious, as more than once Sverdrup had to hold on to his boat by main force lest it should be carried away by the waves which broke on the floe.

Once or twice, indeed, the danger seemed imminent: the ice rocked furiously, and as Nansen lay in the tent the breakers seemed to be roaring close to his head. But he lay still, and in spite of the noise soon went peacefully to sleep, for was not Sverdrup pacing the ice outside as calmly as though he were on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war? While he was on guard his comrades knew they need not trouble; there was no fear that the plucky fellow would disturb them for nothing, though he was constantly on the alert, and would call them if really necessary.

Their confidence was well bestowed, as the events of that night proved. In the morning the floe was walled in by the fragments of ice cast on it by the waves, and Sverdrup said that several times he had been on the point of calling the sleepers. Once he went so far as to undo one of the hooks which fastened the door of the tent: the floe was not quite in the breakers, but the litter of fragments upon it showed that it was already among the crashing ice-blocks, and one huge pinnacle threatened at any moment to fall and overwhelm it. The case looked serious, but it might improve, and Sverdrup decided to wait.

Then matters grew, if possible, worse, and again Sverdrup came to the tent door and undid another hook. He had hesitated before, but now, surely, he must wait no longer. Yet, cool-headed sailor that he was, before quite unfastening the door he took another look round, and that look decided him to do no more. For, wonderful to say, when the floe was almost in the breakers it suddenly changed its course, and, caught perhaps by a counter-current, began once again to drift towards the shore. It was a merciful deliverance from a great peril.

For several days the explorers drifted helplessly at the mercy of the currents, which carried their ice-raft now this way, now that; sometimes moving it rapidly

towards the shore, and then, as their spirits rose, perversely changing its direction. Only one thing was certain: however capricious the current might be in other respects, its general direction was southwards, and the place where Nansen had wished to land now lay far to the north.

One day a fine large seal was seen basking on the ice at some little distance, and Nansen and Sverdrup started in pursuit. As soon as they were within range Nansen fired, but the ball only wounded the seal, and he at once made for the water. Another shot would probably have finished him, but in the interests of science Nansen desired to examine the living animal in order to clear up one or two, as yet, undecided points. The seal, however, had no interest in science, and during the inspection he managed to flap along the ice, and in another moment would have been in the water had not his pursuers, who were provided with boathooks, struck them into him and held him fast. Now came a trial of strength. Little by little the seal gained the advantage, and seeing this, Nansen asked Sverdrup to shoot the monster. Sverdrup, however, had the better hold of the two, and wished Nansen to fire, and during the momentary discussion which took place the seal settled the question. Giving a couple of violent flaps with his tail, he succeeded in freeing himself from the boathooks. In another

second, with a mighty splash, he took his departure, leaving the two crestfallen hunters to return empty-handed to their friends.

One of the many disagreeables of drifting among the flocs was the necessity of economizing the spirits for the cooker, lest the supply should be exhausted before the west coast was reached. Hot food or drink became, therefore, quite an exceptional luxury, and it was very seldom that anything was cooked. The poor little Iceland pony had come to an untimely end on board the *Jason*, and his flesh provided many a meal for the hungry travellers, though the Lapps had a strong prejudice against horseflesh. The meat being half-frozen was eatable enough, even uncooked, for hungry people who were not over-particular, and one day Nansen, having chopped up a portion, mixed it with a quantity of preserved peas, duly seasoned it, and then piped all hands to dinner. Balto had been watching with the greatest interest, and when the mixture was placed, in the absence of a dish, in the cooker, he doubtless expected a savoury stew. His face fell when he found no cooking was intended, and he hurriedly told Ravna in Lappish how matters stood.

Hungry as they were, both turned aside. Raw meat, they said, was only fit for heathens and beasts of the fields, and they deeply regretted having come

on this expedition with men whose habits and ways "were so different from those of the Lapps." But Nansen, though he did not share their prejudice, was quite able to respect it, and he supplied them with some tinned beef, which Balto pronounced to be "good, clean food."

One night a bear made his appearance, and Kristiansen, who was on guard, at once awoke his companions. They rushed out in a light and airy costume, and Kristiansen ran off to fetch a gun, but it was in its case, and before it could be disengaged the bear took fright, and trotted away so quickly that he was soon out of range. The opportunity of sampling bear-steaks was thus lost to the expedition, though they had the gratification of getting a good view of the Polar bear on his native ice.

Day after day the same monotonous drift continued. There seemed little chance of reaching land north of Cape Farewell, and though every one except the Lapps, who had given up all hopes of reaching the shore at all, felt sure of landing there, it became a question what was to be done afterwards. Dietrichson suggested that when they reached the coast they should at once work northwards, and, if it was too late to cross the ice that year, they should get through the winter as best they could, and cross in the following spring.

"We shall risk nothing but our lives," said he coolly, when he made the proposition.

Then another attempt was made to haul the boats over the ice. It was hard work, but the explorers seemed to make good progress, until, after some hours' work, they found themselves no nearer the shore than when they began. The current was too strong for them, and was carrying the ice seawards faster than, with all their efforts, they could drag the boats landwards over it. But luck changed at last.

Before going to bed on the night of the twenty-eighth of July some of the party noticed that the ice showed signs of opening. This, however, had often happened before without result of any kind, so no particular notice was taken, and every one except the watchman turned in as usual and slept soundly.

The night was too foggy to allow of any distant objects being seen, but when, towards morning, it came to Sverdrup's turn to watch, force of habit induced him to look at the compass. What in the world had happened? He could hardly believe his eyes, for instead of pointing northwards, as a well-conducted compass ought to do, this one persistently turned its needle in the direction where, to the best of Sverdrup's belief, the south lay. The thing was incomprehensible—yet, unless something had gone wrong with the compass, how was it that the breakers, which

hitherto had been on the east, had suddenly gone round to the west, where he now distinctly heard them? Try as he might, he could not solve the puzzle.

Daylight cleared up the mystery. Ravna's turn for sentry-go came round, and when Nansen awoke he saw the little man gazing anxiously into the tent. It was clear that something unusual had happened, and half in joke Nansen said, "Well, Ravna, can you see land?"

"Yes, yes," eagerly replied he; "land too near." It was a peculiarity of the Lapps always to say *too* when they meant *very*.

Nansen ran out to see for himself. Land was indeed near, for during the night the pack had opened, and the floe which served as a raft had drifted through to the inner edge of the ice. The sound which had so puzzled Sverdrup was the dash of the waves on the beach.

Now all was commotion: this chance must not be lost. The tent was struck, a hasty breakfast eaten, boats were launched, the men stepped in and pulled rapidly shorewards. At last the weary drift was at an end, and before long the keels of the boats grated on the beach.

CHAPTER VI.

EAST GREENLAND HOSPITALITIES.

THE first landing-place was a small island a short distance from the mainland—not that there would have been any difficulty in reaching the latter, but it was farther off, and every one was anxious to feel dry land under his feet once more. Besides, a feast had long been promised on the first occasion of landing—hot chocolate, cheese, jam, biscuits, and such other little luxuries as the very limited supplies of the expedition could produce. In a general way, this bill of fare might not have presented any special attraction, but after drifting for twelve days among the ice on a diet of cold, raw food and snow water, the prospect of a hot plentiful meal increased phenomenally in attractiveness.

No sooner did their feet touch the shore than the Lapps, in their wild delight, made straight for the hills, and did not reappear for some little time. The others turned their attention to the cooking, but after

a while Nansen, finding his assistance was not required, also went off for a stroll with the view of getting a better idea of the lie of the land than had been possible from the boat. Far to the south lay the rocky headland of Cape Tordenskiold; but this did not concern Nansen and his friends, whose goal lay to the northward. In that direction plenty of ice was visible close to the shore; it was evident that there were still difficulties to be overcome. But meanwhile the travellers had a short respite from toil, and they enjoyed to the full the sight of grass and heather around them. It was even a pleasure to Nansen when a gnat or two came to sample, probably for the first time, the quality of European blood, and it gave him real delight when a little snow-bunting came with perfect confidence to hop and twitter around the invader of his domain.

Dinner at length was ready, and after ample justice had been done to the feast, the boats were once more pushed off, and the northward journey began. It was not yet too late in the season to cross the Inland Ice, but if it was to be done that year there was no time to lose, as a great part of the summer was gone.

In those latitudes, even as late as the end of July, there is little real night, and hour after hour the boats pushed on, sometimes in open water, but very

frequently every foot of progress had to be wrested from the ice by sheer hard work. Towards morning everybody was both tired and hungry, and the proposal to land on a floe for breakfast was received with general satisfaction. But the halt was a short one, and very soon the boats were once more under weigh. There was no time to sleep—that must wait until the ice had either cleared off or altogether barred progress. Several times one of the boats was nearly crushed, but no real disaster occurred, and about noon the two crews landed for dinner and a rest before attempting to pass a glacier called Puisortok, which came down to the coast and had an evil reputation, as some previous voyagers had been delayed there by ice for seventeen days.

While dinner was being prepared, some strange cries and noises were heard. They were hardly like the cry of a bird, but it was difficult to see what else they could be, as the coast was not supposed to be inhabited. One or two answering shouts were, however, given, and just as dinner was finished a shout, which was unmistakably human, sounded close at hand. Balto seized a telescope, and, springing to the top of a rock, declared that two men were approaching. Nansen joined him, and, sure enough, a little distance off were two kayaks, or skin canoes, rapidly approaching the shore. In a few minutes the light craft

grounded, and their Eskimo occupants made their way towards the camp. It was evident that they had had some dealings, direct or indirect, with white men ; for, though one was clad in seal-skin, he had a head-dress of beads, and his friend wore a blue and white cotton jacket and a hat of the same material decorated with a large red cross on the crown. A peculiarity in the attire of both was that the jacket was too short to meet the trousers, and left several inches of bare skin exposed at the waist.

The little fellows were very friendly, but, as neither party could speak a word of the other's language, communication was practically restricted to signs, though the Eskimos chattered volubly for some time. They gave the white men to understand that they came from a settlement on the north of Puisortok : it was evident that they regarded the glacier with extreme awe, and they did their best to warn the explorers to be careful how they passed it, lest they should offend the resident demon, who was credited with a most malevolent disposition.

When informed that the strangers had come from beyond the sea, they received the intelligence with a long-drawn grunt of surprise, but were distinctly incredulous. The boats, however, with their fittings, excited the greatest admiration : the natives examined everything, and when they were presented with a

couple of pieces of meat biscuit, their delight rose to an amazing pitch. They tasted the new delicacy, but such a wonderful thing could not be enjoyed alone, and each man carefully put away a portion for the benefit of his friends. Then, making signs that it was too cold to stand about, the visitors departed; and, after a short rest, the explorers followed their example, and once more proceeded on their northward course.

The water was now quite open, and in a short time they reached the dreaded glacier. Puisortok, however, was in an amiable mood; without delay or difficulty they passed beneath it, and soon afterwards reached the Eskimo camp, where a strange medley of human and canine voices greeted them, and a distinct odour of train-oil was wafted towards them on the breeze. The temptation to visit these hitherto unknown east-coast Eskimos was irresistible; the boats were turned shorewards, and, as they approached, several kayaks darted out to meet them. In fact, the whole village turned out to see the wonderful sight, and the rocks were lined with natives, staring, pointing, and making a lowing sound very suggestive of a herd of cattle.

Willing hands helped to haul the boats up the beach, and then the natives, with many smiles and signs, invited the visitors to come to the largest

tent and make themselves at home. They promptly accepted the invitation: a skin curtain, which served as a door, was raised to admit them, and for the first time, for hundreds of years at any rate, Europeans saw East Greenlanders at home.

Their first impression was of a most horrible stench, which so obtruded itself on their notice that for a few moments they could think of nothing else, and one or two of the party were forced to beat a hasty retreat. When they could give their attention to other matters they saw that a portion of this terrible odour was due to a number of primitive oil lamps, which served alike to light and warm the tent. So well, indeed, did they perform the latter part of their duty, that it was the custom of the natives to strip to the skin directly they entered the tents. The indoor dress, if dress it could be called, both of men and women consisted solely of a narrow band worn round the loins—a light and airy style of attire, which brought embarrassed blushes to the cheeks of some of the guests. The Eskimos, however, were quite at their ease, and did their best to make themselves agreeable by explaining, partly in words and partly in dumb show, the uses of the various strange objects scattered about the tent.

The dwelling itself consisted of a framework of poles, over which a double coating of skins was

stretched. It was of considerable size, and accommodated four or five families, each of which had its own special portion of a long bench, or couch, which occupied the back part of the tent. It was a close pack, for father, mother, and several children were sometimes crowded into a four-foot space; but no one seemed to mind, and no doubt they kept one another warm.

Each family owned one of the odoriferous train-oil lamps, which stood on the ground in front of the couch, and was kept burning night and day, as, unlike Europeans, the Eskimos object to sleeping in the dark. The said lamps were of stone, with wicks of dried moss, which, in the absence of any other contrivance to prevent them from drowning themselves in the oil, were carefully balanced against the sides of the lamps. The "oil" itself was still more elementary, being merely lumps of blubber which became oil only when melted by the heat. Stone cooking pots hung above the lamps, though the Eskimos have no objection whatsoever to eating their food raw.

Few of them made any pretensions to good looks from a European point of view—in fact, the flat, broad faces which were the general rule could not be called anything but plain, although, had they been clean, they might have appeared handsomer. But whatever little drawbacks of this description existed

among the natives, they were most friendly and hospitable; and when the visitors left the tent and prepared to camp for the night, many willing helpers came out to give a hand. They were interested in everything, and the boats, the tins of provisions, the tent, and the clothes of the explorers, excited unbounded admiration.

There was no need to keep watch, and the whole expedition went to rest in the sleeping-bags. This was the most wonderful thing of all to the natives; they quite declined to depart until the last man had subsided into his bag, and the next morning found them again on the watch to see what would be the next astonishing performance of their visitors. An attempt to photograph them pleased them less; they apparently credited the camera with evil powers, and incontinently fled as soon as it was levelled at them. It was only by catching them with guile and attracting their attention elsewhere that any pictures were secured.

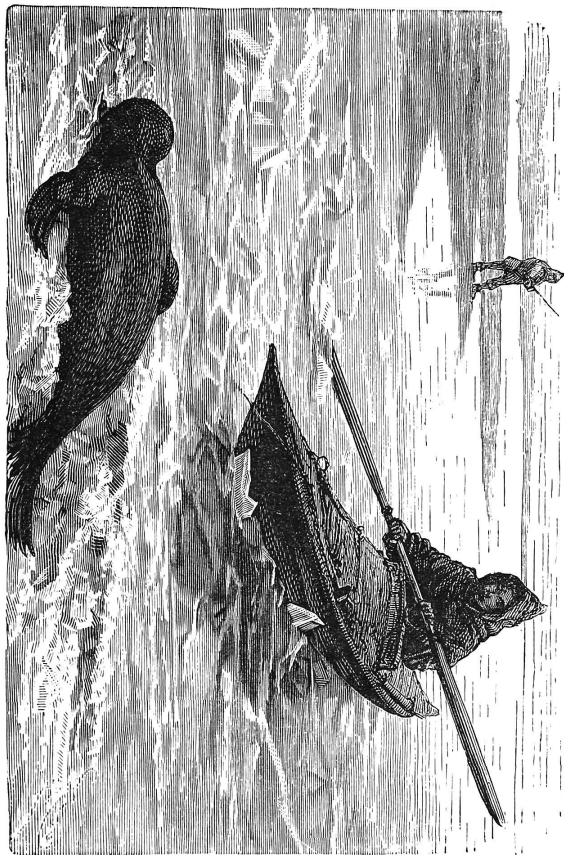
Some of the Eskimos were travelling northwards, and great was their delight when they learned that the white men were going in the same direction. No time was lost in striking the tents and making ready for a start, during which process a presentation of empty meat tins gave huge joy to the recipients. Then the good-byes were said, a ceremony involving

a great consumption of snuff, which was the only form in which these people used tobacco, and the boats departed, some to the north, and others to the south.

Nansen's party was the last to set out, but they soon overtook the Eskimos, as the latter had come to a standstill, being unable to force their fragile boats through the ice which blocked the way. They signed to the new-comers to go ahead and open a passage for them, and this Nansen did, though he had hoped that they would give him a lead. This hope, however, was doomed to disappointment, and for some time the explorers continued to act as pilots, with the natives following close at their heels, and sometimes only just escaping being nipped as the ice closed behind them.

The boats in use on this occasion were kayaks—small skin canoes for one person—and oomiaks, or large family boats, some of them thirty feet long. These were rowed exclusively by the women, whose method of using the oars may best be described as a series of spurts and jumps. They began with a moderately fast stroke which became quicker and quicker, while in the middle of each stroke they rose to their feet. After a time the spurt slackened off, but only to be repeated as soon as the rowers regained their wind.

After a while, rain began to fall, and as the Eskimos



AN ESKIMO KAYAK.

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had a great dislike to getting wet, they declined to go on, and tried to induce the white men to stop also. Nansen, however, was not to be persuaded, and, as the boats were now close to the mouth of a fiord with fairly open water before them, he pushed on with all speed. But about half-way across, the ice reappeared, and a current like a millrace knocked the floes about in a most unpleasant fashion. Once the boats were very nearly caught, and it was not until quite late in the evening that they reached the other side of the fiord, fortunately quite uninjured.

The next difficulty was to find a camping-place, for the shore was so steep that it was next to impossible to land. At last a spot was found where there was just room for the boats, and, higher up, a ledge in the cliff sufficed for the tent, though it could not be called an ideal sleeping-place, as the ground sloped so much that, before morning the whole party rolled into a heap at one side of the tent.

For another ten days the travellers continued to push their way northwards, sometimes in open water, but often fighting with the ice for every foot of progress. More than once they met with Eskimos, and on one occasion traded with them for dried seal meat, a large joint of which could be purchased for a darn-
ing needle or an empty meat tin. Ravna considered this altogether unrighteous dealing, and refused to

have anything to do with it, partly on the ground that the payment was too low for value received, and partly because he thought the natives would require the food themselves. Doubtless they do sometimes fall on very hard times, for at one or two places where the explorers camped they found some ruined huts and a number of human bones, which suggested the idea that famine had made a clean sweep of the previous inhabitants of the spot.

Gruesome as this sight was, another camping-place suffered from a still greater drawback. This was a plague of mosquitoes, and when Nansen and his companions awoke in the morning they found themselves being devoured by the bloodthirsty little wretches. Breakfast-time was still worse, for in addition to a complete coating of mosquitoes on face and hands, every morsel of food was covered thickly with them. It was impossible to fight them off even for a moment. Finally, in despair, food and mosquitoes were swallowed together, and the half-maddened men hurriedly launched the boats and fled. But even at sea they were pursued, and it was some time before they finally got rid of their enemies.

These various hardships, and more especially the many deficiencies of the commissariat, greatly disturbed the two Lapps. One day Balto expressed his opinion on the matter in very plain terms to Nansen,

who listened to all he had to say, and then endeavoured to point out to him where he was in error, and what would be the probable consequences if every one were to eat as much as he pleased, and follow his own ideas of what was best to do. But argument was useless; poor Balto seemed unable to comprehend it, and continued to lament that he had ever cast in his lot with people who, as he mournfully said, “had such strange ways.”

CHAPTER VII.

ASCENDING THE ICE.

