The North Pole

An enormous mass of Ice toppled over towards the Vessel.

THE NORTH POLE,

AND

CHARLIE WILSON'S ADVENTURES IN SEARCH OF IT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE REALM OF THE ICE KING," &c.

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THE NORTH POLE,

AND

HOW CHARLIE WILSON DISCOVERED IT.

CHAPTER I.

PETER SVENDSON.

N a bright day in early spring, two lads were strolling in company along the quays at Dundee, talking of ships and the sea with the buoyant spirits of youth, and pausing at intervals to regard with admiring eyes some vessel whose tapering masts and neatly-arranged rigging favourably impressed them.

them. One of the lads, whose embrowned complexion contrasted sufficiently with his light hair and blue-grey eyes to show that it was the result of exposure to wind and weather, wore the blue jacket and trousers of a sailor. His companion, a

handsome youth, with curly brown hair, bright blue eyes, and a countenance glowing with health and exercise, had the appearance of a lad who has lately left school, and is rejoicing in his freedom from tasks and bounds.

Jostled by seamen of various nations, and often turning aside from casks and bales, the two lads made the tour of the quays, and had turned into a narrow lane, at right angles with the river, when they encountered a tall, middle-aged seaman of foreign aspect, who paused suddenly before them, regarding the seeming school-boy with a steadfast gaze. They were stepping into the road-way to avoid him, his appearance and manners not prepossessing them in his favour, when he suddenly extended a bony hand, and placed it on the shoulder of the lad who had attracted his attention.

"My lad!" said he.

The boys paused, and the one whom he addressed raised his eyes to the man's haggard and colourless countenance, the lower part of which was half concealed by his long and thick beard and moustache, while the upper part was chiefly remarkable for the wild expression of his dark eyes, which were deeply sunk in their orbits.

"You are the boy I want," he continued. "I must have a little talk with you."

"You don't know me," said the lad. "I am sure I don't know you—never saw you before."

"I do know you," returned the strange man. "Your name is Wilson—I am sure of it. And you are the boy I want; so come along with me, and I will tell you something you will be glad to know, and which nobody else can tell you."

"Don't go with him, Charlie," the lad who wore the blue jacket and trousers of a sailor whispered to his companion. "I don't like the looks of the fellow."

"What have you to say to me that you can't say here?" inquired Charlie, regarding the strangelooking seaman with an air of suspicion.

"Much," replied the seaman, whose dark eyes flashed in their deep orbits, as if he was becoming excited by the lad's hesitation.

"Who are you, then?" said Charlie.

"You would be no wiser if I were to tell you," returned the seaman. "But let your companion stand aside, and I will whisper one word that will make you glad to go with me, and hear what I have to say to you."

The sailor-looking boy crossed the lane, and paused on the other side, regarding his companion and the strange seaman with furtive glances of doubt and suspicion. The latter followed him with his eyes, as if to satisfy himself that he had

retired out of hearing, and, having done so, inclined his head to the ear of Charlie Wilson, and whispered, "I am Peter Svendson!"

Having made this communication, he raised his head, and glanced quickly around, as if he feared that it might have reached ears for which it was not intended.

"Well," returned Charlie, "what of that? I don't know you by your name any more than I do by sight."

"But your father knows me," said Peter Svendson, his dark eyes flashing wildly as he spoke. "Has he never mentioned me to you?"

"My father perished at sea many years ago," returned Charlie, regarding him with a look of surprise.

The mariner surveyed him for a moment with a stare of bewilderment, but soon recovered himself, and chuckled incredulously.

"It was supposed so, my lad," he rejoined, after a moment's pause, "but Peter Svendson knows better. Who should know where Charles Wilson is better than Peter Svendson?"

"My father not dead!" exclaimed the astonished youth. "Where is he, then, Svendson?"

"That is a secret which must not be told here, my lad," the strange mariner replied, glancing warily around. "Come with me, and I will tell you all about the matter."

"Where do you wish to take me?" inquired Charlie.

"You must follow me, and ask no questions," replied Svendson. "Such a story as I have to tell you must have no listener but yourself."

"Lead on, then!" exclaimed Charlie, and, calling



CHARLIE IN THE BOAT WITH SVENDSON.

to his companion that he must go with the stranger, and alone, he followed Peter Svendson to the water-side.

Looking behind him at intervals, to assure himself that they were not followed, the mysterious mariner walked with long strides to a landingplace, and, stepping into a boat, took up the oars, nodding significantly at the same time to a brownfaced man of amphibious aspect, who was seated on the head of a pile, smoking a very short and very dirty pipe.

"All right!" said the brown-faced man, without removing the pipe from his mouth; and then Charlie stepped into the boat, and Svendson pushed her from the bank.

Neither spoke while the gaunt, haggard-looking seaman rowed the boat far into the stream, and then pulled first in one direction, and then in another, as if uncertain of his further course.

"We are out of ear-shot here, I think," he at length observed, resting on his oars in a solitary part of the river, and looking warily around.

"What is the need of all this secrecy?" inquired Charlie. "There is no one who knew my father that would not be glad to hear that he is still living."

"Maybe not," returned Svendson. . "But the secret concerns myself as much as him or you, and must be revealed with due care for all of us. Before you hear it, you must swear, therefore, not to divulge it until you receive my permission."

"That is a hard condition," observed Charlie, hesitatingly.

"Why hard?" returned the seaman. "Can you have no secrets from that sailor lad? Or must you

tell everything to the relations who have interested themselves in you since your father's disappearance?"

"I think I ought to," replied Charlie, with a grave and perplexed countenance. "My uncle and aunt have been very kind to me."

"You must swear to keep secret what I tell you, or you will never hear one word concerning your father that you do not already know."

"You assure me that the secret is known only to yourself?" said Charlie, regarding his mysterious companion intently.