ON the morning of the ninth of August the expedition was passing up a portion of the coast where the ascent to the inland ice was almost anywhere practicable. But the navigation being now fairly easy, and the water open, it was decided to push on to Umivik, the position of which was marked by a lofty mountain peak, already distinctly visible, although it was thirty miles away : the clearness of the atmosphere, however, made it appear much closer than it really was. This peak was now the goal which every one was anxious to reach, that they might bid farewell to the boats, and begin the long-talked-of journey over the Inland Ice to Christianshaab. Thirty miles, however, was too much to accomplish in one day, especially when occasional opposition from the ice had to be combated, and however near the mountain might look, in practice the miles were found to be quite as long as usual. But patience and perseverance have a wonderful effect

in overcoming difficulties, and the next evening the long-desired camping-place was reached just as a thick fog began to settle down and obscure everything.

An unexpected treat was in store, for a lucky shot of Nansen's laid low four birds of the snipe tribe which obligingly rose almost under his feet as he stepped ashore. Hot coffee, a most unusual luxury, also figured on the bill of fare, and every one—even the Lapps, who rejoiced exceedingly that the boat journey was at an end—seemed to be in thoroughly good spirits. One section of the journey was successfully accomplished; it was a good omen, and even though an unknown icy waste had now to be traversed, what Norwegian or Lapp fears ice or snow?

The next morning rose bright and clear, but before a start could be made many odd jobs required attention. After breakfast all hands set to work, and a few photographs and scientific observations having been taken, Dietrichson betook himself to mapping the district; Kristiansen and the Lapps began to overhaul the sledges and ski; and Nansen and Sverdrup went off up the mountain in search of a practicable ascent to the Inland Ice.

At first they walked for some distance up a narrow ridge which divided two rivers of ice, but before long Mother Earth disappeared, and the friends had to take to the ice. At first, although the rough surface proved

exceedingly detrimental to shoe-leather, walking was easy enough, but after a while crevasses—caused, doubtless, by inequalities in the bed of the ice—made their appearance. Some were narrow enough to leap, or even step, across; but many were too wide for this, and as crevasses generally run across an ice stream, it became necessary to go round them. Fortunately most of them were not very long, and therefore the delay caused was not serious. Sometimes a snow-covered crevasse proved a dangerous trap to an unwary walker, but no accident occurred.

Towards evening the pioneers reached the top of the mountain, and for the first time looked out across the grand expanse of snow-covered ice which shrouds the interior of Greenland. A fine rain was falling, but in spite of this, mountain peaks, some of them many miles away, could be distinctly seen. Otherwise the slope was gradual, but the walking was heavy, a defect which the frosty nights that might fairly be expected would do much to remove.

Long before this the sun had set, so the provisions were brought out and a very dry supper was eaten, for nothing drinkable was to be had. To go back by the same route was voted foolish, so after supper the two friends set out towards a promising-looking mountain which lay some little distance to the south, and where they hoped to find water. They were,

according to their reckoning, about fifteen miles from camp, but rest and food had restored their strength, and they stepped out manfully; but once more distance was found to be deceptive. The mountain was farther off than it had appeared, and crevasses were far too large and numerous to be pleasant; but at length the goal was reached, and—more delightful still—a glorious stream was found, where the thirsty travellers drank to their hearts' content. Then off they went again, and reached the camp about five o'clock in the morning, well satisfied with their work, and quite ready to turn in for a few hours' sleep.

The next day or two were spent in making preparations for the march. The boats were hauled up into a safe nook among the rocks, and a small stock of provisions, tools, ammunition, etc., was placed in a cache, lest by any unforeseen accident the expedition might be forced to retreat to the coast.

On the fifteenth of August all was ready, but the hot sun in the daytime made the snow so soft and sticky that it was agreed to travel by night. At nine o'clock, therefore, on the evening of that day the men harnessed themselves to the sledges and set out on their long tramp. Progress at first was very slow, for the ascent was so steep that for some distance each sledge required three men to draw it. Under

these circumstances only two sledges could be advanced at once, and the men had to go several times over the same ground; but after a while the loads were rearranged, so as to give Nansen and Sverdrup, who dragged the first sledge, double the weight drawn by each of the others, who had a sledge apiece. After this they got on a little better, but it was hard work, especially after a long spell on shipboard and in the boats, where they had had little chance of using their legs.

Three miles was found quite far enough for the first march, and then the party halted, pitched the tent, and put some snow in the cooker to melt for tea. Henceforward every drop of drink would have to be prepared thus, for there are no streams or pools on the Inland Ice.

Just as the weary men were preparing to lie down to sleep, some one discovered that the best piece of cheese had been left behind at the last halting-place. Provisions were none too plentiful, so it was a serious loss, but no one was inclined to go back for it. The men looked rather blankly at each other, and then the indefatigable Dietrichson strode off, declaring he should like the walk, and, moreover, a view of the country would be a great help in drawing his map.

In due time Dietrichson came back with the cheese, and in a few hours the march was resumed. Crevasses were far more plentiful than was convenient; they

were often hidden by snow, but though a man occasionally fell in, he always managed to extricate himself. Fortunately the fissures, though plentiful, were not very wide, so the sledges glided easily across them, and served also as a kind of anchor by which any one who was unfortunate enough to fall through the snow could pull himself out, even if he did not get his elbows or his walking-pole across the crevasse as he fell.

Rain began to fall heavily, and continued so persistently that, as it soon penetrated the so-called waterproofs, the travellers were obliged to halt and pitch the tent. Having made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow, tea was prepared, the smokers were treated to a pipe, and on the whole a cosy afternoon was spent. Three days, however, passed before the weather showed any disposition to clear, and though every one who had a yarn to spin spun it, the enforced idleness began to be very monotonous. There were one or two books among the stores certainly, but they had been brought for use rather than entertainment, and it was not easy to extract any amusement from nautical almanacs or tables of logarithms. Nor did it improve matters that short commons were added to imprisonment, as, seeing that there was no knowing how many such delays might occur, Nansen cut down the rations to

the smallest possible allowance, as he feared that the supplies might be exhausted before the west coast was reached.

At length the storm passed, and another start was made; but the crevasses became worse and worse, and ran at right angles to each other in an absolutely impracticable manner. There was nothing to be done but to turn back, and try to find a better road. A little to the northward the ice proved to be less broken, and the incline became less steep; so, bending to their work, the men hauled away merrily. The rain had done them one good turn, for it had not only made the snow firmer, but in many places had washed it away altogether. A little frost would have made the travelling better, but even in Greenland frost cannot be obtained to order.

A far greater trouble was the absence of water, for the hard work and generally dry atmosphere caused intolerable thirst. Scarcity of fuel forbade a too frequent use of the cooker, and though each man carried, inside his coat, a tin flask filled with snow, the melting process was so slow that the supply never equalled the demand.

One morning, after a night of hard work, it occurred to Nansen that the addition of a little citric acid would improve the tea and make it more refreshing. A slice of lemon has this effect—in fact the

Russians always use it—why, thought Nansen, should not citric acid do just as well? Unfortunately, citric acid and milk will not mix in a satisfactory manner; and as every one forgot this, and added both, the result was the formation of a thick curd, which sank to the bottom of the vessel. Nansen, who had proposed the acid, felt in duty bound to pronounce the mixture good, but as no one else agreed with him, the experiment was never repeated.

So heavy was the work that Balto declared his shoulders were cut by the ropes “till they felt as if they were being burnt.” He wished to leave the Indian snowshoes behind, as every pound of weight made a difference; but of this Nansen would not hear, for though the snowshoes were not needed then, no one could say how soon they might be wanted. But Balto could not see this at all: neither he nor Ravna had ever used such things; and, therefore, according to his ideas, it was quite impossible that they ever would do so, and he scouted the notion that any one could teach a Lapp on matters connected with snow. He had quite got over his recent alarms, and his improved spirits were indicated by a frequent indulgence in bad language, a vice from which he always carefully abstained when he was depressed, or believed himself to be in danger.

Though the snowshoes were too valuable to be

sacrificed, it was desirable that the sledge loads should be reduced if possible. Oilcloth covers had been brought for the sleeping-bags, but these were found to be unnecessary, and were accordingly condemned. Everybody felt, however, that simply to leave them would be most unsatisfactory, and some one suggested that oilcloth was inflammable and would make a good fire on which to cook the supper.

The idea was at once carried into effect, with the further improvement that the fire was lighted inside the tent and an empty biscuit-tin was pressed into the service as a cooking-pot. The oilcloth blazed up splendidly—but most pleasures have their attendant pains, and in a few minutes a horrible black smoke filled the tent and almost blinded its occupants, most of whom took refuge in the sleeping-bags, with their heads well covered. Some one, however, had to stay and look after the tea-making; but long before enough snow was melted the tin began to leak terribly, and a more watertight vessel had to be found. Eventually the tea was made and disposed of, though at the same time it was agreed that oilcloth was a most unsuitable fuel for use in a small tent. The next morning the fire was built outside, with perfectly satisfactory results, and enough snow was melted for a real thirst-quenching drink all round, which was a treat not enjoyed every day. A more personal effect of the

oilcloth fire was a thick coating of soot on the faces of the company. This continued to decorate them for many a day, washing being entirely at a discount, for water was far too scarce to be used in this way, and even had it been plentiful, it would have been unwise to apply it to the face, as it seemed to make the skin more liable to crack and peel off under the combined glare of sun and snow.

The explorers had, by this time, reached a considerable elevation, and the nights were decidedly cold. There was plenty of frost now—in fact there was almost too much, for the steel runners of the sledges refused to glide easily over the dry, dusty snow. It was probable that the heat of the sun in the daytime would lessen this difficulty, and night travelling was therefore given up. The upward slope was still very considerable, and the work of hauling proportionately hard, so, at the end of each mile, refreshment was served out in the shape of a cake of meat chocolate per man.

As cooking took up a good deal of time, some one proposed that the cooker could do its duty just as well while the march was in progress. Accordingly it was filled and lighted, and being carefully secured on one of the sledges, fully justified the good opinion of its owners. When the soup was ready the tent was pitched, and the steaming mixture brought in. Un-

fortunately, the first time this plan was tried, just as the party sat down to their meal, Nansen accidentally upset the pot, and sent the soup, mixed with a pleasing assortment of spirits, water, and half-melted snow, from the other compartments of the cooker, streaming over the waterproof floor. Anywhere else the mixture would have been voted uneatable, but squeamishness was forgotten in the interior of Greenland. The men sprang to their feet, and in a few seconds the corners of the oilcloth were carefully raised, the soup was returned to the cooker, and once more set to boil. It was not so clean as it might have been, and the flavour was peculiar; but hunger is the best of sauces, and the fact that the mixture was eatable atoned for its other deficiencies.

The day after this mishap the expedition got into a region of snowdrifts where it was very difficult to advance the sledges at all, especially when, at one point, the route lay over a steep ridge. Even with three men to each sledge, it was hard work to get to the top, and the descent of the other side was little, if any, easier. It was disheartening work, and the slow progress was very disappointing; but when the party camped that evening, their spirits rose a little at finding they had reached the elevation of 6,000 feet above sea-level.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE ON THE ICE.

THE many difficulties of the journey, and the slow progress made, caused Nansen seriously to consider what would be the best course to follow. The last ship for Copenhagen might be expected to leave Christianshaab about the middle of September, and there was not the ghost of a chance that the expedition could reach its destination by that time, though to fail in doing so would entail wintering in Greenland. This no one had any desire to do, and it occurred to Nansen that by directing the course to Godthaab less time would be consumed on the road, and there would be a better chance of catching a ship. An additional inducement to follow this plan lay in the fact that, while Nordenskiöld's expedition had surveyed the ice to the south-east of Christianshaab, the neighbourhood of Godthaab was absolutely unknown.

The more Nansen thought over the new scheme

the more advantages presented themselves, and he soon made up his mind that Godthaab, not Christianshaab, should be the destination of the party. Then he took the others into council and found that they agreed; in fact they were delighted, for even the most enthusiastic began to find that perpetually hauling heavy sledges over an interminable expanse of snow was a pleasure which, in time, might pall.

It appeared from the map that the best place at which to reach the coast would probably be Ameralik Fiord, an arm of the sea situated a little way to the south of Godthaab. Ameralik Fiord, therefore, was unanimously selected as the point to which the party should direct their steps, and the course was altered accordingly.

This change of plan was made on the twenty-seventh of August. That morning the wind was very strong, and Nansen thought it would be a good idea to make the breeze propel the sledges over the snow. He quickly propounded the scheme to the others, but at first it was not particularly well received, especially by the Lapps, who, never having sailed over the snow before, laughed at the idea of doing so now. Nansen, however, declined to be laughed out of his plan, and as he was in a position to command, the sledges were soon lashed side by side to form two "vessels"—one composed of two sledges, the other of three.

Some of the useful bamboos made capital masts, the tent floor and a couple of tarpaulins did duty as sails, and although they were not originally intended for anything of the sort, really answered the purpose very well.

Sailing was a great relief from the continual hauling, but, like most other things, the arrangement had its drawbacks: one—a minor difficulty, but sufficiently unpleasant—was the rigging and lashing of the sledges; this had to be done with bare hands, and was no joke when a cold wind was drifting the snow before it and the thermometer registered a good many degrees of frost, amenities of weather very common in Greenland.

The climate was peculiar, and, owing no doubt to the rarefaction of the air on the higher elevations of the ice-cap, very little of the heat of the sun's rays was absorbed. Thus, on one occasion when the thermometer in the sun at mid-day rose to 88° (Fahrenheit), the shade temperature was only 12° . It was by no means uncommon at night to find shoes and upper and under socks frozen together in one solid mass.

Day after day the cold became greater, and, even when the sun was shining, fine snow, like frozen mist, often fell. At night the frost became far more intense, and a difference of 40 degrees between the day and night temperatures was of frequent occurrence, but

even when the sun was hottest it had, practically, little or no effect on the snow. Sometimes the surface of newly-fallen snow became moist and sticky for a time, but the moment the sun withdrew his influence the moisture was transformed into an icy crust, beneath which the unmelted snow lay in its original condition. Considering that this process must have been going on for ages, it was impossible to form any idea what depth of snow covered the ice-cap of central Greenland. In some places the explorers found that, after penetrating one or two of these layers of ice near the surface of the snow, they could drive their sticks down to any depth; but elsewhere, within four feet or so of the surface, they reached an absolutely impenetrable stratum of frozen snow.

At the end of August a tract of loose unfrozen snow was reached. Into this the feet sank deeply, and as it was not suitable for ski, the Norwegians decided to try their luck on the Indian snowshoes; the Lapps, however, with their usual contempt for anything new, utterly declined to use what they considered such outlandish footgear. For a time the laugh was on their side, for snowshoes, however valuable they may be when one has learned to walk with them, are extremely awkward at first, and the four novices suffered many tumbles and rolls in the snow before they attained anything like proficiency.

Indeed Kristiansen never succeeded in mastering his snowshoes, and finally in despair had recourse to his trüger, which proved far inferior to the snowshoes when once the art of using them without measuring one's length in the snow had been acquired. Even Balto began to lose his prejudice when he saw that the despised articles were a success, but before he quite came round the quality of the snow improved, and the snowshoes were discarded by all in favour of ski.

One day early in September the wind seemed colder than ever, and more than once frost-bite was imminent, but fortunately in each case the injury was discovered and remedied before serious damage was done.

On the following morning the wind had abated, but the comparative calm was of short duration, for in the afternoon the wind again rose and caused the snow to drift in such thick clouds that everything more than a few yards distant was effectually obscured. Every one was glad when the day's march was over, though pitching the tent in the teeth of the pitiless gale was by no means an easy matter, and when at last it was accomplished, so much snow found its way through the joints and fastenings that any attempt to cook was voted useless. One or two of the party found it necessary to take off their outer

clothes in order to put something extra beneath them, but the process was a most disagreeable one, for even inside the tent the drifting snow penetrated through shirts and jerseys in a manner which made it desirable to lose no time in dressing fully.

The storm raged all night, but in the course of the morning the weather looked a little better, and Nansen thought it would be possible to go on. Balto was ready first, and crawled out of the tent to reconnoitre, making his way with difficulty through the mass of drifted snow which almost blocked the doorway; but in a few seconds he struggled breathlessly back, declaring it would be utterly impossible to move that day. Nansen looked out, and soon saw that he was right—to attempt to proceed would be madness in that whirl of drifting snow.

By this time it seemed doubtful if the tent was strong enough to withstand the fury of the gale. Some of the party set to work to strengthen and secure it, while others made their way to the sledges to fetch in a stock of provisions, as there was no telling how long the storm might last. Ravna, on the strength of being an old Lapp who had lived forty-five years in the snow, and so might fairly claim to know its ways, shook his head dismally over the prospects of release, and quite refused to be comforted.

His gloomy forebodings were not fulfilled. That day the storm raged violently, and the drifts not only almost buried the tent, but whirled inside through every aperture, however small. Yet, in spite of many discomforts, the time passed pleasantly, and the next morning the storm had so far abated that it was possible to start once more, though the depth of the snowdrifts made progress slow and difficult.

One of the most disagreeable parts of the day's work fell to the lot of whoever officiated as cook. That unfortunate individual had to get up an hour earlier than anybody else to prepare breakfast; this was bad enough, but worst of all was lighting the cooker, as some of the spirit was sure to get on the fingers and cause considerable pain. The most successful cooks were Nansen and Balto, who paid the proverbial penalty of greatness, inasmuch as the unwelcome office was usually assigned to one or other of them. When breakfast—chocolate or tea, biscuits, potted liver, and pemmican—was ready, it was handed round to the company, who usually remained in bed till after the meal. Then all set to work; the tent was struck, sledges were cleared of snow, packed and, if the wind suited for sailing, lashed together and rigged, a few scientific observations were taken, and the march began. After a couple of hours' work a cake of meat chocolate was served out all round, and

then after a short rest work was resumed and continued till dinner-time.

Dinner consisted of pemmican, potted liver, and biscuits, with oatmeal biscuits, and a compound of snow, citric acid, oil of lemons, and sugar as dessert. This last comestible was Nansen's invention, and was much appreciated by his companions.

No time was wasted over the meal, but in two hours or so another halt was called, and again the meat chocolate went round. Then came a further march, and, about five o'clock, afternoon tea—biscuits, potted liver, and pemmican. Work for the day, however, was not yet over; another tramp, relieved by a third distribution of chocolate, had to be accomplished before the order was given to halt for the night. Then the tent was pitched, and supper—pemmican and biscuits, with tea, soup, or stew—was prepared. It was Ravna's duty to fill the cooker with snow, and this accomplished, he usually sat down cross-legged in the tent, without troubling himself in the least as to what else might need attention. His duty was to get the snow, and that done, nothing else, he thought, concerned him.

Supper-time was the most enjoyable hour of the day, but as soon as the meal was over and one or two preparations had been made for the morning, every one was ready for bed, and having closed the hoods of

the sleeping-bags, so as to keep out as much cold as possible, in a short time the expedition slept the sleep of the just and the weary.

Among the many privations endured by the explorers perhaps one of those most keenly felt was the lack of sufficient fatty matter in their food. Had the pemmican been made in the usual way, with plenty of fat, this want would have been supplied, but fortunately the potted liver was very rich, and to some extent made up for the deficiency of fat in the pemmican. Each man had also half a pound of butter a week, which he used as he pleased; Kristiansen usually got through his share the day he received it. Oddly enough, the butter, though salt, was, when eaten by itself, a capital thirst-quencher.

In the absence of water it was obviously impossible to wash the cooker, and tea, chocolate, soup, and stew followed each other with a charming impartiality. What did it matter if the chocolate was flavoured with soup, or an occasional tea-leaf intruded into the stew? No one had time to trouble about such minor details; and if the dishes were sometimes a little mixed, the fact never interfered with the appetites of the company.