"Who else should know it?" returned Svendson, with a strange chuckle. "There was no one near but ourselves."

"When? What are you speaking of?" inquired Charlie, who began to suspect that the seaman was not quite in his right mind.

"Ask no questions!" exclaimed Svendson, almost fiercely. "Will you swear, or shall I pull back to the landing-place?"

"I swear!" said the lad, whose curiosity was powerfully excited, while he saw that he should learn nothing from his strange companion, unless by compliance with his condition of secrecy.

"Very well," said Svendson. "You must know, then, that I served, before the mast, aboard the ship in which your father made his last voyage, and in which he was chief officer. The ship was lost, as you have probably been told."

"Crushed by the ice," observed Charlie, with a shudder at the recollection of the terrible story.

"Ah! you know that?" said Svendson, with a keen glance. "How, then, am I to know how much or how little is known to you?"

"Some of the crew escaped," returned Charlie.

Svendson opened his eyes widely for a moment at this communication, but, though evidently surprised by it, he did not question its correctness, or make any remark upon it.

"There were others who escaped," he said, after a moment's pause, "and amongst them were your father and myself. There were others, but I cannot remember their names. My brain turns queer when I think of all that was done and suffered while we were afloat, in that little open boat, amongst the ice of the Polar Ocean. We were frozen by the cold,—famished by hunger into the semblance of ravening wolves,—transformed by burning fever into mad demons!"

"Poor fellows!" ejaculated Charlie, whose sympathy with the sufferers overcame for the moment his curiosity to hear the promised revelation concerning his father.

"How long we rowed about amongst the floes I cannot tell you," the mariner continued, after a

brief pause. "Famine, sickness, and delirium made sad havoc amongst us, and at last only your father and I remained alive. Another terrible day passed, and then only Peter Svendson remained."

"But you told me my father was still living," said Charlie, whose suspicion that his companion's brain was affected returned as he listened to the recital of the horrible sufferings of the survivors of the crew of the ice-crushed whaler.

"Ay!" returned Svendson, his dark eyes flashing as he glanced around with that strange expression which Charlie had before observed in them. "If ever you go to the North Pole, you will find him. I often think I should like to go there myself, just to see how he looks."

"The North Pole!" exclaimed Charlie, now almost convinced that the sailor was insane.

"Ay, he is there right enough!" rejoined Svendson. "But, mind! not a word of this to anybody, on your oath!"

"But why have you never communicated to any one your discovery of the North Pole, and the fact of my father's existence?" inquired Charlie.

"I didn't say that I had discovered the pole," returned Svendson, evasively. "As for your father, I wasn't likely to say anything about him. No, no, my lad," he continued, beginning to row towards

the landing-place, "I know what is good for me better than to do that."

"Where did you part from my father?" Charlie inquired, after a few moments of silence, during which he reflected as well as he could upon the strange communication of his new and mysterious acquaintance.

"On the north coast of Greenland," replied Svendson, resting on his oars while he uttered the words in a whisper; and then he pulled steadily to the bank without another word being spoken.

The brown-faced man, still sitting on the pilehead sucking his pipe, regarded them curiously as they stepped from the boat, but he said not a word; and Peter Svendson, with a parting injunction to his bewildered companion to remember his oath, strode away in the direction of the quays.



CHAPTER II.

AN EXPEDITION PROPOSED.

WO or three weeks passed after Charlie Wilson's meeting with the mysterious Peter Svendson without anything being seen or heard by the lad or his insepa-

rable companion, Willie Webb, of that singular person. Charlie kept within his own breast all that had passed between them, telling Willie only that the strange sailor was a half-demented fellow, who told him a cock-and-bull story about his father. The more he thought of Peter Svendson's strange story and singular behaviour, the more he leaned to the notion that the man's mind had become unsettled by his sufferings on the occasion which he had described, and which had evidently left an enduring impression upon it.

He had ceased, therefore, to think seriously of the conversation in the boat on the Tay when he one day entered his uncle's parlour with the eagerness of one who has interesting intelligence to impart and a momentous request to make.

"Uncle," he exclaimed, "Captain Webb is going to the North Pole, and I should so like to go with him!"

"To the North Pole!" returned Mr. Wilson, regarding him over the edge of the newspaper he was reading with an air of surprise.

"Yes," returned Charlie, whose eyes were sparkling with boyish anticipation of wild and wonderful adventures in the realm of the Ice King. "It will be so fine, and I should like to go in the same ship with Willie; and you know I am to go to sea soon, and I should so like to go to the North Pole!"

"How do you know?" inquired his uncle, very gravely, and yet with an appreciative smile, as he laid down the newspaper.

"Why, I have read all about Parry and Franklin, and the discovery of the North-west passage, you know," replied Charlie; "and of all the seas in the world there seems none where there is so much sport and adventure to be met with as there is in the frozen waters around the North Pole."

"And none where there are so many dangers to be encountered," rejoined Mr. Wilson. "How many whalers have been nipped between masses of ice, and crushed as I might crush an egg-shell between my thumb and finger! And then what dreadful privations and sufferings the poor fellows endure while threading the narrow channels among the floating masses of ice in their boats, or perhaps drifting upon a floe, like those unfortunate Germans! It is frightful to think of, Charlie."

"But they all got off safe, uncle," said the boy, with unabated enthusiasm.

"Your poor father and the poor fellows who were with him did not get safe off, Charlie," his uncle observed in a grave tone.

Charlie was silent for a few moments, and a cloud came over his countenance. The communication of Peter Svendson trembled upon his lips, but he remembered his oath, and did not divulge it.

"They may be yet alive," he at length said. "And there are dangers in all parts of the world. Then the shooting of bears and walruses! the charm of exploring seas and lands where nobody has been before! I am sure I would rather go to the North Pole than to New York, or even to China."