CHAPTER IX.

“AND HE LED THEM DOWN AGAIN.”

THE eleventh of September was a memorable day in more ways than one. Hitherto, though in some places the surface of the ice was fairly level, the expedition had, ever since leaving the coast, been steadily ascending, and that evening camped at the very respectable elevation of 8,250 feet. This was the greatest height that had to be traversed, and, for the first time, the ice ahead had a slight downward inclination. The cold had now become intense—perhaps that also had reached its culminating point, and, to test the question, Nansen, that night, put under his pillow a minimum thermometer. It registered 35° below zero, but in the morning, even inside the tent where six men were sleeping, the mercury had sunk to some distance below the last degree marked on the scale.

The knowledge that the hardest part of the work was accomplished was very exhilarating, and the

party set out in high spirits. The descent, however, was very gradual, and Balto and Ravna, who probably had expected to reach the coast in no time, became rather depressed, when, three days later, there was still nothing but ice and snow to be seen. One day Ravna, being specially downhearted, remarked,—

"I am an old Lapp, and a silly old fool too. I don't believe we shall ever get to the coast."

Nansen answered calmly,—

"That's quite true, Ravna; you are a silly old fool."

Both Lapps had an immense respect for the superior wisdom and attainments of their companions. Judiciously-applied banter seldom failed to cheer them, and Ravna burst out laughing, quite reassured by this handsome acknowledgment of his folly.

On the seventeenth of September, the downward slope became much more perceptible. That night, for the first time for some weeks, the mercury did not quite reach zero, and no hoar-frost formed in the tent. No sign of life was to be seen as yet, but at breakfast-time a sound like the twittering of a bird was heard. It seemed impossible that any bird could be there, but a few hours later the twittering again became audible, and this time its author, a little snow-bunting, made his appearance. The bird was the first living thing that had been seen for about a month, and the men

gladly welcomed the little messenger which had come over the ice to tell them that, though not yet visible, land—beautiful land, with all its wealth of life—was not very far off.

Two days afterwards a capital sailing breeze sprang up. The opportunity was not to be lost: willing hands quickly accomplished the disagreeable task of lashing and rigging the sledges, and clearing the rapidly drifting snow from around them. Once started, they travelled at a rapid pace over the smooth snow, but their crews had not as yet had many opportunities of gaining experience in the art of sailing these novel vessels, and several times one or other of the men measured his length in the snow.

After a few such accidents some one proposed that each vessel should be provided with a bamboo, rigged somewhat after the fashion of a carriage pole, by which one of the crew might steer, while the rest hung on behind the sledges as best they could. This plan was adopted, and Sverdrup took first turn at steering the front vessel. The post was not altogether free from danger, for had he stumbled, the sledges must infallibly have run over him. Fortunately no such disaster happened, and all went well until an ice-axe on the top of the load began to slip from its fastenings. Nansen saw it, and tried to

secure it; but while he was so occupied, the projecting end of a spare ski caught his legs, and sent him flying into the snow.

Recovering himself, he set off in pursuit of his rapidly-disappearing vessel, and soon came upon the ice-axe which had caused his mishap. Picking it up, he went on his way, and a little farther on found a box of chocolate. It, too, was annexed, and then appeared some more derelict articles—a fur jacket and three pemmican boxes. These were too much to carry, so, in spite of the bitter wind, Nansen sat down to await the coming of the second vessel, which was still some way behind. His own, meanwhile, was growing smaller and beautifully less in the distance, but before it was quite out of sight Sverdrup discovered his loss. Down came the sail; and in a few minutes Kristiansen made his appearance, having returned to see what had happened. The two together were quite able to carry everything, and before the other sledges came up, the cargo and lashings had been readjusted and secured.

A few hours later, Balto, chancing to look up, saw, in the distance, clearly outlined against the sky, a long, dark mountain range quite free from ice or snow. A joyous shout announced his discovery to his companions—at last the west coast, the goal for which they had striven so hard, was almost attained.

It was a great event, and a feast was then and there planned in honour of the occasion.

The dark mountains lay a little to the northward, but, as the ice seemed to slope in that direction, Nansen changed the course, and steered towards them. Soon afterwards the wind freshened, and whirled the sledges along at a grand rate; but, in spite of this, the distant peaks were soon lost to view, hidden, probably, by some intervening rise in the ice, or veiled by the drifting snow, which effectually blotted out all distant objects, and reduced the range of vision to the immediate locality of the sledges.

Just as it was growing dusk, Nansen, who had replaced Sverdrup as steersman of the front sledge, saw a dark line on the snow a little way to the front. Supposing it to be some trifling inequality in the surface, he took no notice of it, but a moment later he saw to his horror that he was within a few yards of a huge crevasse. Another second, and he and his sledges must have gone down—down hopelessly into the yawning ice—but he was a first-rate skilöber, and just contrived to turn aside, and so check the progress of the sledges.

As this was a warning that the ice was not now to be trusted, further advance in the gathering darkness demanded extra caution. But the breeze was too good to be lost, so sail was reduced, and Sver-

drup resumed the post of front steersman, while Nansen, with a long pole to try the snow, went on ahead as advance guard. Thus the journey was continued for some distance, but at last the ice became so dangerous that it would have been foolhardiness to go farther by moonlight, and a halt was called. It was no easy matter to pitch the tent, as not only was the wind boisterous, but the ice at that spot was almost clear of snow, and a hole had to be cut for each peg. By the time this was accomplished no one felt in the humour for cooking, and the projected feast was therefore, by common consent, postponed to a more convenient season. Not until he was warm in the tent did Nansen discover that his fingers had been frozen during the afternoon, but they had begun to thaw, and, though they ached and tingled terribly as the circulation returned, no serious damage ensued.

The following morning, when the explorers came out of their tent, a glorious prospect burst upon them. The long monotony of ice and snow lay behind them, and in front was the great expanse of coast to the south of Godthaab Fiord. It was a wild, mountainous tract, whose snow-capped peaks, glittering in the sunshine and intersected by long, deep gorges black in shadow, called up vivid recollections of home, and the men strained their eyes to

catch a glimpse of the sea, which was all that was needed to complete the resemblance to the coast of Norway. But no sea as yet was visible, and the country looked anything but promising for sledge travelling.

That day crevasses were unusually plentiful, and several times a serious accident nearly happened, but fortunately no one came to grief. In the afternoon a hailstorm and a violent gale, which was not propitious for sailing, made hauling such hard work that a halt was called earlier than usual, though it was a disappointment to have to camp again on the ice, as every one had reckoned on reaching land that day.

Morning light showed an unpromising state of affairs, for snow was falling so heavily that the attempt to advance resolved itself into groping along. Towards noon, however, the snow stopped, and the sun appeared, which enabled Nansen to ascertain the latitude. This he found to be about $64^{\circ} 13'$, which was farther north than he had intended to go. Clearly the swerve made when the mountains were first seen had been a mistake. A more southerly course was accordingly taken, but again crevasses barred the way, and another slight alteration in the route became necessary.

At length the explorers found themselves in a narrow defile between two ridges. Here the ice was

so rough that it was difficult to get the sledges over it, and, though the atmosphere was too thick to allow any one to see what lay a little distance ahead, matters seemed to get worse rather than better. Prudence suggested a halt, so Dietrichson and the Lapps set to work to pitch the tent and cook a good supper, while the others went to reconnoitre.

Travelling certainly was very bad, but the ice was not really dangerous. The reconnoitring party therefore pushed on, but before they had gone far Nansen caught sight of a dark patch, which, had he seen it anywhere else, he would have felt sure was water. Here it was most probably merely a piece of clear ice, but nevertheless he went towards it, and, on trying it with his staff, found it was neither more nor less than a pool of beautiful clear water. In another moment all three lay on their faces sucking in great draughts of delight, as those only can drink who for weeks have been unable to quench their thirst.

They had not long left the pool when they heard a shout, and, looking round, saw Ravna in full pursuit. His unexpected appearance caused a momentary alarm. Was anything wrong at the camp? but before there was time to inquire a rather breathless request for wicks for the lamp quite dispelled any rising fears. With the view of keeping the wicks dry, Nansen had put them in his pocket. For-

getting he had done so, he had carried off the whole supply; and when the cook came to light the lamp, that functionary found himself minus wicks—hence the chase. Having supplied the demand, Nansen asked if Ravna had seen the water. Yes, he had seen it, said the little fellow, but had not had time to stop—for which piece of self-denial he meant to make ample amends on his return.

In due time he reached the camp, where Balto, who was officiating as cook, was patiently awaiting his arrival with the wicks. Ravna at once told his news, and the thought of a good drink banishing all other ideas, Balto seized an empty biscuit-tin to serve as a bucket, and rushed off to slake his thirst. His appearance with a well-filled tin was the first notification received by Dietrichson that water had been discovered, and unceremoniously seizing the tin, he, in his turn, drank till he could drink no more. From that time forward water was plentiful, and there was no further need to melt snow.

The following morning a further reconnaissance showed the whereabouts of the party. Somewhat to their disgust they found that they had not, as they had intended, come down to the head of Godthaab Fiord, but into another fiord a few miles to the north. This would necessitate working southwards, and once at the water's side, there would be little difficulty in

building some sort of boat, which, if not very artistic, would serve to carry men and stores to Godthaab, or whatever might be the nearest settlement.

A consultation was held, and, after some discussion, it was agreed that Nansen and Sverdrup should go on ahead to explore, while the others, taking charge of the sledges, did their best to follow the leaders. One sledge, having proved for some unknown reason unconscionably hard to drag, had already been abandoned. There was, therefore, only a sledge apiece for the four men, which was lucky, seeing that, owing to the extreme roughness of the ice at this portion of the descent, the sledges had not unfrequently to be carried bodily. Once the only practicable path was the bed of a partially frozen stream.

Three days of heavy work brought the travellers to the top of the last ice-slope, and, looking down, they saw at their feet a beautiful mountain lake, frozen indeed, but surrounded with grass and heather. The descent was made in very quick time, and once off the ice all fatigue was forgotten in the intense delight of again setting foot on real earth, and lying at ease on the soft heather.

There was still plenty of work to do. The lake was not Godthaab, and if there was to be any chance of reaching home that year there was no time to lose. Of course the sledges were now useless, so the most

necessary articles were made up into portable bundles to be carried down to the fiord. The other stores, with the sledges, were cached, to be fetched at some future date. Ravna now, for the first time, showed his real strength, for in addition to his necessary load, he shouldered a big bundle of his own private effects, and yet easily kept pace with the others, who were much bigger men, and less heavily laden.

Progress was slow, for the ground was by turns boggy and stony. Towards evening another lake was reached; this also was frozen, but the ice was rotten, and in some parts much broken, apparently by the fall of fragments from a neighbouring glacier. In consequence of this, Nansen and Ravna, in trying to cross the lake, very nearly came to grief, but a hurried retreat saved them, and the party halted for the night on the shore of the lake. A blazing fire of heather gave a cheerful light to which they had long been strangers, and far into the night they lay basking in the warmth, and enjoying the cheerful glow. The Lapps now liked Greenland as much as they had before objected to it, and Ravna declared that, could he only transport his family and reindeer thither, the west coast would be a capital home for an old Lapp. He would get rich in no time, he said, for since he came off the ice he had seen the tracks of plenty of wild reindeer.

CHAPTER X.

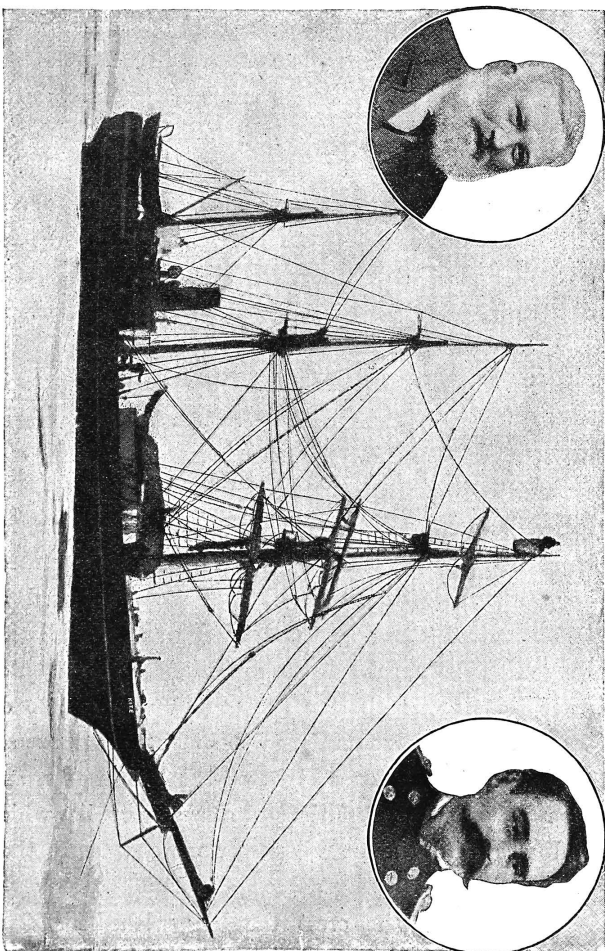
“SOMETHING ATTEMPTED—SOMETHING DONE.”

AFTER a night's rest on the soft springy heather the men awoke wonderfully refreshed, and shouldered their loads in high spirits. They certainly were in luck's way that morning, for, before they had gone far, a hare, which injudiciously showed itself, was bagged by Nansen, and though it was not over-large, a bit of fresh meat for supper was a delightful prospect after so long a course of pemmican and dry biscuits. But even on the brightest day clouds sometimes appear, and after a while Nansen suffered a small disappointment in finding that the map by which he was steering was not correct, and that the fiord itself was still twelve miles or more away. Seeing that the walking was bad, and the loads heavy, this was too much for one day, and that evening the party again camped by the side of a small lake. A big fire of heather was quickly lighted, and some hare soup was set to cook in an old spirit can, which

CAPTAIN RICHARD PIKE.



LIEUT. ROBERT F. PEARY, U.S.N.



THE "KITE."

See page 132.

promised to make a first-rate impromptu saucepan. Unfortunately, just as the soup was ready, the pot upset, and, though the meat was saved, most of the liquid part of the supper was lost among the ashes.

The next day, at dinner-time, the party reached a stream which at that spot was too deep to ford, and they had to choose between going back to search for a shallow place, and crossing a spur of the mountain. At this juncture the calls of hunger demanded attention, so the decision was left till after dinner.

Balto finished first, and leaving the others still eating, he trotted off alone. Presently he appeared high up on the mountain-side, waving his cap, and evidently in a state of considerable excitement. His friends had not long to wait to know the reason, for he soon came back, bringing with him a big reindeer horn, and reporting that he had seen the fiord at last, and that the upper end of it was covered with ice. The news settled the question of the route; after this it was obvious that the best thing to do was to cross the mountain, so the men once more set off, anxious alike for a sight of the blue water, and for relief from the attentions of a swarm of flies which had welcomed the travellers far more warmly than they desired.

On reaching the crest the long-wished-for fiord stretched before them, but the “ice” which Balto had

reported was now seen to be sand. In a little while some human footprints were found, so it seemed that civilization could not be far off.

Some way farther down an ideal camping-place was found, and throwing down their loads, the men stretched themselves on the heather in happy consciousness of work well done—work, moreover, which many of those best qualified to judge had pronounced impossible of accomplishment. Godthaab, however, was still some distance off, and, until the travellers reached that settlement there was no prospect of getting home. "How is Godthaab to be reached?" was therefore the question which had now to be answered.

A little examination of the coast showed that the sea-route would be far the easier, and as it was desirable that communication should at once be opened, Nansen and Sverdrup undertook to go on ahead, while the others returned to the sledges to fetch the remainder of the baggage. The first business, however, was to build a boat, and now arose the difficulty of materials: what was to be done? The woodwork of the sledges would have been most valuable, but, as every day was of importance if the party were to have any chance of catching a ship, there was not time to fetch it. Fortunately a number of willow trees grew close at hand; these with a couple of bamboos would furnish ribs and keel, while the water-

proof floor of the tent stretched over them would take the place of the side-planks.

The next morning Dietrichson, Kristiansen, and Ravna, went off to fetch the baggage, while Balto, who promised to follow them later, set to work with Nansen and Sverdrup at boatbuilding. Under the circumstances this was by no means an easy task, and the absence of almost all the proper tools made it harder still, but by evening the job was finished and, to their great satisfaction the amateur craftsmen found that their boat, if not exactly artistic, would float capitally.

After a few hours' sleep the boatbuilders were once more astir; Balto strode off to join the others, making such good progress that he overtook them that same evening. Nansen and Sverdrup still had their sculls to make, and a few other small items to complete, but by noon all was ready, and after a frugal dinner the boat was stored with necessities, and everything else, including the tent, was packed together and secured with heavy stones to await the return of the rest of the party.

Now came the rather difficult operation of launching the boat. Instead of being able, as they had hoped, to row straight down the river to the fiord, Nansen and Sverdrup found that the water was far too shallow to allow of anything of the sort. In fact,

when they were both in the boat she stuck fast altogether, so Nansen, who was the bigger and heavier of the two, got out to walk over the sands. This he found no easy matter, for they were so soft and wet that in many places he sank over his knees. Sverdrup was little or no better off, as he soon found it necessary to tow the boat instead of punting it along. This entailed wading, an unpleasant occupation when the temperature of the water is only a little above freezing-point. Too much of it could not be endured, and after several hours, as the open water still seemed to be some distance off, the travellers carried the boat up to higher and drier ground, kindled a fire, changed their clothes, and settled down for a pleasant, restful evening.

A little of this sort of work went a long way, and in the morning Nansen and Sverdrup, having taken the boat down to the water, decided that they would carry their goods overland rather than have any more wading.

The unexpected, however, often happens, and before this decision could be carried into effect, they found that, owing to the tide or some cause unknown, the water in the fiord had risen to such an extent that much of the sand was covered, and the boat was well afloat. Luckily Sverdrup had moored her securely, and he now waded out to her and rowed to a con-

venient point where Nansen met him with the baggage. Thus one more difficulty was overcome, and, though the boat required a good deal of baling, she proved, on the whole, to be a better sailer than they had dared to expect.

It appeared that they were on one of the innermost branches of the great Ameralik Fiord, and all day they paddled on through scenery of the wildest and grandest description; so rugged were the shores that it was difficult to find a level space where the evening camp might be fixed. Progress was slow, owing to an adverse wind, and two or three days passed without any special event, unless the shooting of numerous birds which made first-rate soup could be accounted as such. Once or twice, on landing, the travellers found themselves surrounded by an abundant crop of crowberries, a fruit not generally regarded as having a specially pleasant flavour, but, after so long an abstinence from vegetable food, it seemed delicious, and the two managed to consume a vast amount.

These were the last memorable events of the voyage, and ere long the friends reached the Moravian settlement of Ny Herrnhut, a short distance from Godthaab. As the boat was wholly unlike any craft ever seen by the natives, its appearance excited a vast amount of interest, and its occupants, when they landed, at once became the centre of an admiring

crowd. The jabbering was at its height when a young man who, though his dress was mainly Eskimo, was evidently a European, came up and saluted the new-comers. He next asked with a strong Danish accent if they spoke English, adding, apparently as an afterthought, the question, "Are you Englishmen?"