"But what should take Captain Webb to the North Pole?" inquired Mr. Wilson, looking a little perplexed. "The whales don't go so far north as that by several degrees; and it isn't likely that his owners will send him on an exploring expedition at their own cost just as the Government have taken the matter up."

"There is a reward for explorations towards the Pole, and the farther they go the bigger reward they are to get," returned Charlie. "I read that in the newspaper; and Captain Webb is part owner, you know, and he says if he gets to the Pole it will pay him pretty well as much as if he filled his ship with oil in Lancaster Sound or Barrow Strait."

"Ah, if he could accomplish the undertaking in one season!" said Mr. Wilson, with an air of doubt. "But suppose he doesn't get farther than the American explorers, and loses his ship besides, as they did? How will it pay then?"

"Oh, but he says," replied Charlie eagerly, "that there has been scarcely any ice in Smith Sound the last three or four years, and there is every prospect of a favourable season this year, and beyond the Sound there is open water—perhaps all the way to the Pole."

"Sometimes," observed his uncle, looking into the bright fire with an air of deep thought. "That open sea has been seen only by a party of Dr. Kane's men. According to the account of the chief officer of the disastrous 'Polaris' expedition they went a degree farther in the ship, and afterwards he and Captain Hall went seven days' journey in a sledge, and yet he says nothing about open water. Parry went, in a different part, half a degree farther than Kane's men, and saw nothing but a frozen sea towards the north; and the Germans, who lately took nearly the same course, made the same report, except that they saw land stretching a degree farther, which may have been ice, for such mistakes have been made, and seem very easily made in such high latitudes. Ice is not so smooth in the Arctic Ocean as it is in the Tay, Charlie."

"I know that," returned Charlie. "I think, if it was, I should not care so much about going to the North Pole."

"You talk of going to the North Pole as you would of going to a well-known port," observed his uncle, turning from the fire, and regarding the animated countenance of the boy with a smile. "Do you know that there are nearly eight degrees between the Pole and the farthest point reached by Kane's men? and that only two ships have ever entered Smith Sound, neither of which returned?"

"I read all about the 'Polaris' in the newspaper," returned the boy, some of the brightness of his enthusiasm fading from his countenance before the shade of thoughtfulness induced by his uncle's questions, as the rosy hues of sunset fade from the sky before a rising cloud. "I don't know much about Dr. Kane's expedition, or about the geography of Smith Sound; but all the whaling men and boys are talking about the Government expedition going that way, and about its being the gateway to the Pole."

"Well, the only chance of reaching it seems to be in that direction," observed Mr. Wilson; "but I think it is very doubtful, Charlie, whether either the North or the South Pole will ever be reached."

"Never!" exclaimed Charlie, with a look of surprise. "And yet the North-west passage has been discovered, in spite of all the dangers and difficulties which the explorers had to contend with."

"But the cases are not alike, Charlie," observed his uncle. "The obstacles to the discovery of the North-west passage arose from the number of islands in that part of the arctic regions, and the ice by which the channels between them were often obstructed. The obstacles to the navigation, the severity of the climate, the difficulty of procuring supplies of food, were not greater in one part of the region explored by Ross, and Maclure, and Maclintock than in another. But the searchers for the North Pole will find the cold more intense as they proceed, and no food procurable—not even a bear or a seal."

"Parry saw two seals and a bird at his farthest," observed Charlie.

"The Germans were not so fortunate, though nearer to land," rejoined his uncle. "There can be no doubt that animal life becomes more and more scarce as the Pole is approached, and, as I reminded you before, there are nearly eight degrees between the Pole and the farthest point yet reached."

"How many miles is that?" Charlie inquired, somewhat anxiously.

"Between five and six hundred," replied Mr. Wilson.

"That is not a very long way," observed Charlie.

"But in such a region as that," said his uncle. "the difficulty of the task cannot be estimated merely by the distance to be traversed. How much of the distance is land and how much water is unknown; but the chances of open water being found seem small, and the frozen sea affords a worse road than the land. Parry travelled nearly two hundred miles over the ice, but the journey occupied more than a month, only eight miles being accomplished in the first five days; while in the last three days they lost four miles, owing to the ice upon which they were travelling drifting southward. Dr. Kane made only eight miles a day on the land; and open water beyond Smith Sound will be an obstacle to the expedition, instead of an advantage, if the ship cannot be got into it."

"But Captain Webb says that the Sound has

been free from ice the last three or four years," observed Charlie.

"Well, if he finds it so next year, he may get into the circumpolar ocean," said Mr. Wilson. "But he will be very fortunate if he gets half the length of Smith Sound; and beyond the eighty-third parallel of latitude all is unknown. Greenland may extend to the pole, or the sea may flow round its northern limits."

"It would be something to get a hundred miles nearer the pole than anybody else," said Charlie, with sparkling eyes. "You will let me go, uncle, won't you?"

"I must think about it, Charlie," replied his uncle.

"And I must see Captain Webb about it. I am thinking this is only Willie's talk."

"Thanks, uncle!" exclaimed Charlie. "I know you will consent to my going, if you think about it."

So saying, he ran off, to have another chat with Willie Webb about icebergs and walruses, and all the mysterious phenomena of the circumpolar regions.

For several weeks afterwards nothing else was talked of, for Captain Webb had really resolved upon a North Polar exploring expedition, and Charlie Wilson induced his uncle to consent to his making his first voyage in that experienced seaman's

vessel. The whaler was to sail a fortnight before the Government expedition, and Captain Webb boasted that he would be in Smith Sound before the vessels forming the latter were through Davis Strait.

A day or two before the departure of Captain Webb's vessel, Charlie encountered Peter Svendson on the quay.

"So you are going to the North Pole?" said the mariner, pausing as he recognized the lad.