The idea of laboriously conversing in English struck Nansen as being a trifle absurd, and he was heartily glad to declare himself a Norwegian. It was clear that his fame had preceded him, for on stating his name, and mentioning that he and his comrade had just come from the east coast, over the much-dreaded Inland Ice, the Dane heartily congratulated him on having taken his doctor's degree, an event which had occurred just before the expedition left Norway.

The stranger, whose name was Baumann, proved to be assistant-superintendent of the "coloni" of Godthaab, and was able to give full information on that most important subject—the possibility of catching a ship. His news was not very satisfactory: the last ship for that season had left Godthaab two months before, but the *Fox*—the same vessel that had brought the tidings of the fate of Franklin's ill-starred expedition—was still at Ivigtut, and would sail with a cargo of cryolite about the middle of October. Ivigtut, however, lies 300 miles south of Godthaab, and there was small chance of catching the *Fox*.

In Greenland, as elsewhere, news flies apace, and long before the strangers reached Godthaab, the colonists turned out to welcome them, and a salute was fired in their honour. The hospitality of the Greenlanders seemed boundless; in fact, the chief difficulty now was to discover the means of accepting all the proffered attentions. Never before had Nansen and Sverdrup found themselves so much in request.

The first thing to be done, however, was to dispatch kayaks with provisions and comforts to Dietrichson and his companions in Ameralik Fiord—the next to find some one willing to convey letters to the *Fox* at Ivigtut, to ask the captain to come north to Godthaab and pick up the explorers and their goods. On consideration, this seemed the best thing to do, as it would probably be easier and quicker for the ship to come to them than for them to go to the ship. The messenger was also entrusted with sundry missives to private friends in Norway, which he was to commit to the care of the captain in case that gentleman should not see his way to come so far north. Some delay, however, occurred on account of the weather, which suddenly became too stormy for even the most expert kayaker to venture to sea.

The relief expedition was more successful, and two kayaks laden with good things reached the camp a few hours after leaving Godthaab. Dietrichson and

his companions had done their work well, and by the time the kayaks arrived they had transported all the baggage to a convenient spot close to the fiord. The job had not been a particularly pleasant one, for there was too much baggage to be carried at once, and the same ground had to be gone over several times. Further difficulty was caused by the bad condition of the ice on the small lakes which had to be traversed or skirted. It was not strong enough to bear properly, as Dietrichson speedily found to his cost. In the interests of his map he had lingered behind the others, and, being anxious to rejoin them, he essayed to make a short cut across the lake with his sledge. About the middle, the ice showed signs of giving way, but he pushed on hoping to reach the other side dryshod. Not so; at every step the ice became weaker, and at last in he went, but partly swimming, and partly scrambling through the ice, he reached the shore in safety. Balto, who had seen his danger, came to his assistance and the two managed to secure the sledge, which was still high and dry on the ice, and bring it safely to land. This was the only disaster, and it was not a serious one, as the hardy Norseman suffered no ill effects from his ducking.

Two days later all the stores had been brought down to the fiord, and no more could be done until Nansen sent boats from Godthaab, so with quiet con-

sciences, the party gave themselves up to the enjoyment of a well-earned, if compulsory, rest. Under these circumstances the arrival of the two kayaks with the stores from Godthaab was a most welcome event, as pemmican and biscuits were becoming somewhat monotonous, and a change of diet was very desirable; tobacco, too, had not been forgotten, and Balto was specially delighted at receiving a pipe which Nansen had, some time before, promised to get for him. The only drawback to the pleasure of the occasion was the news that there was only a slight chance of reaching home that year, but amid the general satisfaction even this was little regarded.

The provisions were at once attacked, but before the meal was over two more strangers appeared. These turned out to be further emissaries from Godthaab with more provisions, and also letters from several influential persons in the colony. The newcomers indicated by signs that they meant to stay, and the first kayakers having departed, a merry evening was spent over a bowl of punch, the materials for which were found among the second consignment of provisions.

Silas, one of the last arrivals, was a mighty hunter, and it was not long before he distinguished himself by bringing in a fine reindeer, which was a welcome addition to the stores, as reindeer steaks are excellent

eating. Very probably some good sport might have been obtained in the valley, but the weather was unpropitious, and almost the whole of the time the party were in camp rain fell so heavily that no unnecessary outdoor occupation could be undertaken. Under these circumstances time passed slowly, but at last, early one morning, the boats from Godthaab arrived. Everything was ready to be embarked, and in wonderfully quick time the camp was broken up and the boats with their new loads pushed off without any delay. The voyage was prosperous and uneventful, and the following day the travellers arrived at Godthaab.

No news had as yet been received from the *Fox*, and for some days the prospect of getting home remained dubious, but at length kayaks were seen speeding up the fiord from the south. It was evident that they were engaged on some special service, and this, on their arrival, turned out to be the delivery of letters from Ivigtut. The messengers had done their duty well; they had caught the *Fox* at the very last moment, but after thoroughly considering the matter the captain did not consider himself justified, so late in the year, in returning to Godthaab. This was, of course, a disappointment, but as the *Fox* would carry home tidings of the safety and success of the explorers, they knew that their friends would speedily be re-

lieved of all anxiety on their account, and one and all settled down to spend the winter as happily as might be among Greenland hospitalities.

Time passed quickly, and when, about the middle of April, a ship arrived, a good deal of sorrow entered the farewells. The vessel only remained for a few days, and then, with Nansen and his comrades on board, attempted to visit some other settlements to the north of Godthaab. This design was, however, frustrated by the ice, and not caring to wait until it opened, the captain set sail for home. The voyage was accomplished without hindrance of any kind, and on the thirtieth of May the explorers found themselves once more at Christiania. “Greenland’s icy mountains” had been traversed from east to west, and, thanks to the pluck and endurance of six men, the mystery of the Inland Ice was a mystery no longer.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER NUT TO CRACK.

THOUGH the explorations of Nordenskiöld, Peary, and Nansen had effectually solved the mystery of the Inland Ice, there was still another nut to crack. It was quite clear that in the interior of Greenland there was no habitable land; in fact, there was no land at all, for

“The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around.”

But this question being settled, another puzzle presented itself for solution. What is Greenland? Is it part of a great Polar continent? or is it merely an island? So far no one was prepared with an answer, though in 1882 Lieutenant Lockwood and Sergeant Brainard, of the Greely expedition, had reached Cape Washington, a mile or two farther north than Markham's highest point. To that headland the coast-line, though much broken and indented, seemed to be continuous, and had a general north-easterly

direction from Cape Alexander. Beyond Cape Washington no man had yet penetrated, and the secret of the north coast was still safe in King Frost's keeping.

This mystery Lieutenant Peary proposed to investigate. Ever since his trip on the Inland Ice in 1886, the Greenland problem had had a great interest for him, although the necessity of discharging his naval duties prevented him for some years from gratifying his taste for exploration. Meanwhile Nansen and his companions crossed the Inland Ice, and thus divested that particular feat of its attraction for Peary. He determined to turn his attention to the north coast, which was as yet a *terra incognita*, and he aimed at nothing less than to reach, if not surpass, Lockwood and Brainard's highest point, viz., $83^{\circ} 24' N.$ lat.

The result of his own previous journey over the Inland Ice, not to mention Nansen's successful achievement, was to convince the lieutenant that the best way to attain the end he had in view would be to travel on ski or snowshoes over the ice-cap, and not, as most of his predecessors had done, to attempt to force a way either through or over the sea-ice. In order to do this, it would be desirable to begin the overland journey from the most northern point to which a ship could convey the expedition; and, as the early summer is the best time for travelling over the

ice, it would be necessary to spend the preceding winter on the spot which might be selected as the starting-point of the land journey. Means of returning to America must also be provided, as there was no chance of a casual vessel making its appearance so far north; and, besides all the stores, instruments, etc., usually taken by Polar explorers, timber to build a house for winter quarters would be a necessary item of the equipment.

All these requirements represented a large sum of money. Peary was quite willing to throw his own capital into the undertaking, but this would not suffice, and it was useless to hope for aid from Government while the tragic fate of the Greely expedition was still fresh in men's minds. Two or three relief parties had failed to reach the unfortunate explorers, and they endeavoured to retreat in their boats, hoping to find a vessel awaiting them in Smith Sound. Here again they were disappointed, and they had no choice but to camp for the winter near Cape Sabine, on the western shore of Smith Strait. Their stores by this time were at a terribly low ebb, and though they found a cache of provisions which Nares had left in 1875, it was too small to supply their needs. One by one the poor fellows died of cold and hunger, and when at last relief arrived in the spring of 1884, of twenty-three men who had set out in full strength

and vigour, only Greely and six others—mere shadows of men—were found by the search-party, barely alive among the unburied bodies of their dead comrades.

It is not wonderful that the Government should have been unwilling to send another exploring party to the latitude—almost to the spot—where such a terrible disaster had so recently occurred; neither is it surprising that they should have declined to spend public money in promoting an expedition in any way. Peary had, therefore, to rely for what help was necessary on private enterprise, and on the generosity of scientific bodies such as the American Geographical Society of New York and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. These showed themselves worthy of the trust reposed in them, and the Academy, especially, gave such substantial support that the expedition was to a great extent fitted out under its auspices. Government, too, was so far propitious to the undertaking that Peary had no difficulty in obtaining the required leave.

Matters being thus put in train, the lieutenant set about making definite arrangements. The Academy, as its share, was to charter a steamer to convey Peary, his party, and his stores of every description to Whale Sound, or Inglefield Gulf, and there land them in as good a position as could be found. The same steamer was also to convey another scientific exploring party,

who, on the return voyage down the west coast, would make all possible investigations and observations, and obtain as many useful and interesting specimens—botanical, geological, and zoological—as possible. Peary was to provide his own party with provisions for eighteen months, and also with the means of returning to civilization. A stock of coal from the ship's stores was to be left with him, and he was also provided with materials for a house, two large whale-boats, clothing, scientific instruments, hunting paraphernalia, etc.

Probably, in the matter of stores, all Arctic expeditions have a family resemblance to one another, and the difference between them lies rather in the amount taken than in the items of which the said amount is composed. For instance, Nansen had to provision his party for a couple of months only, and as during most, if not all of that time, they were on the move, he could take only what was easily portable. Peary, on the other hand, had to reckon for an absence of eighteen months, a large portion of which would be spent in winter quarters close to the spot where his party disembarked. Not only, therefore, did he require a much larger total amount, but as most of the provisions would be consumed where they were landed, weight became a matter of little importance, and luxuries as well as necessities were included

among the stores. A stock of pemmican of course was ordered—what Arctic expedition would be completely equipped without it? In addition to it, Peary laid in an abundant supply of tinned goods of every description, bacon, flour, hominy, sugar, and a large assortment of miscellaneous edibles, for a varied diet, including plenty of vegetables, is the best possible preventive of scurvy. Spirits also were not tabooed, though tea, coffee, and chocolate were the drinkables ordinarily used by the expedition.

The matter of clothing was another important consideration. Lieutenant Peary was of opinion that the only material suitable to the work which lay before the expedition was fur—not the expensive kinds which look so attractive in the furriers' windows, but such as are used by the Eskimos themselves; for example, reindeer-skin, dog-skin, and rough seal-skin. These could be procured in Greenland, as well as, if not better than, in America; so on first starting no special preparations in this line were made, but each person took what garments he chose.

Peary's companions were six in number. First and foremost was his wife: they had been married less than three years, and Mrs. Peary, who was strong and active, saw no reason for staying at home while her husband went forth on his perilous journey. The other members of the party were Langdon Gibson,

who acted in many ways as the lieutenant's chief assistant; John M. Verhoeff, mineralogist and meteorologist to the expedition; Dr. F. A. Cook, who was appointed surgeon; Eivard Astrup, a young Norwegian, whose proficiency as a skiløber constituted a qualification for a place on the staff; and Matthew Henson, a coloured man who had been for some time in Peary's service, and had once or twice accompanied him on exploring excursions. Jack and Frank, two fine Newfoundland dogs, completed the party, and were, throughout, most agreeable companions to the human members of the expedition.

CHAPTER XII.

“NORTHWARD AYE WE SPED.”

AT length all the arrangements were completed, and on the sixth of June 1891, the whaler *Kite*, which had been chartered for the benefit of the two expeditions, steamed out of New York harbour amid the hearty cheers of a considerable crowd who had assembled to see the explorers off, and bid them God-speed on their journey. The *Kite* was a stout little vessel, specially constructed for Arctic service, and strong out of all proportion to her size—a most desirable qualification for a vessel which in a few weeks' time would be pitted, single handed, against a squadron of King Frost's ice-floes. She was, too, in good hands, for her officers were all experienced ice-sailors, and her captain, Richard Pike, had commanded the *Proteus* when she conveyed the Greely expedition to their headquarters in 1881. Two years later he took a relief-party northward in the same vessel, but before they reached their destination the

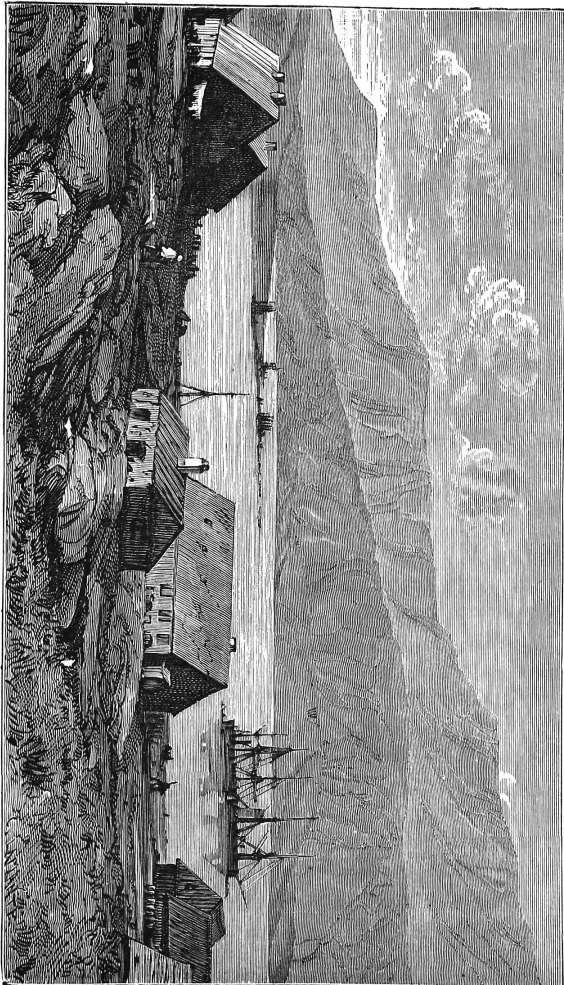
unlucky *Proteus* was crushed by the ice, and her crew and passengers had to make their way in open boats to Upernavik, a distance of 600 miles. It was a terrible journey, for very often the boats had to be unloaded and dragged, perhaps for miles, over rough ice, and then, before they could be again launched, the weary men had to tramp back to fetch the stores which they could not drag in the boats. Once, after a long day's work, they camped for the night on an iceberg, but they had hardly settled down when the berg showed signs of breaking up. Tired as they were, there was nothing for it but to load up the boats and start again in search of a safer resting-place. After such adventures it was probable that what Captain Pike did not know about the ways of ice was hardly worth the trouble of learning, and he was quite willing to teach his “boys,” as he called the younger members of the expeditions, whatever he thought might be useful to them.

The first stopping-place was Sydney, on Cape Breton Island, where the *Kite* filled not only her bunkers and hold, but also every available space on deck, with coal. This did not add to the present comfort of her passengers, but the members of the North Greenland expedition, at all events, had no right to object, as most of this extra supply was shipped for their future benefit.

Two or three days after leaving Sydney a few innocent-looking pieces of ice floated past the ship. They were the forerunners of a heavy pack which, under cover of a thick fog, was bearing down upon the *Kite*, and soon surrounded her, holding her fast until the wind went round to the south and, for a time, carried ice and ship northwards together. A few days later a heavy gale knocked the vessel about considerably, and so much damaged the cook's galley that, until it was repaired, no cooking could be done: under these circumstances it was, perhaps, not unfortunate that most of the passengers were too seasick to have any desire to eat.

Towards evening on the twenty-third of June the Greenland coast was sighted in the distance, and three or four days later the *Kite* dropped anchor at Godhavn, the chief Danish settlement in North Greenland. This was, to most of the party, their first experience of Greenland life and ways, and they carried away most pleasant reminiscences of the kindness and hospitality of the Danish officials.

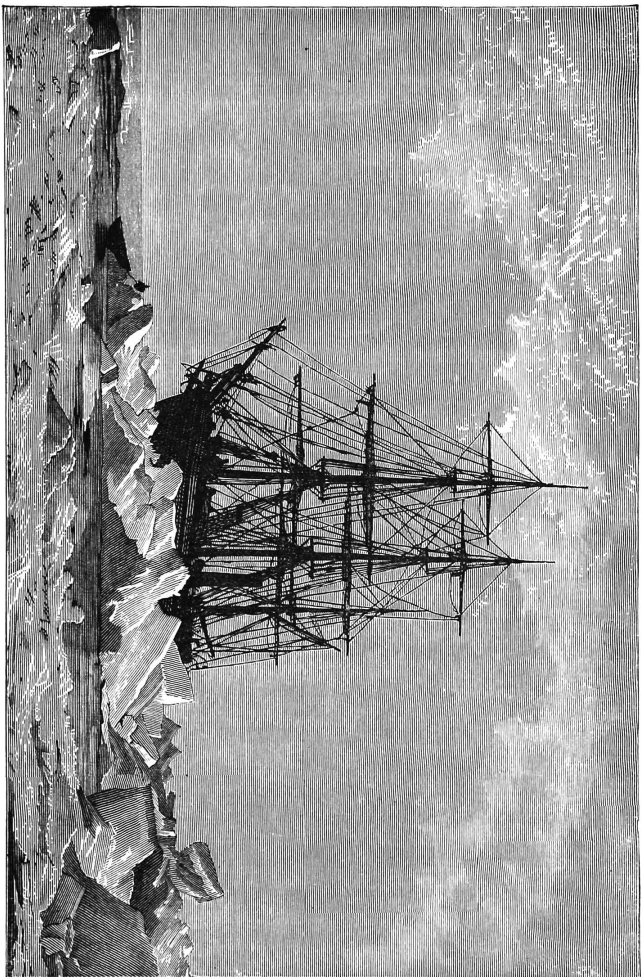
One Arctic voyage is very much like another: now open water and rapid progress raise the hopes of the crew to the highest pitch, but very soon all is changed and hopes are dashed, for ice blocks the way and the advance has become a full stop. Of such ups and downs the *Kite* met with her full share,



GODHAVN.

and though she reached Upernavik without difficulty, shortly after leaving that somewhat dreary outpost of civilization she was again gripped by the ice and held fast. Having freed herself, she forced her way onward for a few miles, and thus in alternately advancing and being stopped several days passed, rather slowly, it must be confessed, to the eager minds of the explorers. Once or twice a mild attempt at seal-hunting created a slight diversion, and Peary's party found plenty of occupation in getting the timber ready for their house, in order that no time might be lost when once they reached their destination.