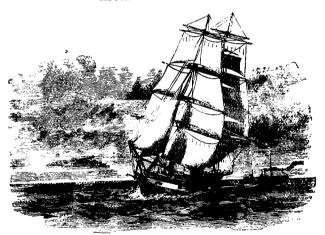
"I hope so," returned Charlie.

"I shall see you somewhere up that way," said Svendson, as unconcernedly as if he had been speaking of Montrose or Aberdeen; and, with a friendly nod, he stalked away.



CHAPTER III.

ABOARD THE WHALER.



THE WHALING SHIP LEAVING THE TAY.

when the brig commanded by Captain
Webb sailed out of the Tay, and the
broad bosom of the North Sea spread

out before his enraptured gaze, sparkling in the

sunshine of a bright May morn. He had long and ardently desired to become a sailor, and the adventures incident to an arctic voyage, with the prospect of sharing in the anticipated glory that would be won by the discoverers of the North Pole, had taken entire possession of his mind.

Willie Webb, less imaginative, and already familiar with the ordinary incidents of a whaling voyage in the arctic seas, was far less enthusiastic. He smiled at the interest which his companion showed in the simplest phenomena of ocean life, and maintained that, as they were not going to chase the leviathans of the deep, nothing very exciting was to be expected until they got among the icebergs in Melville Bay.

Buchan Ness was rounded with a favourable wind, and then the voyagers crossed the broad bay into which the Moray and Dornoch firths widen, and ran through the Pentland firth, between the dark rocks of the storm-vexed Orkneys and the cliffs which terminate the heath-clad mountains of Caithness. They then ran to the westward, and the purple and red summits of the Scottish Highlands were left behind, seeming to sink beneath the blue waters of the ocean as the whaler held her course towards the southern extremity or Greenland with a favouring breeze.

"It is beginning to get colder already," observed

Charlie, as he turned from contemplating the distant ridges, now changing their hues from purple and red to blue and grey, and looked towards the northwest, as if he expected to see the snows of Greenland already whitening the horizon.

"Ay, the air always gets colder as we hold on this course, though we do not get much farther north till we double Cape Farewell," rejoined Willie Webb, who stood beside him, watching the seabirds that skimmed the foam-tipped waves in quest of their fishy prey.

"That must be because the snow and ice of Greenland chill the air," said Charlie, after looking thoughtful for a moment. "What large bird is that?" he inquired, directly afterwards, as a handsome sea-bird flew over the waves in the direction of the coast. "It is not a gull, Willie, for it has a red breast."

"You have sharp eyes, Charlie," responded his companion. "That is a goosander—a sort of smew with a red breast. That dusky-looking bird, that has just dived after a fish, is another sort of goosander, that we call the saw-bill."

"There is another diving," said Charlie, who watched with eager interest the motions of birds that were new to him. "A little speckled bird, with a red throat; see, there are many of them!"

"That is a bird we call the sprat-borer," returned

Willie, who knew only the common and local names of the multitudinous swimming birds of the northern coasts and islands. "There are plenty of black and white gulls too; and yonder is a shearwater, a regular seafaring little bird, that I think would never go near land at all if it was not for the necessity of finding something solid to leave its eggs upon. I know only one bird that, at all other seasons, keeps to the sea so much; and that is Mother Carey's chicken."

"The little storm petrel," said Charlie. "Why is it called Mother Carey's chicken? Who was Mother Carey?"

"That I can't tell you," replied Willie, with a smile, "and I don't believe anybody else can, or I should have heard something about the old woman, and why the birds are called after her. But we don't like them, I can tell you that."

"Why not?" inquired Charlie.

"Because they always bring a storm after them," replied his companion.

Charlie looked thoughtful again.

"I suppose their instinct warns them of the approach of a storm, and prompts them to fly around the rigging of ships," he observed after a pause.

"I dare say that is it," said Willie. "But I only know that our men never like to see them flying

round and screaming as they do in rough weather, though of course the poor birds can't be the cause of it."

"It is silly to suppose so," said Charlie, "and scarcely more wise to regard them with displeasure on account of the storms they warn us of. There is another large bird of a different kind."

"That is a fishing hawk," observed Willie, as, looking in the direction indicated by Charlie, he saw a large brown bird, with the plumage of the under parts white, hovering over the sea at some distance from the ship. "See, it is pouncing upon a fish! It will have a long way to carry it, though."

The osprey swooped down as he spoke, and was seen beating the water with its wings, as if struggling to retain its hold of a large fish.

"It must be a cod," observed Willie as they watched the strife of the bird and the fish.

"Ah, the osprey is worsted!" exclaimed Charlie as the bird rose from the sea without the fish it had attacked and striven to make its prey.

"I will get a line and hook, and see if I can catch a fish," said Willie, who disappeared for a few moments, and returned with a strong line, to which a large hook, baited with a morsel of salt beef, was attached.

The line was dropped over the side and trailed after the vessel, watched with keen interest by the

two lads. Presently a gull came sweeping over the waves, and greedily snapped up the bait; but was brought up sharp, screaming and flapping its wings as it endeavoured to fly off.

"It has gorged the hook!" said Willie, laughing at the unavailing struggles of the gull as he tugged at the line, and drew the bird towards him.

The barb did not seem to have penetrated very deeply into the bird's gullet, however, for just as the young angler thought his unexpected prey was secured the hook and bait were disgorged, and the gull flew off.

"We will try again," said Willie, as he dropped the line into the sea.

It was drawn tight in a few minutes, and the lads, uniting their efforts, drew on board a fine cod. A smart blow on the head deprived it of sensation, and in a few moments it was slit open with the young sailor's knife, deprived of its entrails, and handed over to the cook.