Sometimes the movements of the ice were very erratic. On one occasion the *Kite* had been frozen in immovably for two or three days, without any apparent chance of getting free for many days to come, when some one chanced to look over the side. Much to his surprise the ice had given way and the ship was once more afloat, and contrived to advance several miles before she was again stopped. One evening while the *Kite* was thus battling with the ice, Mr. and Mrs. Peary went on deck to watch the progress of the vessel. They stood for some time on the bridge, and then, saying he wanted to warm his feet, the lieutenant went below. In a few minutes he came up again and, as he passed the wheel, stopped



GRIPPED BY THE ICE.

for a few seconds behind the wheel-house. While he stood there a block of ice struck the rudder with such force that the wheel was dashed from the hands of the steersmen, and Peary's leg, being caught by the rudder chains, was crushed against the wheel-house. One of the men at the wheel at once went to his assistance, and Mrs. Peary, guessing that some accident had happened, almost flew from the bridge to her husband's side. He was still standing on one foot, and cheerily told her not to be alarmed, but his face was as white as death, and she saw that he was seriously hurt.

By this time some of the others had arrived on the scene, and, as the injured man could not walk, Gibson and the surgeon of the West Greenland expedition carried him into the cabin, laid him on the table, and having given him some brandy, proceeded to examine his leg. Both bones were broken between the knee and the ankle, but fortunately the fracture was not in any way complicated. It was quickly set, and the damaged limb laid in a box, well padded round with cotton in order to protect it from further harm.

Such an accident to the leader of the expedition was most disheartening, and some of the party wished to postpone the journey for a year, but Peary refused to hear of anything of the sort. For the time he was, he admitted, disabled, but as the journey over

the ice was not to be attempted until the spring, he had the whole winter before him in which to recover; he felt certain, he said, that his leg would be as strong as ever before the days were long enough for traveling. In this opinion his doctor concurred, declaring the patient would be quite well in six months, so there was no more to be said, and the *Kite* proceeded on her way.

Three or four days after this accident she narrowly escaped a severe nip, but the crew went to work so coolly, that it was not until the captain afterwards pointed out the masses of ice piled higgledy-piggledy in the spot lately occupied by the vessel that the passengers realized the danger they had so narrowly escaped. In fact, but for the coolness and ready resource of the sailors, the vessel must have been doomed. As soon as a sign of danger appeared, the men leaped on to the ice armed with beams and crowbars, and, shoving with all their might, endeavoured to force a passage. But the floes were too heavy to be moved so easily, and finding that no amount of shoving made the slightest difference to them, the captain set some of the crew to drill holes in the ice, while others prepared a novel form of cartridge by filling bottles with gunpowder and attaching to them safety-fuses. These explosives were placed in the holes cut for them, and, after one

or two unsuccessful attempts, enough of the ice was blown up to free the *Kite* from her perilous position.

Notwithstanding the vagaries of the ice-pack, and the small reliance to be placed on its movements, there was clearly no immediate chance of getting on, so several of the company went out to shoot guillemots. At this season the Arctic midnight was as light as midday, so there was no occasion for hurry, and the excursion was prolonged to a late hour. At ten o'clock the sportsmen had not returned, but the rest of the party were sitting cosily in the cabin, when the door opened quickly and one of the sailors looked in. He only said "Bear!" but the proverbial "word to the wise" was enough; rifles were snatched up, and in less than no time the cabin was empty. When its late occupants reached the deck, the bear was about three hundred yards from the ship; his curiosity was evidently at work, and he seemed bent on making closer acquaintance with this new and, to him, unknown variety of sea-monster. Little did he guess the reception that awaited him, for the men were crouching on the deck and only the muzzles of the rifles showed over the bulwarks.

Nearer and nearer came the bear; more and more excited grew the owners of the rifles, but still no one fired, for it had been agreed that until the captain gave the signal they should "play 'possum" and show



THE DEAD POLAR BEAR.

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no sign of life. Thus unmolested, the bear came within fifty yards and was still advancing, when one of the guillemot shooters chanced to fire. He was at some distance, but the sound alarmed the bear, and he sat up on his haunches to listen better. The watchers on board could no longer resist the temptation to fire; first one rifle-shot rang out, and then a whole volley sounded. Poor Bruin was evidently hit hard: he staggered and fell, and for a few moments lay motionless on the ice. His slayers, delighted at their prowess, rushed towards him; but he was not dead yet, and though his shoulder seemed to be broken, and he was otherwise severely wounded, the monarch of the north had no intention of being captured. Stumbling and often falling, he made off towards the water, his pursuers firing wildly, until, when he had almost reached the water's edge, one shot, better aimed than the rest, laid him lifeless on the ice. He was a magnificent fellow, more than seven feet in length, with thick, long, yellowish-white fur, and formidable claws and teeth, which would have made it most unpleasant to come to close quarters with him, except on more friendly terms than are usual where his race and mankind are concerned. But an ignominious fate awaited him, for he was promptly cut up and added to Peary's winter store of provisions. Two days later, when the *Kite* was

once more free, three bears were seen, and might have been captured had it not been necessary to approach them from windward. The sight of the ship in no way alarmed them, but the smell was a different matter, and evidently warned them of danger, for as soon as the breeze carried a whiff of civilization towards them, they fled so hurriedly that pursuit was useless.

About one hundred and sixty miles from Whale Sound the *Kite* was again stopped by ice. Matters began to look serious, for the season was fast advancing, and it would soon be necessary for the ship to turn her head southwards if she were to get home that year. It even became doubtful whether it would be possible to reach Whale Sound at all, and if not, what was to be done? The *Kite* was now lying about ten miles from land in the neighbourhood of Cape York, and the intervening ice was so rough and broken that to convey either Peary or the stores to land would be very difficult, if not quite impracticable. Moreover, even supposing that these next-to-impossible operations were successfully accomplished, the headquarters would have to be located about one hundred and sixty miles farther south than had been intended, which would entail an addition of more than three hundred miles to the spring sledging journeys. Taking all these drawbacks into considera-

tion, the idea could not be entertained, and it was a great relief to everybody when, after remaining obdurate for four days, the ice suddenly broke up. Steam was at once got up, and though there was plenty of ice floating about, the *Kite* made such good progress that that same evening she reached the long-desired goal.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEW NEIGHBOURS.

WHALE SOUND, to which with so much difficulty the *Kite* had at last made her way, is the southern entrance of Inglefield Gulf, a large arm of the sea, at whose mouth is a group of three islands known as Northumberland Island, Herbert Island, and Hakluyt Island. When the *Kite* arrived the sound was comparatively clear of ice, so Captain Pike determined to pass inside the islands, and endeavour by this means to reach the northern shore of the gulf, where Peary wished to locate his camp. It was reported, too, that somewhere on the shore of the sound there was an Eskimo village, probably the most northern settlement in the world, and therefore very interesting to the explorers. Its exact locality was not known, and as Captain Pike found that his charts were not by any means to be trusted, he had to feel his way carefully lest the *Kite* should suddenly be found hard and fast on a sandbank or hidden rock.

After proceeding cautiously for several miles, some erections, which appeared to be skin tents, were seen in the distance. Was this the much-desired village? The telescope soon answered the question by revealing moving objects, and soon these were seen to be Eskimos and their dogs, not very many, to be sure, but they were interesting, and the *Kite* drew nearer and nearer, feeling her way cautiously for fear of hidden dangers. When she was about a mile from the village Captain Pike thought it well not to venture any nearer to the shore, and he ordered out a boat for the benefit of those who wished to visit the settlement. It was situated at a little distance from the water, and seemed to be approachable only from one side, where a steep rocky slope served as a landing-place. Only twelve natives, five of whom were children, were to be seen, and the visitors came to the conclusion that they had been left in charge while the rest of the tribe were absent on their summer hunting excursions. This seemed likely, because, though there were only three skin tents, close at hand were more than a dozen huts built of earth and stones, which were evidently the winter residences of the tribe.

So far, all was merely conjecture, resulting from the mental operation called putting two and two together, for conversation in an unknown tongue was manifestly impossible. The natives were, however, delighted to

see their visitors, one of whom caused great excitement by smoking a pipe. The natives had never seen such a wonderful sight before, and the clouds puffed out by the smoker were a great puzzle to them. Whalers rarely go so far north, and even if they do they have no occasion to explore the inland gulfs, so it was quite probable that these Eskimos now saw white men for the first time in their lives. A visit to the tents confirmed the new-comers in this impression; for, with the exception of the iron end of a boathook, a thimble, and a few other odds and ends of metal, there was nothing to be seen which the most lively imagination could suppose to be of other than native manufacture. Paddles, sledges, and harpoons were made of pieces of wood and bone ingeniously lashed together, and great was the delight of the Eskimos when it was found that these wonderful white men would barter such desirable articles as needles, knives, hatchets, saws, files, and pieces of wood for reindeer-skins, walrus tusks, sledges, etc.; and the rate of exchange was, doubtless, satisfactory to both parties.

As far as could be seen, the Eskimos used no vegetable food whatever, nor did it appear that they were in the habit of cooking their food or having any regular meals. When any one was hungry he cut a huge strip of meat from one of the carcasses of seal,

walrus, or narwhal which lay on the ground, and then, holding the dirty mass in his teeth, hacked off mouthful after mouthful, at the imminent risk of his nose, until the strip was consumed. Yet in spite of their miserable surroundings the people seemed happy and intelligent; they were capital mimics, and took special delight in imitating all that their visitors said and did.

A long stay was neither desirable nor possible, but the *Kite* had not proceeded far when ice ahead made it evident that there was to be no admission, even on business, to Inglefield Gulf, so the captain altered his course, and passing between the islands made for the northern side of the gulf. Herbert Island seemed to be quite an attractive spot, and was evidently a favourite resort of the Eskimos, for, though none of the natives were to be seen, some of the explorers went ashore and found a number of stone huts, sledges, fox-traps, and other signs of habitation. The traps were most ingeniously constructed of stone; each was just large enough to contain one fox without allowing him room to turn after he entered. Over the opening a heavy stone was suspended by a thong, to the other end of which the bait was fastened in such a manner that, as soon as it was pulled, the slab would fall and block the entrance.

Desirable as the island in many respects appeared,

Peary considered it necessary to camp on the mainland; and, as Inglefield Gulf was impracticable, he selected as the next best place M'Cormick Bay, which opened out of Murchison Sound, the northern entrance to the gulf. Could he have done as he liked, Peary would have camped on the north shore of the bay, but no suitable spot could be found, and a site was chosen on the somewhat more exposed south side, beneath a lofty cliff of mingled sandstone and basalt. Beyond the cliffs the Inland Ice gleamed white in the sunshine, and without this it might have been difficult for the explorers to believe that they were about eleven degrees north of the Arctic circle, for the ground at the foot of the cliffs was carpeted with flowers.

There was no time to be lost, so the following day, Sunday, the twenty-sixth of July, Peary's men set to work at house-building, and a tent was erected from which the crippled leader could see what was being done. It was warm enough to work in a light costume of shirts and trousers, but, lest the tent should prove unpleasantly cool at night, some oil stoves were provided for warming purposes. On Monday afternoon Mr. Peary was brought ashore, and thenceforth acted as general referee, while Mrs. Peary divided her time between nursing him and packing and unpacking stores.

As the tent was of limited dimensions, as long as the *Kite* remained in the bay, all the party except the Pearys and their coloured servant Matt, slept on board. But this arrangement did not last long, for the men worked so well that in three or four days the stores were landed, and the house was so far advanced that it was needless for the *Kite* to remain, and early on the morning of Thursday, the thirtieth of July, a salute from her guns announced her departure. Shortly afterwards those of Peary's party who had been sleeping on board pulled ashore, and set to work on the roof as light-heartedly as though no hardships, no long, dreary, Arctic winter lay before them. But, lest things should look too rose-coloured, the weather was preparing a little surprise for them, just by way of showing them what might be expected later on. Three or four hours after the *Kite* sailed, all work was stopped by a tremendous storm of wind and rain which swept down from the cliffs. The house was still in a very unfinished state, but part of the roof was on, and as the tent was too small to hold everybody, the "boys" made themselves as comfortable as they could in the unfinished domicile. Comfortable is probably hardly the right word, but they took their misfortunes in a philosophic spirit, and at dinner-time managed to crowd into the tent and make a very satisfactory meal of corned beef,

stewed corn, tomatoes, and baked beans. Certainly one or other had now and again to leave his dinner and refasten a guy rope which the wind had snapped; but these were small discomforts, and did not trouble any one.

The storm continued for about thirty hours, during which nothing could be done. The delay was annoying, but as soon as the weather would allow, the "boys" returned to work with such good-will that by the following morning the house was habitable; and, as it was drier and more comfortable than the tent, the invalid was brought in and placed on a bed improvised from provision boxes and blankets. Doors and windows were not yet in their places, but at all events the party were under cover, and could work, eat, and sleep, with some degree of comfort.

In another week things began to have a more finished appearance, and on the eighth of August, which was Matt's birthday, a general holiday was proclaimed, a feast was provided, and after lunch all except Mr. and Mrs. Peary went out deer-stalking. One of the rules of the expedition was, that each member's birthday should be observed as a festival, and that, as a special treat, the hero of the day should choose his dinner from the best that the stores afforded.

This day was also memorable as the first on which

Mr. Peary left his bed. When he announced his intention of doing so, Mrs. Peary begged him to wait a little longer, but seeing that he had set his heart on getting up, she helped him to dress. The feat was accomplished safely, and then, with the aid of a pair of crutches which had been made for him on board the *Kite*, he hopped carefully into the next room, and even contrived to go to the door to greet the hunters on their return.

It occurred to Peary that if some Eskimos could be induced to come and settle near the camp they would be a most valuable addition to the staff, as the women would probably be expert in the manufacture of fur clothing, while it was only reasonable to suppose that the men would be well up in the mysteries of Arctic hunting. Accordingly, a few days after he began to get about, he sent Gibson, Astrup, Cook, and Verhoeff in one of the boats to the islands, with instructions to bring back, if possible, a native family. Meanwhile he, Mrs. Peary, and Matt, occupied themselves in various ways at the camp, and the injured leg grew daily stronger.

After a week's absence, the boat party returned triumphant, having succeeded in persuading an Eskimo family to come with them. The new-comers were four in number, queer-looking mortals with smooth, round, flat faces, and were all clad in fur and bird-skin gar-

ments. Ikwa, the father, wore a kind of short under-shirt of bird-skins, with the feathers inside, and over this a garment of seal-skin, fur outwards; each of these articles of dress came down to the hips, fitted the body tightly, and was finished off with a close-fitting hood. Seal-skin trousers reaching to the knee, and "kamiks," or boots, also of seal-skin, with long stockings of hare's fur, completed his attire. Mané, his wife, wore similar garments, the chief difference being that Mané's trousers were shorter, and her coat was provided with a sort of pouch in which the baby, whose somewhat unpronounceable name was shortened by the Americans to Noyah, usually resided. The fourth member of the family was Anadore, a girl two and a half years of age, and, as was soon discovered, of a particularly inquiring turn of mind.

Ikwa and Co. had evidently come to stay, for they had brought with them all their property—a dog, a sledge, a tent, a kayak, and various articles required in Eskimo housekeeping. They were much interested in all they saw, and specially in the woollen clothing of the strangers, which they could not be induced to believe was not the skin of some unknown American animal. That clothing could be made of any material but skins was a matter altogether beyond their experience or comprehension. A few trifling presents won their hearts completely, and before long the

whole of the augmented party were on excellent terms with one another, in spite of the difficulty presented by the confusion of tongues, which rendered conversation impossible.

Later in the day the explorers, with the exception of Astrup, went in the whale-boat to see Ikwa cut up a huge walrus which had been killed on the recent excursion. It was wonderful to see with what dexterity he went to work, cutting up the monster with an ordinary pocket-knife so cleverly that he never missed a joint, but divided the whole mass of meat, weighing something like 1,500 lbs., as neatly as though there was not a bone in it. The walrus was then carried home, but as it was too strong-flavoured to suit civilized palates, it was decided that it should be kept for the Eskimos or the dogs, who were better able to appreciate its merits.

Though it was too late in the year to attempt any distant exploration, even had Peary been in condition for the work, the Arctic summer was by no means at an end. In order to save time in the spring, it was therefore arranged that some advanced depots of provisions should be established on the ice-cap, and this work was undertaken by Gibson, Astrup, and Verhoeff. They proposed to ascend to the Inland Ice from the head of M'Cormick Bay, and as some fresh meat would be an agreeable addition to the larder, the rest

of the party, with the exception of Matt, who was told off to mind the house, accompanied them to the head of the bay.

Hardly had the boats reached their destination when Mrs. Peary espied some moving objects, which the telescope proclaimed to be reindeer. Astrup and his rifle were at once landed, but the others went on a little farther, pitched their camp, and provided for the comfort of the still partially disabled leader. But the love of sport was deeply engrained, and before long Mrs. Peary, Dr. Cook, and the Eskimo, Ikwa, set off separately, with more or less intention of joining in the hunt—but whatever their original views might have been, a sight of the herd settled the question. Astrup had got within range, and Mrs. Peary had seen him fire; at first it seemed that he had missed, but in a few seconds one of the deer stumbled, then ran a few yards and fell again. Mrs. Peary pointed this out to Cook, who had joined her, and off they went in pursuit, up hill and down dale, and across at least one stream which they found was considerably deeper than was pleasant. The clearness of the air made it very difficult to guess distance, and nearly an hour passed before the pursuers were near enough to the wounded deer to see that she had beside her a little fawn.

At length they got within range, and Cook, who

had brought his rifle, expended all his ammunition in the vain endeavour to bring down the deer, which was once more in retreat. At length she reached a small lake and took to the water, but being too weak to swim far, she soon attempted to climb out on to the ice at the side. This would not bear her weight, but in one of her endeavours to land she came so close to the shore that Cook was able to catch her by the horns; Mrs. Peary came to his assistance, and in a few minutes the two together, with some difficulty, hauled their prey ashore, and Astrup, who had just before arrived on the scene, ended the victim's misery with a shot from Mrs. Peary's revolver.

The next two days were occupied in conveying the stores from the head of the bay to the ice, and when this was accomplished, and Gibson and his comrades were fairly off, the others returned to headquarters, which, in compliment to the prevailing hue of the rocks, had been named Redcliffe.

After a short absence the Inland Ice party came back, not particularly well pleased with their adventures. Shortly after they started a heavy snowstorm had come on, which made it almost impossible to advance; a mile or so a day was all that could be accomplished, and then, to make matters worse, Verhoeff's face was frost-bitten. Under such adverse circumstances discretion was voted the better part of

valour, and the explorers turned their steps homewards.

A few days afterwards Astrup and Gibson made another attempt on the ice, while the others, with the exception of Verhoeff, who was left in charge at Redcliffe, set out on a boat trip to Inglefield Gulf. Before long their progress was barred by ice, but a number of walrus were sunning themselves on the floes, and Mr. Peary suggested that it might be some consolation to procure a few walrus tusks, which afford valuable ivory. The boat accordingly was steered towards a small floe, on which about fifteen of the monsters lay asleep, but Peary, who should have been taking charge, was so busy with his camera that he forgot everything else until the boat dashed up on to the floe among the startled walrus, which sprang headlong into the water. Quick as they were, Ikwa was quicker; he succeeded in harpooning one of the huge brutes, and in a few seconds the boat was once more afloat, towed rapidly along by the walrus. Then up came a head garnished with savage-looking tusks—then another, and another, till there were at least two hundred and fifty walrus in fairly close quarters, plunging, diving, and reappearing in every direction, while the boat was in the greatest danger of being upset or swamped. The beasts meant mischief, but the steady fire from the rifles held them in

check, and finally the boat got clear. The hunt had been an exciting one, though less productive of ivory than could have been wished, for only four heads were secured, many others having been sunk by their own weight before they could be hauled into the boat.