Few birds were seen after the Scottish coast had dropped below the horizon, but Charlie, to whom everything that met his eyes was new, found a never-failing source of interest in watching the changes of the sea and the sky, looking eagerly for whales, and examining the various minute forms of life which were sometimes tound swarming on the surface of the ocean.

For many days the voyagers saw only the sea and the sky, but at length the cry of "Land, ho!" was heard from the perch of the seaman appointed to look out ahead, and an uneven white line was seen in the north-west.

"There is Greenland, Charlie," said Captain Webb, pointing towards it.

"I should have thought it was a white cloud rising," returned Charlie. "That is the first Arctic land that was discovered, is it not, Captain Webb?"

"Well, I think it must be," replied the captain.

"There is a tradition that it was first seen by some
Norse skipper, who was driven westward by stress
of weather, about nine hundred years ago."

"So long as that, father?" said Willie, with a look of surprise. "Why, that was before the compass was discovered?"

"True," said Captain Webb; "but they were bold fellows, those old Norsemen; and Eric the Red, when he went in search of the land, was impelled by the motive of having to leave Iceland, where he had been outlawed for some lawless deed. He discovered it, and others followed and formed settlements along the coast. But the southern part of Greenland is not within the Arctic circle, you know; and that was not crossed until three centuries later, when settlements were formed higher

up the west coast, as shown by the stone pillars, with ancient inscriptions and the date of 1135, discovered about fifty years ago on Women Islands. That was four centuries and a half before Davis sailed this way; and he was the first Englishman that ever crossed the Arctic circle."

Willie Webb had seen the ice-bound coast and snow-covered mountains before, but they were a novel sight to Charlie Wilson, and he could not withdraw his gaze from the white line which, as the ship sped on before the favouring breeze, rose higher and higher, like, as he had expressed it, a cloud rising from the sea. The sea was open before them, the land terminating southward in a frowning promontory, and stretching northward farther than they could see.

Next day the land was hidden from their sight by a dense fog, which obliged them to proceed with caution, keeping well to the southward of Cape Farewell until the sharp pinnacles of that promontory, and the jagged masses of dark rock which rise amidst foaming waves around that part of the coast were passed. Then the fog rose and dispersed, and they beheld on their right a range of lofty granite cliffs, behind which towered ridge upon ridge of snow-covered mountains, looking dazzlingly white where the sunlight reached, and coldly grey where they lay in shadow.



CHAPTER IV.

A WHALING YARN.

Willie Webb, calling our young hero's attention from the contemplation of the lofty cliffs and snow-covered

mountains which make the panorama of the western coast of Greenland; and Charlie, running to the other side of the vessel, saw the dark back of a huge animal just above the water at some distance seaward.

"Will you give chase, Captain Webb?" inquired Charlie, turning his animated countenance towards the skipper after a long look at the monster.

Captain Webb, who was also gazing at the whale as it rolled along in the sunshine, shook his head.

"No, my lad," he replied. "It is a pity, certainly, to see so much good train running away

from us; but there is never any telling where the chase of a whale will lead you, and we shall never reach the North Pole if we go out of our way to chase every bottlenose that comes across us."

He looked regretfully after the huge cetacean, which Charlie continued to watch until its black back and broad flapper could no longer be seen. Several more whales were observed in the course of the morning, and their appearance furnished Captain Webb with an occasion for telling one of his favourite yarns of his whaling experiences.

"It was more north than we are now," said he, "but it might have happened just as well about here; and the circumstances were so remarkable that I shall never forget them. Whenever I think of that chase the whole story comes into my mind as fresh as if it had been only yesterday. You have heard the story before, Mr. Morton, so I will not detain you from duty," he added, addressing the chief officer, who immediately withdrew from the cabin, where the captain was smoking his customary after-dinner pipe, "but it will be new to Charlie, and likewise to Mr. Markham. We harpooned a whale near the edge of a small floe, and away his whaleship went, cutting through the water so fast that no time had to be lost in splicing the lines of another boat to those of the boat from which the whale had been struck. In about a quarter of an

hour, to my great surprise, a signal was made for more lines, and a spare boat we had on board was sent with them at once. She had only just touched the water, however, when we observed four oars in a row, blades upward, a signal which is only made in cases of urgent necessity. Two or three men were at the same time seen seated in the stern. which was considerably elevated, for the purpose of keeping it down; while the bows of the boat were drawn down to the water, and a cloud of smoke was rising around the harpooner, through the friction of the line as it ran out. The spare boat was within a hundred yards of the one in such extremity when we saw the imperilled men drop the oars, throw their pea-jackets on the floe, and jump into the sea."

"Why did they not jump on to the floe?" inquired Charlie, who was listening eagerly to the narrative.

"That is a very proper question, Charlie," rejoined the captain. "I must tell you, then, that the harpooner had fastened the end of the line to the iron ring at the boat's stern; and a tongue of the ice, on which there was a depth of several feet of water, kept the boat, by the pressure of the line against it, at a distance from the floe that prevented the men from leaping upon it. As they jumped out of the boat, the bows were buried in the water.

the stern rose perpendicularly, and down she went. The men scrambled upon the floe, and were taken off by the spare boat."

"Did you lose the whale, Captain Webb?" inquired Charlie, as the skipper paused to refill his pipe.

"Steady, Charlie," interposed Willie, with a smile. "Don't spoil the story."