Before leaving the gulf Ikwa treated his new friends to a delightful specimen of Eskimo habits. He had been out for an hour or two, and on his return announced that he had discovered a remarkably fine cached seal—might he take it back, he asked, in the boat to Redcliffe? Peary wondered what its special attraction could be, but he gave permission, and Ikwa went off in high glee. Presently a horrible stench diffused itself through the air—it got worse and worse, and on going out to discover the cause Peary met Ikwa coming back with the seal, from which emanated a most aggressively “gamey” odour. That seal had been cached to some purpose; it was positively alive with maggots, and Mr. Peary promptly refused to have anything whatever to do with it. Ikwa sulked; it was very annoying to be deprived of the expected delicacy, which, to his mind, was just at perfection, and he could not understand how anybody could possibly object to the odour. Sulking, however, had no effect: Peary remained obdurate, and they started on the homeward voyage minus the too odoriferous delicacy.

CHAPTER XIV.

WINTER QUARTERS.

BY the end of September the approach of winter began to make itself felt. The days were rapidly shortening, and all attempts at exploration had to be given up until spring should appear; but things looked encouraging, for Mr. Peary was able to discard his crutches, and, though rather lame, was on his feet from morning till night. He, as well as the others, was busily engaged in preparing for winter, and the house began to assume a very cosy, homelike appearance. It was divided into two rooms, the smaller of which was sacred to the Pearys; the other served the manifold uses of living-room, work-room, dining-room, and kitchen during the day, and at night became the "boys'" sleeping apartment, their bunks being placed along the wall. The rest of the furniture consisted of a table, a few chairs, and a bookshelf. As an extra protection against cold, the wooden walls were sheathed inside and outside with several layers of tarred paper,

and a further inside coating of heavy cardboard covered with red blanketing added considerably to the warmth and comfort of the establishment. A stove in the partition wall was supposed to heat both apartments, and did so successfully whenever Verhoeff, who was appointed stoker, was sufficiently liberal with his fuel to allow the stove to perform its duties properly.

As boating was at an end for the season, the boats were brought up, and a new use was found for them, one being turned into a house for the two Newfoundland dogs, Jack and Frank, and the other made to serve as a storehouse for sundry goods which were put aside in case the party might have to make their way to Upernavik in their own boats.

Household arrangements being completed, the amateur carpenters went to work at sledge-building. They had hoped to get both sledges and dogs from the Danish settlements, but this hope had come to nought, so there was nothing for it but to build sledges, and get dogs, a few at a time, from the Eskimos. Jack and Frank also were put into harness, but the work was not much to their taste, though after a little practice they did pretty well. One or two short sledge trips were made during the autumn in search of game; but every day the sun sank lower, until, on the twenty-sixth of October, he made his last appearance

for the season. The darkness was not yet complete, for every day there were several hours of twilight. Indoors, lamps did their best to make up for the absence of the sun ; one, in particular, was so brilliant, that the natives usually styled it the little sun.

Eskimo visitors by this time were pretty frequent, and on the last day of October a family arrived who said that their settlement lay two days' journey to the north, and was the most northern habitation in Greenland. They had come to Redcliffe to stay, and for a small consideration were quite willing to make themselves useful. Tailoring now went on merrily, for a good stock of skins had been obtained, and the women set to work in the most approved Eskimo style, invariably taking off kamiks and stockings, and using their feet to hold their work.

The skins, when first dried, were hard and imperfectly cleansed, so, to remedy these defects, the women chewed them all over ; this was very hard work, and the best chewers could only manage two skins a day. When well chewed the skins were again dried, and then scraped with a blunt instrument, which softened without cutting them, and being thus rendered completely pliable, they were fit to be made up into garments. The sinews of the deer or seal served as thread, being split up as required, and softened by the chewing process.

With the disappearance of the sun, the party settled down to the winter routine. One way and another they found plenty to do: there was the household work, and the necessity of fetching in ice to melt for water; carpentering, sledge-making, and ski-making, and a variety of other jobs which kept all hands happily and usefully employed. Daily outdoor exercise was the rule, and walks, with or without snowshoes, were only neglected in the worst weather, and were quite enjoyable when the full moon—which in the Arctic regions does not set—lighted up the ice with the brightness of day: at other times the stars did their best to supply the place of the greater lights, and shone far more brilliantly than they are in the habit of doing elsewhere.

Thus time wore on until Christmas was at hand, and a general holiday was proclaimed. The house was decorated in the most artistic manner the ingenuity of its inmates could devise, and a feast was prepared of the best which the stores afforded. The jollification began on Christmas Eve with a bowl of punch, and cakes and fruit *ad lib.*; the little gifts which the members of the expedition had made for one another were presented, and sundry parcels provided for the occasion by friends at home were duly opened.

Then came the Christmas feast, which was quite a grand affair, including all sorts of luxuries, from green

peas to plum-pudding, and from tinned salmon to raisins. To add to the style of the thing, a specially-designed menu-card was placed by Astrup at each seat. The meal was a long and merry one, and as soon as it was over the table was cleared, and a spread was set out for the Eskimos, who, for once, were to be treated to a real civilized meal eaten in the white men's manner. Like their brethren in Whale Sound, they were accomplished mimics, and as most of them had seen the explorers at meals, they acquitted themselves very well, and seemed heartily to enjoy the novelty.

The holiday continued during the week, and on New-Year's Eve Mrs. Peary gave a reception in fashionable style. Cards of invitation were issued, best clothes were donned, and though the guests had to bring their own chairs, and the reception-room was the hosts' sleeping apartment, these details added to the fun, and a very happy evening was spent. The next day the "boys" held some sports among themselves, and the natives were provided with the materials for another feast, which this time they were left to enjoy in their own fashion. This ended the festivities, and the usual routine was resumed.

At the beginning of January signs of reappearing daylight began to show themselves, and by the seventeenth the light had increased so much that ordinary

print could be read at mid-day. The frost, however, continued as intense as ever: there was no likelihood that that would change much until the return of the sun overpowered it. The lowest reading of the thermometer at Redcliffe was 53° below zero, but on the cliffs above, where Verhoeff kept a self-registering thermometer, the minimum record was 24° below zero.

Pleasantly as winter had passed, no one was sorry when it ended. Yet the explorers had little cause for complaint, for, though returning daylight showed some rather white faces, the only illness during the darkness had been a slight attack of influenza which laid Matt by the heels for a day or two.

The fifteenth of February was the day on which, according to the almanac, the sun would for the first time show himself, and preparations were made to welcome him with due honour. As he would be first visible from the cliffs above the camp, Mr. Peary invited the whole party to picnic on the heights, where Gibson and Verhoeff constructed a snow-house for the accommodation of their friends. For one reason and another, however, Mrs. Peary and some of the others declined the invitation, electing to remain at Redcliffe, and let the sun come to them at his leisure. The picnic party was thus reduced to the lieutenant, Astrup, and Cook, who set out early on the morning



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of the fourteenth, taking with them their sleeping-bags and provisions for a couple of days.

The expedition can hardly have been one of unmixed bliss, for, a few hours after the picnic party left the house, a violent gale began to blow, and brought with it rain and wet snow, while a rapid thaw set in. At Redcliffe, the Eskimos were forced to leave their igloo, or snow-house; and at the camp itself, the snow melted so fast that it poured through the walls and soaked everything. Gibson and Matt climbed on to the roof to shovel off the snow, but they were almost carried off their feet by the wind, and in a few minutes were soaked to the skin. For about thirty-six hours the storm continued, but the sixteenth was a glorious sunny day, with soft, balmy air and a blue sky, which shaded off at sunset into all manner of beautiful tints. Nature had put on its most innocent face, and no one looking at it could possibly suppose it guilty of the uproarious conduct of the preceding day. Appearances are often deceitful.

Two or three days afterwards the doctor and Astrup, accompanied by Jack, went up the cliffs, intending to return in time for supper. Supper-time arrived—not so the walking party, so their supper was put aside for them, and for some time their non-arrival caused no uneasiness. Later in the evening some of the Eskimos came in with the news that

there had been a heavy snow-slide down the cliffs, and said that, though it was too dark to see much, they had heard Dr. Cook shouting and Jack barking on the heights above. As it was by that time between nine and ten, Peary began to get uneasy, and fearing that an accident might have happened, he and Gibson set out for Cape Cleveland, a headland about two and a half miles distant in the direction of Inglefield Gulf.

Still there was no sign of the wanderers; but on reaching the cape the rescue party saw an alarming sight. An immense quantity of snow had fallen from the cliffs, and in the midst of this a solitary snowshoe was visible, while poor Jack was barking and whining for help in a most pitiful way somewhere on the cliff-side. What could have happened? That Jack was alive was evident, but what about the others? They were making no sign of life—were they dead? or buried in the snow? or frozen? or too much hurt to call for help? Thoroughly alarmed, Peary and Gibson, being unable to do anything in the dark, set out at their best speed to Redcliffe to get further help, and procure lanterns, ropes, sledges, and whatever else might be necessary in order to institute a thorough search.

These preparations took a little time to make, and before they were complete in walked Cook and Astrup, tired out and hungry as hunters, but otherwise none

the worse for their adventures, which, it soon appeared, might easily have had a very unpleasant ending.

On leaving Redcliffe they had gone along the shore to Cape Cleveland, where they arrived about half-past one, and at once started up the cliff, with Jack in close attendance. At first the ascent was steep, and seemed dangerous; then it grew much easier, but, shortly afterwards the climbing became more and more difficult, and the way lay across a number of round stones cased with ice, where it was impossible to cut steps. Looking back, the puzzled climbers saw that, if to advance was difficult, to retreat would be impossible—what was to be done? Here was a fix indeed; and to make matters worse, Astrup at this moment dropped a snowshoe, with which he had been cutting steps in the snow. The doctor had the fellow shoe, and was using it for a similar purpose, but the loss caused considerable delay, and progress became slower than ever now that only one man could work at step-cutting. The result was that, by four o'clock, when it began to get dark, the three were only about half-way up the cliff.

Climbing now was more dangerous than ever, for the ascent was so steep and the ground so slippery that a single false step must have been fatal. Poor Jack could go no farther, and being as unable to get down as to ascend, he began to howl

most pitifully. Yet to stay with him was impossible, and cruel as it seemed to leave the poor dog; the men were forced to go on. Jack's thick coat, they knew, would protect him through the night, and in daylight they could return and rescue him. Of course he did not understand all this, and his mournful cries at finding himself deserted followed the gradually-ascending climbers for a long distance.

The following day an attempt was made to rescue him, but, much to the sorrow of all, it proved unsuccessful. Not one of the party would leave their canine friend to die miserably of cold and hunger, so on the next morning, as soon as the light would allow, Mr. Peary and the doctor again went to work to rescue the poor dog from his perilous position; but luck seemed to be against them, for a high wind and drifting snowstorm further complicated the already difficult business. Peary and Cook, however, were hard to beat; they had determined to succeed, and at length Jack was coaxed and helped down the icy wall, and went joyfully home with his friends.

Shortly after this adventure Mrs. Peary was seized with influenza, that almost ubiquitous disease to which space presents fewer difficulties than to any other known ailment. An ocean more or less seems to be no obstacle whatever to the "agile microbe," as some one appropriately styled it, and people who are isolated

from the world in North Greenland are as liable to its assaults as those who are jostling each other in the crowded streets of cities. Mrs. Peary, fortunately, soon recovered, and in less than a fortnight was about as usual. But the influenza microbe, having come so far to visit the explorers, was not to be disposed of immediately. Its next victim was no less a person than Mr. Peary himself: he had a rather sharp attack, but it soon passed off, and, had he taken proper care of himself, he would soon have been well; this, however, he would not do, and the consequence was a relapse, which left him weak and out of sorts for some time. Then came the doctor's turn, but he, more wisely, gave in at once, and was soon off the sick-list.

CHAPTER XV.

A SLEDGE TRIP IN INGLEFIELD GULF.

IN the course of the winter several dogs were obtained from the natives, and by the beginning of April the canine force consisted, beside Jack and Frank, of ten fine Eskimo dogs all well up to their work. The "king-dog" was a huge, shaggy, white fellow hailing from Cape York. He had attained his supremacy by fighting all the other dogs; and as, in canine as well as in human estimation, might is right, he afterwards held sway, until, in process of time, another yet mightier conqueror arrived and, after a lengthy contest, forced the Cape York hero to take a back seat. This appears to be the universal custom of Eskimo dogs. Every team has its leader, who holds his post by right of conquest, and whenever a new dog is added, he and the king-dog try conclusions. Whoever is vanquished has to take his place ignominiously among the common herd, and submit in all things to the victor's will.

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During the months of March and April several hunting excursions were made by various members of the party, but the first important trip of the season was undertaken by Mr. and Mrs. Peary about the middle of April. Their object was the exploration of the hitherto unknown recesses of Inglefield Gulf, and having made arrangements for a week's absence, they set out on the eighteenth of April with a large sledge drawn by six dogs, and driven by one of their Eskimo friends, whose somewhat lengthy appellation had, for convenience' sake, been curtailed to Kyo.

On leaving Cape Cleveland the dogs were turned to the south-west, the first destination being Herbert Island. Poor fellows, a hard pull lay before them, for half-way across Murchison Sound the snow became soft and slushy, and sometimes they had almost to swim. Fortunately the sledges ran well, and farther on, the ice was so much better that, even when all three of the party rode at the same time, the willing dogs did not seem to be overweighted.

From Herbert Island the explorers crossed to Northumberland Island, where they lighted on an Eskimo settlement consisting of four snow igloos, very conveniently situated for the seal-hunts which, at that time, formed the chief occupation of the men of the community. Though still light, it was now

ten o'clock, so Mr. Peary decided to go no farther that night, especially as the wind had risen to a gale, and the air was full of drifting snow.

One of the Eskimo families kindly invited the visitors to take refuge for the night in the largest igloo, though it had already a good many occupants. Mr. Peary was quite willing to take advantage of the proffered hospitality; but Mrs. Peary's experience of Eskimo habits had not prepossessed her favourably, and she would have preferred to face the evils which she knew in the storm rather than those unknown inside the igloo. Her husband, being less squeamish, went in, and soon returned with a good report. This particular igloo, if not all that a sanitary inspector could desire, was, he said, cleaner than many; and, finally, to please him, Mrs. Peary went down on hands and knees, and crawled on all fours through the low passage which formed an entrance to the igloo. The dwelling, so far as floor, walls, and roof were concerned, was entirely constructed of snow, but all round the walls, except at the entrance, ran a platform, which served the same purposes as the platforms seen by Nansen in the east-coast dwellings.

Cleanliness, like most other things, is, after all, to a great extent, a matter of comparison, but if this igloo was even comparatively clean, a dirty one must have been filthy indeed. Two blubber-stoves gave

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light, warmth, and smoke, and also served to melt snow for drinking purposes. The Eskimos did not use water for anything else, not even for cooking, for they ate their food raw; and a block of frozen walrus-meat, which lay on the floor, served indifferently as a footstool or as food, according to the requirements of the family at the moment.

This charming abode was the only shelter available for the night, so the Americans had no choice but to make the best of it. They seated themselves on the edge of the platform, judiciously keeping as far as possible from a couple of reindeer-skins which took the place of bedding. Sleep was impossible; and when the explorers' kerosene stove added its quota to the already mingled odours of the igloo, the atmosphere became very peculiar, and soon grew too warm for the Eskimos, who forthwith accommodated themselves to the altered temperature, in the orthodox native fashion, by stripping to the skin.

The night passed somehow, and in the morning, the wind having dropped, the travellers went on their way, and about six o'clock reached a place on the southern shore of Whale Sound, where quite a colony of natives was established. Many of them who had been at Redcliffe during the winter greeted the visitors as old acquaintances; but a few, among them some ancient women, almost too feeble to walk alone,

had never seen white people before, and inspected them with the greatest curiosity.

Mr. and Mrs. Peary had intended to camp near the igloos, but the combined odour of train-oil and antique seal-meat which prevailed in that locality was too much for them, and, closely followed by the natives, they returned to the sledge. Supper was soon disposed of, and then, having taken a few photographs, and obtained some furs and a couple of fine dogs from the Eskimos, the explorers pursued their way along the southern shore of the sound.

Though midsummer was still two months off, the sun did not set till nearly midnight, and about two o'clock in the morning, just as the travellers reached their next stopping-place, an Eskimo village called Ittiblu, he reappeared above the cliffs to the eastward. One or two natives came to offer hospitality, but the last night in an igloo had been a caution, so the invitation was politely declined; and tired as they were, the Pearys set to work to build a snow-hut for themselves. The result was not altogether satisfactory, for though clean as heart could wish, the new hut was most horribly cold; and it was unanimously decided that, for the future, the open air would be the pleasantest sleeping place on fine nights.

In due time the explorers reached the head of the gulf, having met with no special adventures or diffi-

culties by the way. Numerous glaciers were passed, some of them very large, but the grandest of all occupied almost the whole of the eastern end of the gulf, and had a frontage of about ten miles. While the explorers were gazing up the mighty ice-stream to the yet mightier ice-cap in which it originated, a huge mass became detached from its face and thundered down on to the thick ice of the gulf below, crashing through it with a roar and commotion which considerably alarmed the dogs, and evoked a chorus of yelps.

In accordance with their recent agreement, the travellers made no attempt to build a hut, and at bedtime they merely selected a sheltered nook on the lower part of the ice-foot, crawled into their sleeping bags, and soon were deep in slumber. Meanwhile, the tide was rising, and in a few hours it reached the sleepers, soaked Mr. Peary's clothes, which were doing duty as a pillow, and then making its way inside his bag, unceremoniously awoke him. He at once grasped the situation, and, wriggling out, went to his wife's assistance. Her bag was waterproof, and she knew nothing of what was going on until she was roused by feeling her bag raised, and by a voice telling her to stand up, as the tide had risen above the ice. Luckily for herself, her clothes were inside her bag, and had therefore escaped the drenching which had befallen her husband's garments.

A day or two after this rather uncomfortable episode, the homeward journey began, and was accomplished without adventure. Redcliffe was reached on the evening of Sunday, the twenty-fourth of April; and the returning travellers had the satisfaction of finding not only that all were well, but also that a number of Eskimos had arrived, who, for the handsome remuneration of a couple of needles apiece, had set to work at tailoring for the party, and had turned out a good assortment of fur-clothing; that is to say, the women had thus made themselves useful, while the men, not to be outdone, brought in a noble supply of seal-meat for the dogs. These were fed entirely on meat—many Eskimo dogs will eat nothing else—and now that their numbers were so greatly augmented, they required a good deal to keep them in condition.

Altogether, there was reason to be well pleased. Some good geographical work had been done, new ground had been gone over, and with the first-rate team of dogs which the explorers now possessed, there was every prospect of successfully carrying out the great northern journey. This was the main object of the expedition, and Peary proposed to start as soon as he could complete his preparations.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TROUBLESOME TEAM.

THE following week passed in a delightful bustle. There were a hundred and one preparations to be made at the last moment, and all hands were busy from morning till night. As soon as one thing was finished something else needed attention. Sledges and ski had to be carefully inspected and touched up, stores to be packed and transported from Redcliffe to Tuctu Valley at the head of the bay, where a depot had already been established. Finally Gibson, Astrup, Cook, and Matt betook themselves to the valley, and occupied themselves for some days in advancing the stores to the edge of the ice. In this work the Eskimos lent a helping hand, but it was not an employment by any means to their taste, more especially as they firmly believed that the white chief was going to certain destruction at the hands, or rather the jaws, of Korkoya, the terrible demon of the ice-cap, who was popularly supposed to devour every one foolhardy enough to trespass on his domain.