"We lost no time in looking after him," said Captain Webb, resuming his narrative. "There were several other whalers near, and there seemed a chance of its being struck by another crew; so we set all the sail we could carry, and worked through the ice in the direction taken by the whale. We had other boats out, but the crews never dreamed of such a thing as more than two boats' lines being required, and so they were not at hand to render assistance to the one from which the whale was struck. Presently, however, one of the crews saw the whale at a considerable distance, and the signal being immediately given, all our boats went in pursuit of him. After pulling hard for about an hour, they came up with him, and it was not long before three harpoons were fixed in him. We now made sure of our fish, but we had not got him yet. Off he went again, diving under a large floe that had just broken into several small ones, and drawing all the lines out of one of the boats,

the officer of which, not being able to get any assistance in time, fastened the end of the line to a hummock. Snap went the line, and bang against the ice went the other two boats, the harpoon of one drawing out; that left only one of the three fast to the whale, and that was drawn after the animal with such velocity that large masses of ice were wheeled about in the whale's progress, and whenever the line slipped clear of one of them into the space between two other fragments, the boat flew through the opening like an arrow, and shot several feet over the first piece of ice it encountered. We tacked round the broken floe with the ship, and the boats worked through the openings in the ice, following in the course taken by the whale, until the remaining line was broken by getting entangled, and the fish escaped, taking with it a boat and between three and four miles of So there was about a hundred and fifty pounds gone, as well as the whale."

"What a strong fellow he must have been!" observed Charlie.

"Ah!" responded Captain Webb. "The lines alone weighed a ton and a half; and what an obstruction the boat would seem to be! Yet the fish went through the water like a minnow in a stream."

"A whale is not a fish, Captain Webb," said Charlie.

"Well, they are like no other fish, that is certain," returned the captain. "They breathe air, they have warm blood, and the young ones are brought forth alive, the same as calves and lambs. But we have got into the way of calling them fish, and fish they will be to the end of time, I expect."

"Did you see any more of the whale, sir?" inquired Markham, who was the second officer of the ship.

"We did, and captured him, too," replied Captain "As long as the line held him, we looked for him in vain: but soon after it broke we caught sight of him nearly two miles distant, where, on finding himself free, he had risen to the surface to ` Having a fair breeze and very fine weather, we immediately gave chase, though with very small chance of success, having lost one of our boats and so many of our lines. We chased him, however, five or six miles, and at length came up with him, and prepared to renew the attack. did not seem quite so lively as at first, and having run about nine miles with such a weight behind him, and so few opportunities of breathing, he must have been disposed to rest. We did not give him much time, though; but one of the harpooners was incautious, or too eager, and his whaleship took the alarm, and dived before we could get a harpoon in him. I never expected to see that whale again;

but, as we had nothing else to do, we went after him. He rose to breathe about a mile from the spot where he had last disappeared, and so near one of the boats that he was harpooned immediately. Two more harpoons followed the first, and his struggles to escape were so feeble as to show that he was exhausted by his exertions, and could hold out no longer. When he had been pierced with two or three lances, he turned up, and died without any of the flurry that usually attends a whale's last moments of life."

"Was it a very large fish?" inquired Markham.

"Not at all," replied the captain. "The longest lamina of whalebone we got out of it measured nine feet six inches; and twelve feet is by no means an uncommon length. But I must say I never saw a whale show so much strength, or make such tremendous efforts to escape."

"Did you recover the boat?" inquired Markham.

"No," replied Captain Webb. "The harpoon dropped out before we captured the whale, and we saw the boat no more; and with it we lost a dozen new lines."

Markham gave vent to a low whistle as he quitted the cabin, and proceeded to make a mental calculation of the profit and loss attending the capture of the whale which had led its pursuers such a remarkable chase. Charlie and Willie went on deck shortly afterwards, and the former was soon absorbed once more in the contemplation of the snow-covered mountains which rose, ridge upon ridge, from the bold cliffs on the right.

Cape Desolation was passed, frowning darkly over the pale-green waves that rolled round it, and then the cliffs began to be deeply indented, at frequent intervals, by long inlets, and here and there broken into gaps, in some of which little clusters of wooden houses nestled, with a belfry rising in their midst, and indicating the building that served the inhabitants as a church and schoolhouse. These are the settlements made centuries ago by the Danes, which have drawn to them the few Esquimaux who have, in more recent times, been converted from their gross and brutalizing heathenism by the labours of the Moravian Missionaries.

These settlements are farther apart as the voyager sails northward, and the coast becomes fringed with dark and pointed rocks, warning him to keep in deep water, even at the risk of coming into contact with floating ice. On some parts of the coast there are clusters of small islands, precipitous, treeless, and desolate-looking; but on these our voyagers could discern no signs of their being inhabited. They were merely barren rocks of a larger size than those which fringed the cliffs and dotted the inlets which they had passed.



CHAPTER V.

UPERNAVIK.

HE broad waters of Baffin's Bay were at length entered, and the vessel was steered for the little settlement of Upernavik, where Captain Webb in-

tended to hire a couple of native sledge-drivers and three or four teams of the rough, hardy Greenland dogs. All the crew looked eagerly for this opportunity of a run ashore, having seen land only at some distance since they had sailed from the Tay.

Rounding a long curve of the precipitous coast, they stood into the inlet at the head of which the village is situated, and which is enclosed by cliffs of less height, in the clefts of which many sea-birds have their nesting-places. Black guillemots stood motionless on the rocks; black-headed divers pursued their finny prey in the green waves; auks nestled in holes in the cliffs; and turnstones waded

along the shore, seeking for food in the manner from which they have received their name.

The snow had disappeared along the shores of the inlet, though the distant mountains still wore their white winter covering. There were no signs of cultivation, however, and few of vegetation, which seemed to be confined to grasses and mosses, with here and there a bush of juniper.

As the crew let go an anchor, and the vessel was arrested in her progress up the inlet, several men came off from the beach before the village in canoes, which they paddled swiftly towards the ship. In answer to Captain Webb's inquiries, they informed him that there were plenty of dogs in the village, an assertion which was abundantly confirmed by the loud, hoarse barking of the animals as the boats, in which were the skipper, Markham, our two lads, and several of the crew, were pulled towards the landing-place.

The village was a group of wooden houses, irregularly dotting the sloping shore of the inlet, with their fronts at various angles to each other, and all having high roofs, like many old farmhouses in England. All the inhabitants seemed to have gathered on the beach to look at the visitors from the far country with which that of the ancestors of many of them was so intimately connected, and the barking of the numerous dogs gra-

dually ceased, as the animals saw that their owners received the English mariners in a friendly manner.

"Where is the head man of this place?" inquired Captain Webb of a man who had addressed a few words of imperfect English to him.

The Dane indicated a fair-haired young man, well dressed in garments of thick blue woollen, trimmed with fur, and wearing an eagle's feather in his seal-skin cap. This man was approaching from the best house in the village, and had probably lingered behind the rest to adorn his fair locks with his best cap.

To this individual Captain Webb lifted his cap, and directed his inquiries for sledge-drivers and dogs. The young Dane courteously returned his salutation, and invited him to his house, where, over a glass of brandy and a pipe, arrangements were made for the services of a couple of converted Esquimaux, named Christian and Hans, and as many dogs as were likely to be required.

While Captain Webb was thus engaged, Markham and our two lads strolled along the beach, and at a little distance from the village saw a turnstone and several sanderlings wading in the shallow pools left by the receding tide, and auks and divers skimming the green waves that chased each other up the inlet, and rolled up the shingle with a melancholy and unceasing sound.

"Look at that bird," said Charlie, pointing to a sea-bird of dull plumage that was sitting among some fragments of rock, and did not move on their approach. "Can it be wounded, like the gull I once picked up on the shore, that it does not fly away?"

"I dare say it has an egg under it," observed Markham. "I have heard that some of the birds of northern seas will, when sitting, allow themselves to be taken, rather than leave their eggs."

"I will see," said Charlie, leaping over some pieces of rock, and making his way towards the sitting bird, which snapped its bill and uttered a hoarse cry, without changing its position.

Placing a hand over each wing, he lifted it up, and perceived a single white egg, faintly tinged with blue, and slightly veined and spotted with reddish brown. His first impulse was to appropriate the egg as a curiosity, but he refrained, and carefully replaced the bird, which had formed no nest for its reception.

"Is it a habit common to sea-birds to make no nest, and produce only a single egg?" he inquired of Willie, who had followed him to the spot.

"Many of them deposit their eggs on the shingle or sand, like that bird," replied the young sailor; "others scrape a hole to receive them, and some make a loose, untidy nest of sea-weed; but none of them make such a nest as land-birds build. The divers and skuas lay two eggs; the guillemots only one, except the black guillemot, which lays two; the shags and gannets five or six; the terns and gulls seldom more than three; and the shearwaters and Mother Carey's chickens only one."

Continuing their walk along the beach, they came to a gap, which they ascended to the level of the cliff summit, which was there not very high. Hearing a singular cry, like that of some large wild fowl, they all looked in the direction of the sound, and saw a turnstone running through the grass and moss towards a juniper bush.

"Another nest, I'll bet!" exclaimed Willie Webb, running after the bird, which again uttered its peculiar cry, and, flapping its brown wings, flew seaward.

Charlie followed, and they soon found four eggs of an olive-green colour, spotted and streaked with various shades of a reddish brown. They were lying upon a bed of the dead leaves of the juniper, under a low branch of the shrub, which would have effectually concealed them from observation if the presence of the bird had not led to a search for them.

Charlie took one of the eggs for preservation in a collection of natural curiosities of the Arctic regions which he had determined to form, and then they continued their walk. Turning away from the cliff, they looked towards the distant mountains, the summits of which were covered with snow, while the lower slopes presented strips of verdure, alternating with long stretches of moss of various hues.

It was a dreary prospect, but the snowy summits shone with dazzling whiteness in the sunlight, and the pale blue sky, sprinkled with fleecy clouds, gave sharpness to their outlines. Ridge rose upon ridge, like masses of white clouds, as if the whole of the interior of the land was an Arctic Switzerland.

Turning towards the sea, they looked down upon the cluster of wooden houses forming the little village of Upernavik, and the inlet around the head of which it is built, the southern side of which was in shadow, while the northern glittered in the sunlight. On the slope of a hill near them a few rein-deer were browsing on the moss and coarse herbage.

"They have certainly made some attempts at cultivation," said Charlie, who was looking towards the village. "Those enclosed patches of green look like little gardens, and yonder are sheep, too."

Descending a devious track through the moss, they approached the village from the rear, and found that our hero's eyes had not deceived him. Low walls, constructed of stones gathered from the beach, and piled in ridges without cement, divided the little gardens, in which the inhabitants cultivated a few hardy vegetables and herbs, and fenced the pastures in which the more wealthy kept a few sheep or goats.

"I would not give much for their crops," observed Markham, with a smile, as he looked over one of the dwarf walls, and saw what a struggle the cultivator had with the poor soil and the unfavourable climate. "And the sheep! Did you ever see such animals?"

"They have good fleeces," said Charlie, grasping the thick wool on the back of one of the animals; "and I have no doubt that the ewes and she-goats are kept as much for milk as for meat, for there would not be pasturage enough for a cow."

The children of the village gathered around them as they appeared, the little Esquimaux in particular casting their long, dark hair back from their flat faces, and widely opening their little black eyes to stare at them; for though a Danish vessel sometimes carries to the southern settlements commodities which the ungenial climate does not enable them to produce, and whalers occasionally enter their natural harbours for repairs, such visits are much more rare at Upernavik, which is, with

the exception of Providence, the most northerly of the settlements. With some of these unsophisticated little ones Charlie and Willie endeavoured to have a little talk, the endeavour resulting in more amusement than information, however, as the lads knew nothing of either Danish or Esquimaux, and the children were equally ignorant of English, and every failure produced laughter.