Even without this alarm the work was sufficiently disagreeable, for the ground was too rough and broken for the sledges to be of much use, and everything had to be carried. More toilsome work could not have been easily found; but as it could not be helped, the men made the best of it, and cheerfully shouldered load after load.

It was necessary that some one should remain in charge at headquarters, and for this duty Mrs. Peary and Verhoeff were detailed. The latter promised also to continue the various scientific observations in which he had been engaged during the winter, and Mrs. Peary undertook to overhaul the stores, and put everything in readiness to be packed for the homeward journey.

The lieutenant stayed at Redcliffe until all was ready, and it was not until the morning of the third of May that he set out, taking with him a large dog-sledge driven by Matt, who had returned to fetch sundry forgotten articles. Mrs. Peary also accompanied him for a few miles, and then the two bade each other good-bye, and went their several ways, the wife to her charge at headquarters, the husband to brave the unknown dangers of the hitherto untrodden icy waste.

After several hours' hard travelling Mr. Peary and Matt reached the camp, where, finding their comrades wrapped in slumber—it was about three

o'clock in the morning—they joined the sleepers, and some time afterwards awoke refreshed, and ready for the work which lay before them. Their first task was to haul sledges and stores up on to the ice, and a terribly difficult job it was; but again perseverance conquered, and at length men, dogs, sledges, and stores were safely landed on the ice-cap. The weather looked anything but propitious, for the sky was black and lowering, but this in no way alarmed Peary. Once or twice before, when he had been starting for a short trip on the ice, the weather looked equally threatening, but nothing had come of it, and he saw no reason why he should not be equally fortunate this time.

The ascent of the ice and the loading of the sledges occupied two days, and then, having duly harnessed the dogs, Peary strode off ahead, setting the course as best he could, sometimes by the aid of a compass, sometimes by the time and the direction of the shadow cast by his walking-staff. Close to his heels came Gibson with a team and sledge, then Cook similarly accompanied, and, last of all, Astrup in charge of two sledges, one towed behind the other. This arrangement was necessary, as very soon after the journey began Matt's heel was frost-bitten, and became so troublesome that he was forced to go back to Redcliffe.

At first, in spite of various short excursions made during the spring, dog-driving was not at all an easy matter. The Americans were, naturally, quite unused to this mode of travelling. They did not understand the dogs, and the dogs did not understand them, and in consequence considerable confusion prevailed. Moreover, the creatures possessed a peculiar talent for entangling their harness, and they conducted themselves generally as though their mission in life was to verify the statement that

“Dogs delight to bark and bite.”

Occasionally they broke loose altogether, and then a wild chase ensued, which frequently resulted in one or two of the men being severely bitten by the errant dogs. During the first part of the journey, before the dogs had worked off their superfluous energy, this not unfrequently happened when the party halted, and much ingenuity was expended in recapturing the wanderers. A tempting morsel of food served as a bait, and while this was being devoured the unwary dog was seized, his head buried in the snow to check his biting propensities, and his drag-line once more made fast. Sometimes all blandishments were in vain, and the dogs had to be lassoed and half-choked before they could be secured. After a time, however, they settled down to their work, and a better understand-

ing between them and their masters was established.

On the second day of the journey over the ice a strong gale from the interior made progress very difficult and disagreeable, owing to the sharp fragments of ice picked up by the wind and driven against the faces of the explorers. For a time they struggled on, but at last they could stand it no longer, and were fain to halt and build igloos to shelter them from the icy storm. The igloos, however, were a doubtful benefit, for they proved to be so cold that, after twenty-four hours in one of them, Peary and Gibson could endure no more. They made their way out, and, having warmed themselves somewhat by exercise, went to look for Cook and Astrup, who occupied another igloo a little farther on. Had it not been for the sledge there might have been some difficulty in finding them, for the drifting snow had almost buried the igloo, and its occupants were unable to get out without assistance. The next thing was to disinter the sledges—a work of time, for the drifts had buried the loads completely. Then the dogs had to be caught and damages repaired, for, not content with breaking loose, the unruly teams had chawed up their harness, and devoured every particle of food which they could find. An insatiable appetite was one of the charms of the Eskimo “bow-wow.” He



A ROUGH JOURNEY.

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would eat anything and everything, from harness to jam.

All these hindrances and drawbacks were very annoying, especially as, at this part of the journey, the ice was very rough, and the travelling exceedingly bad. To make matters worse, several of the dogs fell ill and died. Their disease was an unknown one, apparently peculiar to the country, and nothing could be done for them, though other Arctic explorers had lost their dogs in a similar way. Up to the time of leaving Redcliffe the dogs had been in splendid condition, but soon after the ice journey began this mysterious disease made its appearance, and carried off a number of victims.

On the twenty-first of May the expedition camped on the edge of the Humboldt Glacier. This was the limit fixed for the supporting party, and a council was held to arrange plans and determine who should go on and who return. Peary told his comrades that he had made up his mind to take only one companion with him, and saying that they had now seen enough of the work to understand its nature and the difficulties which might be expected, he asked who would volunteer to go forward with him. All three eagerly responded—all wanted to go. Peary was therefore very much where he was before, and had to make a selection. This might seem a somewhat invidious

task, but there was no help for it, and Gibson and Cook were too generous to feel anything like jealousy when Astrup, who was an expert skilöber, was selected for the coveted post. Peary took with him also thirteen dogs and three sledges. Five dogs had died, so only two were left to accompany the returning party; but as they only took one sledge with provisions for the journey, this number sufficed. On account of the death of the dogs, and for other reasons, four sledges had already been abandoned. The next business was to overhaul the sledges after the rough usage to which they had been subjected, and rearrange the loads. This was finished the next morning, and then Gibson and Cook wished their friends good-bye and good luck, and set out on their homeward journey. They reached Redcliffe without adventure, and found all well. Nothing particular had happened, and work and recreation had gone on much the same as in the earlier part of the spring. The chief difference noticeable was that a good deal of snow had disappeared, and given place to grass, while thousands of birds brought new life into the scene—in fact, all nature seemed to be awakening from its winter sleep.

Meanwhile Peary and Astrup were pursuing a north-easterly course over the ice-cap. They generally marched during what would elsewhere have

been the night, using ski or snowshoes, according to the condition of the snow—that is to say, Peary sometimes used snowshoes, for Astrup confined himself throughout to his national footgear. Night was thus literally turned into day, but it was the custom of the two friends to use the ordinary forms of expression and talk about their day's work and their night's rest, although, as a matter of fact, the two were usually reversed.

The usual daily routine was somewhat after this fashion. The spirit-stove having been lighted, some snow was put in the boiler to melt, and then breakfast—pemmican, biscuits, butter, and tea—was discussed. There was no time to linger over the meal, and as soon as it was finished, the sledge loads were adjusted; and while Astrup completed this job, Peary harnessed the dogs, and removed the muzzles, which, as a security for the harness, they usually wore when not eating or working. They were too destructive to be trusted unmuzzled while their masters were sleeping. Peary also noted the indications of the thermometer, the aneroid, and the odometer, a machine which measured the distance travelled, and then, all being ready, he took his bamboo walking-pole, to which was attached a little silken guidon, the handiwork of Mrs. Peary, and the march began. The lieutenant generally went on ahead to lead the way,

and the dogs, with Astrup in charge, followed him closely.

This division of labour was in reality quite a fair one, for the keeping of a course in that trackless wilderness of snow was a most arduous task, and required unremitting attention and constant reference to charts and compass. In cloudy weather the strain became greater still, for objects even a few yards distant were quite hidden from view, and sometimes even the snow under foot could not be seen. So far as his eyes could guide him, Peary could often have imagined that he was walking on nothing. The light seemed to come from below as much as from above.

After tramping for several hours a halt was called for lunch, at which meal again the staple article was pemmican. The dogs' feeding-time had not yet arrived, but while their masters ate, the poor fellows were glad to stretch themselves on the snow for a rest. Work, however, was not yet done, and in a short time men and dogs were once more on the move, and the march continued as before until bedtime.

When it was time to halt, the explorers' first care was to select a spot where the snow was firm and dry. This done, Peary set up his little flag, and called the dogs, who soon learned that this was the

preliminary of supper; and, joyfully pricking up their ears, hurried forward with their loads to his feet. Now came a busy time for the two men. Peary's first duty was to take the readings of the aneroid, thermometer, and odometer, and when these were duly noted, as much as was necessary of the sledge loads was unlashed, and Astrup, the architect and builder of the expedition, got out his tools, and set to work to mark out a space on the snow about eight feet long by three feet wide. From this space he then cut out the snow in blocks, which he piled carefully along three sides of his cutting, so as to raise the walls high enough to afford some shelter from the cold wind, of which there never was any lack on the ice-cap. Over the hollow thus formed was stretched a light sail supported by the ski, and held in position by more blocks of snow piled on the walls. It was not exactly a luxurious dwelling, but it sheltered the explorers from the biting wind, and served fairly well as kitchen and sleeping apartment combined.

While Astrup was thus engaged, Peary attended to the wants of the dogs, who certainly had well earned their dinner. Having loosed them from their traces, he first tied them to a strong pole firmly fixed in the snow in front, and in full view, of the tent. On the ice there was, of course, no fresh meat to be had, so the dogs, like their masters, had to content themselves

with pemmican. One pound was the daily allowance for each dog, and having duly weighed out and prepared their food, Peary stood by while it was eaten to see fair play, as otherwise the weaker ones might have fared badly.

By this time the kitchen was ready, and the cook of the day took possession, lighted the spirit-lamp, filled the cooker with snow and set it to boil, while his comrade, in order to leave the coast clear, retired modestly to the lee of the sledge. As soon as the water boiled, some pea-soup was made, a couple of lumps of pemmican were got out, and dinner was announced. The first course was washed down with a cup of preserved milk; but meanwhile another potful of snow had been put on the stove to melt, and by the time the pemmican was finished, the second edition of water had boiled, and tea and biscuits concluded the repast.

When dinner was over, the fortunate individual who was not on duty could turn in as soon as he pleased, and sleep soundly until it was time to get up. Not so the cook: he had to sleep with one eye open, as he was responsible for the safety and good conduct of the dogs, whose views on the rights of property were extremely lax. A pound of pemmican was not a very satisfying meal for hard-working dogs, and they were apt to make up deficiencies with

whatever fell in their way. Jam, meat, harness, furs, were alike devoured. Nothing came amiss, as Gibson found to his cost, for one day the end was gnawed off his sleeping-bag by some hungry "bow-wow." To look after such dogs was no light task, and until it occurred to some one that they might be muzzled when off duty, the cook got very little sleep. Some judiciously-administered correction also had a very soothing effect, and after a time even the most unruly members of the pack were licked into shape.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

SEVEN days after leaving Humboldt Glacier, the explorers found themselves above Petermann Fiord, an arm of the sea which opens into Robeson Channel. Peary had intended to avoid this fiord, but he had set his course a little too much to the north-west to keep quite clear of it, or of the broken ice and crevasses in the neighbourhood. These caused some trouble, but when at last the travellers fairly reached the basin of the fiord they decided to have a good rest and thoroughly refresh themselves and their dogs before going farther; more especially as the weather was all that could be desired for camping out. The fiord, too, was very attractive. It had a north-west aspect, so day and night the glorious sunshine lighted up its rugged cliffs and gilded the snow which surrounded it: even the black mountains which rose like a wall in the distance were glorified by the flood of golden light. And there was not only light—there

was heat, summer heat, for the thermometer rose to 77° in the shade, and the explorers were able to dry their clothes more thoroughly than they had done for some time. Peary even undressed completely and took a bath in the snow.

Then came some easier travelling. The ice was almost level, and rapid progress was made. But this pleasant state of affairs did not last long. About forty miles from Petermann Fiord, somewhat to Peary's surprise, the ice began to slope upward. This indicated the neighbourhood of another arm of the sea, and according to his map the next large inlet, Sherard Osborn Fiord, should have been a considerable distance to the north-eastward. It was quite possible, however, he reflected, that the map might be wrong, as very little was known about the coast, so the travellers pressed forward.

So far all was well, but after a while the ice became constantly rougher and more broken, and the crevasses larger and more frequent, while icy cliffs and mountains, which it would be impossible to ascend with the dogs and sledges, loomed ahead.

To make matters worse, at this juncture the weather changed. It was evident that a storm was brewing, and prudence suggested a halt—but only just in time, for hardly was the usual shelter finished when the tempest burst. For two days it raged furiously, and

the friends found their canvas roof a very insufficient protection from the biting wind and searching snow-drifts which insinuated themselves into every chink. A more comfortless position it would be difficult to imagine, and both men were heartily glad when the storm abated and allowed them to go on their way.

Hard work lay before them. When the sky at length cleared, they found that in following the coast-line they were keeping much too near the edge of the ice to have a chance of making rapid progress. This part of the ice was terribly broken up and scored by deep and dangerous crevasses, to avoid which it would be necessary to strike inland so as to gain the smoother surface of the snow-clad Inland Ice. Before this was reached, however, some very hard climbing had to be done, and a good deal of time was lost; worse still, the best dog of the team sprained his foot. A few days afterwards he sickened with the same mysterious disease which had carried off so many of his fellows, and it was thought best to put him out of his misery. The largest sledge, too, was considerably the worse for its recent knocking about, and the necessary repairs took a whole day. Then the loads were rearranged, and several articles, which experience showed were unnecessary, were turned out, for every pound of weight made a difference in the labour.

Once on the smooth surface of the ice, travelling

became much easier; not that it was by any means perfect, for the heat of the sun made the snow soft and sticky, and fur coats and trousers were found unpleasantly warm. This last difficulty was easily remedied by leaving off superfluous garments, but even then the work was very tiring, especially when the ground again began to rise. Small troubles are sometimes more aggravating than greater ones, and these minor discomforts had a very depressing effect on both explorers. Even merry-hearted Astrup, who generally sang as he went along, became silent and gloomy, though he worked as hard as ever, and helped his team by pushing the sledges up the steep slopes which had to be climbed.

This new ascent was very annoying, for it could be nothing, thought Peary, but the watershed between Sherard Osborn Fiord and some other inlet farther to the north-east, and fiords and the rough ice around them had given so much trouble already, that they were not unnaturally regarded with disfavour. Nevertheless the travellers pressed on, and on the twenty-sixth of June their observations told that they had reached the eighty-second parallel of north latitude.

Now a strange thing happened. Hitherto the coast land, which had occasionally been visible, had always lain on the north-west of the explorers, and the various fiords they had passed all trended in the same direc-

tion. But now the coast seemed to have suddenly jumped round, for behold! there it lay to the north-east, extending as far as the eye could reach, first almost due east and then south-east. What could this possibly mean? Peary could only suppose that they had reached another inlet, hitherto uncharted, and turning to the south-east he endeavoured to pass round the head of the opening.

Keeping the coast-line on their left, the explorers went on, expecting to find the shore trend northwards—but no such thing. Several glaciers were passed: they too had a general north-easterly direction. Things seemed to grow stranger, but the mystery was on the point of solution.

On the first of July a range of mountains entirely free from ice and snow was seen to the eastward. Beyond this nothing was visible—not even the ice-blink, or peculiar dazzling whiteness in the atmosphere which is generally to be seen when large fields of ice are present. What lay ahead? Could it be possible that Greenland was crossed?—that the mountains were the eastern coast range, and that beyond them rolled the Arctic Ocean? Peary and Astrup could hardly believe their eyes, yet no other explanation was possible.

Hitherto they had been travelling over the ice-cap, but they had now reached its limit, and before them stretched a tract of barren, stony country, from

which rose the mountain chain that bounded the view; beyond the mountains lay—they knew not what. This mystery they wished to solve at once; but as the mountains seemed to be only about four or five miles away, and it was no use to give the weary dogs a needless tramp, it was decided that Astrup should keep camp while Peary visited the mountains. The trip, he thought, would not occupy more than a few hours, and he quite expected to be back to supper.

Having selected the best place he could find for a descent from the ice, the lieutenant set out. He had by this time had plenty of experience in rough travelling, but long before he reached the distant hills he came to the conclusion this was about the worst he had had. Not only was the ground excessively rough—it was covered with splinters of stone so sharp that they cut through his shoes—but also he was perpetually going up and down hill, and in spite of the 82 degrees of latitude, the heat was most oppressive. Probably Peary felt it the more after being so long on the ice-cap, where, if an actual gale was not in progress, there was sure to be a breeze of some sort. At all events the miles seemed to lengthen themselves out unconscionably, and the farther he went the farther off the mountains seemed to be. At each hill he thought surely this must be the last! but no—when he reached the top the mountains seemed no nearer than before.

The fact was, that in the rarefied atmosphere of Greenland it was impossible to judge distance correctly.

After some time things began to improve a little ; first a snow-bunting made its appearance twittering joyously overhead ; then a patch of grass took the place of the hitherto all-prevailing stones, and some hair and a bleached skeleton proclaimed that musk oxen might be expected in the neighbourhood—at any rate they had been there. Soon more snow-buntings came fluttering fearlessly round the solitary traveller, and flowers, purple, white, and yellow, grew here and there among the stones.

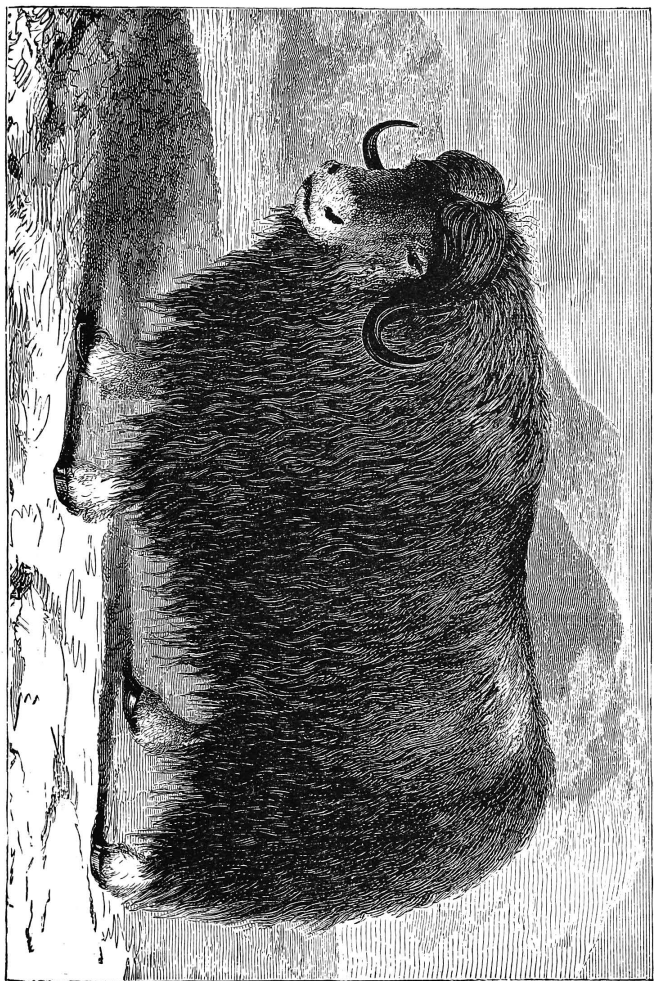
The five miles had by this time lengthened out to fifteen, but Peary had not reached the mountains ; in fact, they were still at some distance. The weary pedestrian was forced to own himself beaten for the present ; his will was good to go on, but his shoes were cut to pieces by the stones, and his feet were bruised and bleeding to such an extent that he concluded discretion would be the better part of valour. Under these circumstances the return journey was even more unpleasant and tiring than the outward one, and not until twenty-four hours after he set out did Peary reach the camp, where he found Astrup anxiously wondering what in the world had become of his chief. Food and rest, however, were just at present uppermost in Peary's mind, and having com-

bined breakfast, dinner, and supper in one mighty meal, he turned in for a well-earned sleep.

Some hours later he awoke refreshed and ready for a new attempt. This time it was decided that the sledges should be left where they were—they would be quite safe inasmuch as there was no one to interfere with them—and that Peary, Astrup, and the dogs, of whom only eight now survived, should go forward together. Five days' rations were packed up, as this, Peary thought, would be plenty; and off they went. The dogs, delighted to be rid of their loads, would have rushed madly forward, but their ardour was restrained by the unanswerable argument of leashes, against which they strove in vain.

The route which Peary had taken on his last trip was so bad that the friends determined to try a different one. This turned out worse, if possible, than the other, and by way, perhaps, of mending matters, every day the rays of the sun became more powerful, with the unpleasing result that the snow was rapidly being reduced to water, and the softer parts of the ground to a wet sludge, while on this journey the stones and rocks seemed even sharper than those which had played such havoc with Peary's shoes a day or two before. Travelling under such conditions was hard for all, and the poor dogs suffered terribly.

At length, thoroughly tired out, the party halted



MUSK-OX.

for a few hours' rest. The spot was particularly stony and uninviting, so it was rather a surprise when, soon after they were once more in motion, the travellers saw something moving at a little distance. They watched silently for a moment, for more than once they had been deceived, but this time there was no mistake, and they saw before them some musk-oxen, apparently waiting to be shot. Peary lost no time in starting off in pursuit, while Astrup stayed where he was with the dogs lest an inopportune yelp might scare the intended victims. For a while all was silence as the hunter carefully made his way down the valley towards his prey, and then, as Astrup listened, he heard the crack of the rifle, and knowing that there was no further need for concealment he left the dogs to their own devices and ran forward. Peary had been lucky—a bull and a cow had fallen to his rifle—and as Astrup came up, a little calf peered round a huge boulder to discover the reason of the commotion. The poor little thing was captured alive, but it did not long survive, and eventually was turned into veal cutlets.

As quickly as might be the animals were skinned, and then, having put aside what they required for themselves, the amateur butchers shouldered one of the carcasses and carried it towards the spot where

the dogs lay wearily licking their paws, too tired to trouble themselves about anything else.

The sight and smell of fresh meat, however, quickly roused them, and springing up with a yell of delight they dashed at the welcome food. Leaving them to enjoy it Astrup made a couch of skins in a grassy hollow, and while Peary rested, betook himself to the preparation of supper. Water was plentiful, for a stream ran near the spot, and in a short time the hungry travellers were in the full enjoyment of a luxurious repast of musk-ox steaks. After their long, comfortless journey they had lighted on quite a pleasant resting-place; birds twittered overhead, and a big bumble-bee hummed lazily as he hovered from flower to flower. All things considered, the friends concluded that it would be advisable to stay where they were for a few hours, more especially as the dogs were in no condition to proceed until they had slept off their gluttony.

After a thorough rest the march was resumed, and in due time the explorers reached the top of the mountains, which at that spot widened into a small plateau. Behind them was the Inland Ice—in front, more than 3,000 feet below, the sea washed the base of the cliffs which bounded the plateau. On either hand the coast-line curved outwards, forming an immense bay, from the southern side of which a mag-

nificent glacier extended itself along the foot of the cliff, while on the north a narrow arm of the sea ran westward from the bay, and, as the explorers believed, was connected with Lincoln Sea. Almost incredible as it seemed, the bend in the coast-line which Peary had supposed to be the mouth of a fiord, marked the northern extremity of Greenland, and the land beyond the channel had no connection with that misnamed country.

Peary's desire had been to surpass Lockwood's highest point. This, it is true, he had not accomplished, but he had done better, for his attempt to follow the coast-line had dispelled all doubt as to the insularity of Greenland. Well satisfied with their work, the explorers had no intention of attempting more, and they proceeded to build a cairn in which they deposited a record of their achievement; they also unfurled the silken stars and stripes which had been presented to the expedition by the Academy, and planted it on the top of the cairn. It was a curious coincidence that the "flag of freedom and union" should float for the first time over the iron-bound coast of North-east Greenland on the fourth of July, the anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence, and in honour of the occasion Peary named the bay at his feet, Independence Bay. In compliment to the Academy to which the expe-

dition owed so much, the great glacier was called Academy Glacier, and Professor Heilprin, the leader of the West Greenland expedition, was immortalized in Heilprin Land, on the north of the newly-discovered channel.

After a day or two spent in making observations and taking photographs, the return journey was begun. The worst part was the walk over the stones to the ice, and on reaching the spot where the sledges had been left, it was necessary to allow the dogs a couple of days' rest before going farther.

Now that the northern coast-line had been traced there was no need to keep close to the shore. The great thing was to reach McCormick Bay as soon as possible, and, experience having taught the explorers wisdom, with this end in view, they took a more southerly course, whereby most of the crevasses and broken ice which had given so much trouble before were avoided. Much of the way lay over the smooth, snowclad surface of the Inland Ice, 8,000 feet above sea-level, and often, literally, "in the clouds." At one place some deep snowdrifts were encountered, but otherwise the travelling was fairly good, which was fortunate, for only five of the dogs survived the hardships of the journey. In order to relieve them as much as possible, all unnecessary articles, and all the sledges but one were abandoned. On the remaining

sledge a sail was set, and the wind, which blew steadily off the ice-cap, sometimes took all strain off the drag-ropes. Thus rapid progress was made, and on the fifth of August the party reached a large icy hummock near the head of M'Cormick Bay.

The heat of the sun had made the snow so soft that it was impossible to climb the steep slope, but the explorers knew that at night, in spite of the midnight sun, there was likely to be frost enough to harden the snow, so, making a virtue of necessity, men and dogs lay down to sleep. A few hours later they tried again; this time the surface was hard enough to bear their weight, and without much difficulty they reached the top of the hill. At that moment some black objects caught Peary's eye; he watched them for a moment—yes, he was quite right!—they were men, and shouting to Astrup, "There, there, the boys are looking for us!" he fired his gun as a signal. Then an answering cheer echoed over the snow, and the returning wanderers saw that the party who raised it numbered seven or eight. At Redcliffe there were but four people, so this could only mean that a relief expedition had arrived, and forgetting their fatigues, Peary, Astrup, and the dogs rushed headlong down the slope to greet, and be greeted by, their welcome friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ICE CLAIMS A VICTIM.

AFTER the return of Gibson and Cook from the Inland Ice, life at Redcliffe went on most uneventfully for some weeks ; in fact, almost the only variation from the usual routine was that Matt's frozen heel took an unfavourable turn, and kept him a prisoner for some days. Verhoeff gave unremitting attention to his scientific work, and seldom went very far from the house, but the doctor and Gibson made a ten days' hunting excursion up the bay ; luck, however, did not attend them, and, much to the disappointment of their companions, who were reduced to an unpalatable diet of seal-meat, they came back without any game whatever.

Towards the middle of July a slight sensation occurred, for one morning Matt declared that he had overheard two of the Eskimos plotting to kill some one—he was not sure who was to be the victim, but

thought it might be himself. He was considerably alarmed, and promptly communicated his fears to Cook, who also thought seriously of the supposed plot.

Mrs. Peary heard them talking, and insisted on knowing what was the matter, but much to the doctor's annoyance, when she heard the tale, she burst out laughing, for so far, the natives had been extremely gentle and friendly. Besides, she remembered that three of them had left Redcliffe on the previous day, which hardly looked as though they were hatching a dangerous plot against the whites, whom they certainly regarded as superior to themselves; and further, even supposing that they had any such design, and elected to discuss it close to the house, she very much doubted whether Matt understood their language sufficiently to form a correct opinion of anything he might chance to overhear. All things considered, she saw no special ground for alarm; but, seeing that her companions still had qualms, she gave her husband's pistol to Cook, and her own to Matt.

The scare proved to be groundless, but the Eskimos somehow got wind of it, and the fact that the doctor and Matt were carrying revolvers alarmed them quite as much as the imaginary plot had alarmed Cook and Matt. They were still more scared by one of the windows being opened in the

afternoon, for this, thought the natives, could only be done with the intention of shooting them through it. The misunderstanding might have led to serious consequences, but in the evening one of the Eskimos came in and had a long talk with the doctor, which ended in the restoration of mutual confidence.

Mrs. Peary was naturally anxious about her husband, and as soon as there was any possibility of his return, she set out to the head of the bay to await his coming. Matt, whose foot had recovered, went on ahead with the Eskimo Ikwa, some dogs, and a couple of sledges, but the ice was so broken and slushy that they had much ado to reach their destination. The next day (the thirteenth of July) Mrs. Peary followed, and, accompanied by Dr. Cook, walked along the beach to the spot chosen for the camp.

Cook returned immediately, and Mrs. Peary and Matt, being left to their own devices, occupied themselves with strolling about and shooting such game as came in their way. Several days passed without any particular event, and then, early one morning, Mrs. Peary was awakened by a sharp, clear whistle—it was not quite like the cry of a bird, yet, as she and Matt had the valley to themselves, what else could it be? She listened; the whistle sounded again, and this time she distinctly heard footsteps also. This settled

the question as far as the bird was concerned, and she shouted in good Eskimo, "Who is there?" "Me—the ship has come," came the answer in the same language.

That a ship should arrive was quite unexpected—so much so, that at first Mrs. Peary did not believe her informant, and told him so very abruptly. But "me not lie," answered he stoutly, and to prove the truth of his words he tossed into the tent a big bundle of letters which provided ample employment for some hours. Yes, it was quite true; the Academy had fitted out a relief expedition, of which Professor Heilprin was appointed leader, and once more the *Kite* was anchored in M'Cormick Bay. It seemed almost too good to be true, but the letters afforded undeniable proof.

The following day an exchange of visits was made; Matt went down to the *Kite*, and Professor Heilprin came up to the camp to call on Mrs. Peary, and tell her the news from home and the great world outside Greenland. He was, moreover, charged to induce her to return with the *Kite* to America, whether Mr. Peary had come back from the ice or not. What good, argued her friends at home, could she do him by waiting on the coast while he was on the ice?

But of such a desertion the faithful wife would not

hear for a moment. If her husband should be delayed until after the ship had been forced to leave, that would be quite disappointment enough, she said, and she certainly would not go without him so long as there was a chance of his being alive. Meanwhile, she had no doubt that he would return, at the latest, by the end of August.

The arrival of the *Kite*, however, somewhat altered the aspect of affairs, and instead of waiting to meet her husband at the head of the bay, Mrs. Peary thought it best to return to Redcliffe, and superintend matters there. She went back, accordingly, at the end of July, but a few days afterwards the *Kite*, with the relief expedition on board, steamed to the head of the bay, and at Professor Heilprin's invitation Mrs. Peary accompanied the party.

The next day (the fifth of August) Heilprin and his comrades went up to the Inland Ice with the intention of planting a series of guide-posts for the benefit of the returning explorers. The precaution was a wise one, for a very slight deviation from the proper course would land the travellers in a wrong bay, and cause them much needless labour.

The party were so little used to Arctic travelling that no one thought of taking snowshoes, though they had not gone far before they discovered that the

omission was a grave one. They plodded on manfully, but it was hard work, and they progressed slowly, for, when they reached the ice-cap, at every step they sank at least knee-deep into the snow. By nine o'clock in the evening, however, they had covered several miles, and they set up their first guide-post, bearing a clearly-inscribed board :—

BE TO M'CORMICK BAY.
KITE IN PORT. AUGUST 5.

It was decided that the next sign-post should be planted on a hill about two miles ahead, but hardly had the relief party reached the appointed spot when they caught sight of a dark speck against the horizon. What could it be? A rock? No, for it moved. A bear? Neither bear nor any other native beast will venture on to the snowclad waste of the Inland Ice.

As they watched, the speck grew larger and more distinct; something waved aloft; there could no longer be a doubt, and wild cheers burst forth. The wanderers had returned, and in a little while Heilprin and his companions had the satisfaction of welcoming the men whom they had come to help.

No further guide-posts being required, the united

parties made the best of their way down to the beach where the boat was moored. Shouting, cheering, and yelling, like boys let loose from school, they pulled to the *Kite*, every moment becoming more uproarious. The crew speedily caught the infection, and rushed to the ship's side, cheering madly, until the returning explorers leaped on board, and Peary rushed down the companion ladder. His wife, who was below, had guessed the cause of the cheering, but excitement kept her motionless, and she awaited his coming in her berth.

As Heilprin was anxious to examine some of the glaciers, the *Kite* stayed where she was for a day or two, and then went back to Redcliffe, where Peary and Astrup were greeted with delight by their comrades, and with surprise, almost amounting to terror, by the Eskimos, who could hardly believe that the explorers were still in the flesh. They had fully expected that the demon of the Inland Ice would devour the rash invaders of his domain, and though their safe return upset all calculations, it inspired the natives with almost boundless confidence in the white men. Henceforward, said the admiring Eskimos, they should be willing to follow Mr. Peary anywhere, even on to the ice, since he was stronger than the demon, and would not allow any harm to come to them.

There was still time to spare before turning the *Kite's* head southward, and short exploring and hunting trips were undertaken by both expeditions, who split up into small parties as their fancy prompted. Gibson went to hunt at the head of M'Cormick Bay; the Pearys and Verhoeff betook themselves to the head of Inglefield Gulf, to verify sundry observations made by the lieutenant in the spring; while most of the relief party camped at the entrance to the gulf, where they amused themselves with hunting, collecting specimens, and studying the habits and manners of the neighbouring glaciers. Unfortunately, the weather was most unpleasant; and after three days Heilprin and his friends returned to the *Kite*, where, early the next morning, they were joined by Gibson.

The other party was still absent, but Gibson said that, a day or two before, Verhoeff had walked over the hills which divided Inglefield Gulf from M'Cormick Bay, and had declared his intention of going up the valley specimen-hunting. He expected, he said, to be away for about four days, and, telling Gibson not to wait for him, asked that at the end of that time a kayak should be sent to fetch him. M'Cormick Bay, however, was not the safest place in the world for boating, and as Verhoeff was not a particularly expert kayaker, it was arranged that Gibson, with one white

companion and some Eskimos, should take one of the whale-boats for him.

Verhoeff failed to appear, and Gibson and his comrade went up the valley to search for him. No sign of him was, however, to be seen, and his friends were at length obliged to return without him. A few hours before they arrived Mr. and Mrs. Peary came in, having narrowly escaped being wrecked by a furious gale, against which they found it all but impossible to make headway.

Where could Verhoeff be? It had been arranged that everybody and everything should be on board the *Kite* by the seventeenth of August, and that she should sail the next day, but Verhoeff's absence upset this plan. He had been away so long that his friends were becoming seriously uneasy about him, especially as he was comparatively thinly clad, and had taken a very slender stock of food with him. The opinion of the Eskimos that no one, dressed as Verhoeff had been, could have slept safely without shelter during the recent storm, added to the general alarm, and a search was organized. Mrs. Peary and Matt remained at Redcliffe, packing up and preparing for the homeward journey, and all the others, working in small parties, scoured the neighbourhood for five days and nights, examining every spot to which it was thought possible that the missing man could

have gone, but always without result. The case looked very serious, and his friends began to fear that he would not be found alive.

The valleys in M'Cormick Bay and its neighbourhood having been thoroughly examined, on the sixth day two search parties, led respectively by Peary and Heilprin, set out to explore a large and dangerous glacier which came down almost to the head of Robertson Bay, the next opening to the northward. In order that the work might be done thoroughly and quickly, the two parties took opposite sides of the glacier, Heilprin beginning on the north and working southward, and Peary starting on the south and going northward.

Strangely enough, Gibson, who had been the last to see and speak with Verhoeff, was the first to find his track. The first trace was on the shore of the bay, where, shortly after the two parties separated, Gibson discovered footprints. No one doubted that they had been made by Verhoeff; and the Eskimos volunteered the opinion that the marks were some days old. How eagerly they were followed up! On and on they led along the shore, until at the mouth of the glacier valley the anxious seekers found a heap of minerals, evidently broken by a geological hammer, a few scraps of blue paper from a pemmican tin, and a bit of string. Probably Verhoeff had

halted there for lunch, and had left his specimens while he went farther up the valley.

A little farther on he had apparently attempted to climb a steep and slippery bank, partly composed of mud, partly of ice, and partly of sand and stones, but it was equally clear that he had slipped down again, and had concluded to try elsewhere. Another slope had been more successfully assaulted, and thence the footsteps were followed for some distance up the gorge, then along a moraine to the side of a terrible crevasse—

“ And farther there were none.”

Suspicion had now become all but certainty—what could this track, ending thus at a huge crevasse, mean except that poor Verhoeff had met with a terrible death? There was no sound, no sign of life, nothing to lead the awe-struck searchers to hope; but they must not remain inactive, and the first thing was to go and meet Heilprin's party and tell them of the discovery of the tracks. This done, the search was continued—round and round the crevasse, up and down the gorge where the footsteps had been found, then among a labyrinth of crevasses extending some distance up the glacier, and among the gorges and valleys passed on the way. But not another trace of the missing man was to be found; everything ended at the side of the crevasse, which, it every

moment became more certain, must have swallowed him up. At length every one became worn out with fatigue, and a few hours' rest was necessary; it was the first time for six days and nights that the search was entirely suspended.

Hopeless as the case evidently was, no one would give up without making one more attempt. The next day, therefore, was spent, like its forerunners, in anxious, painstaking search, but nothing more was discovered; if the ice had claimed a victim, it held him fast. To stay longer was useless, and the searchers reluctantly returned to the *Kite*, which was awaiting them; and having cached a store of provisions, in case that, by any possibility, Verhoeff might be alive, made the best of their way back to M'Cormick Bay.

The next morning all was bustle at Redcliffe. Everything was packed, and as the new ice had already begun to form, it was desirable to get the baggage on board and start at once, otherwise there was every chance that the *Kite's* "white wings" would not be able, even aided by steam, to carry her home that season. But the work of removal was soon accomplished, and in a few hours everything and everybody, including Jack and the five Eskimo dogs who had survived the ice journey, were safe on board. The other Newfoundland, Frank, had taken a fancy

to one of the natives, and as he returned the compliment, Frank was left behind, as also were various articles which Peary's party did not think worth carrying back, but which caused immense delight when they were distributed among the natives. The excitement rose still higher when Professor Heilprin brought out a store of useful gifts—pots, kettles, knives, tools, and timber—sent by friends in America for the benefit of the natives, who, in spite of their appreciation of the gifts, showed genuine sorrow at the departure of the explorers.

The homeward voyage was prosperous, and, therefore, uneventful; and on the twenty-fourth of September the *Kite* arrived safely at Philadelphia, where a joyful welcome was given to the returning travelers. The one shadow on the rejoicing was the loss of poor Verhoeff, whose friends could not be induced to believe that he was really dead; he had always had such a strong desire to go north, and was such a determined, venturesome fellow, that they were almost convinced that he had purposely disappeared with the view of being left behind.

Right well did the gallant explorers—Nansen and Peary, and their no less gallant comrades—earn their triumph. Being mortals, they could not command success, but being brave, true-hearted fellows, they

deserved and attained it. Between them the long-discussed problem of Greenland was solved, for the inland ice was crossed, and the northern coast-line traced. Others, in time to come, may make new discoveries, but to them belongs the honour of being the first to penetrate the mysteries so long preserved by Greenland's icy mountains.

THE END.

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