The time soon came for their return to the ship, for Morton and the rest of the crew wished for a run ashore, and Captain Webb's arrangement with the sledge-drivers was already concluded. Christian and Hans went aboard, with their noisy teams, at an early hour next morning; and the sun was only just beginning to brighten the snowy crests of the distant mountains, and tip the waves with rose, when the ship sailed out of the inlet, and turned her head towards the north.



CHAPTER VI.

AMONG THE ICE.

OW soon shall we be in the Sound, Captain Webb?" Charlie Wilson inquired, a few days after the voyagers left Upernavik.

The wind was still favourable, and the ship was running rapidly between the rugged and drearylooking coast of Greenland and an apparently illimitable field of ice, on which seals were basking or sporting in the genial sunshine, and which stretched on their left from north to south.

"How soon shall we be in the Sound?" repeated Captain Webb, lowering the grey eyes that lighted his bluff, weather-beaten face as he spoke from the swelling sails of his vessel to the animated countenance of his questioner. "Well, with this wind, if it holds for so long, we should be there in a week; that is, if we are not stopped by ice about

Melville Bay, where it sometimes lays uncommon heavy."

"And if we are, what will you do?" inquired Charlie, with an air of anxiety.

"Push through it if we can," replied Captain Webb. "We may have to wait for a change of wind to carry the ice out; or we may have to run across to Jones Sound, and try to get to the northward from there."

Charlie looked westward as the sturdy mariner suggested this alternative, and his wondering eyes traced northward the far-stretching line of ice which lay, white and glistening, in that direction.

"Ah, that is the Middle Pack!" observed Captain Webb. "That is always there, all the year round, stretching down the Bay; while there is open water on each side, and round its northern extremity. Sometimes there are open channels through it, and we can always get round the head to Lancaster Sound."

"Bergs ahead!" shouted the look-out man at that moment, and Charlie ran forward, eager to see the first of those towering masses of floating ice of which he had so often heard and read.

"There is a berg, Charlie!" exclaimed Willie Webb, as, leaning over the bulwarks of the vessel, he pointed to a distant mass of ice, glittering in the

sunlight as it rose and fell on the blue-grey waves, looking very much like a peak of one of the snow-covered mountains which bounded the prospect eastward.

"I see only one," observed Charlie, shading his eyes with his right hand as he gazed on the novel object before them. "But old Saunders can see farther than we can, and I dare say we shall see more presently."

In less than an hour two more floating mountains of ice were in sight, drifting slowly in the wake of each other, and in the course of the ship, which had to be slightly changed to avoid a collision. The favouring breeze continuing, she ran past them shortly afterwards, and Charlie saw, with wonder and delight, the giant masses of ice, their pinnacled summits towering above the masts of the ship, encrusted with snow, which glistened in the sunbeams like frosted silver,—their steep and craggy sides shining like masses of sapphire and emerald, —their wave-worn bases hollowed into dark recesses, hung with enormous icicles, like stalactites in a limestone cavern.

Other bergs rose on the northern horizon as these were passed, and towards night they became so numerous that Captain Webb judged it expedient to shorten sail to avoid coming into contact with them, while the experienced seaman who was

steering the vessel had his vigilance and skill tasked to the utmost.

Next day the breeze increased, and impelled the vessel through the water so rapidly that, her bows meeting the strong current from the northward, she plunged heavily over the waves, which covered her deck with spray. The number and magnitude of the icebergs which she almost constantly drove past imperilled her so much that Captain Webb felt anxious for her safety, even after every sail had been closely furled.

"Mr. Morton," said he, to the chief officer of the vessel, an intelligent, skilful, and experienced seaman, "have ready a couple of grapnels; if this continues, we must try to make her fast to a good-sized berg."

"Ay, we must try, sir," returned the mate, emphasizing the verb as he looked anxiously around. "But there is rather too much of a gale to promise much for the success of the manœuvre."

He gave orders, however, for the grapnels to be got ready, and, screening his face from the driving spray with one broad brown hand, looked towards the masses of ice which they were rapidly approaching.

"There is a big fellow on the port side, sir, we shall be down upon in five minutes," said he.

"Stand by!" shouted Captain Webb. "Port

the helm! Grapple to the berg as we run past! Now!"

The grapnels were cast as the vessel drove past a stupendous iceberg, and both fortunately caught hollows or projections in the drifting mass, and held fast, bringing the vessel up with a strain upon the mooring ropes which caused them to creak as they tightened.

"Well cast!" exclaimed Captain Webb, approvingly. "I think we shall ride all right now, Mr. Morton."

"Ay, we are all right on *that* side, sir," returned Morton, who was a very cautious man, and never took too sanguine a view of any situation in which the ship might be placed.

The weight of the stupendous berg to which the vessel was now attached checked her speed, and, though the gale continued, she did not plunge as before. and the cold spray ceased to be cast over her deck.

During three days the ship and the berg kept company, the wind still blowing a gale from the south; but on the fourth a crash like thunder announced that the ice-mountain was breaking up, and, while the grapnels were hastily cast off, it split from base to summit, and an enormous mass of ice toppled over towards the vessel, crushing the port bulwarks, and covering the deck with ice and snow.

Released from the curb of the berg, the ship again drove rapidly before the wind, amongst masses of ice which alternately plunged beneath the waves and reared their glittering emerald-like heads above them, crashing and grinding against each other, and churning the sea into foam and spray, which drove in clouds before the wind.

"The Lord have mercy on us!" said Willie Webb, clasping his hands as he looked towards the icebergs upon which the vessel was driving in the furious gale.

Charlie Wilson said not a word; he seemed spell-bound by the imminency of the peril with which they were threatened. Just ahead was a group of icebergs of such magnitude, and in such close proximity to each other, that it seemed almost impossible to avoid a collision.

"Man the braces!" shouted Captain Webb, making his voice heard above the roar of the gale and the crash of ice. "Put the helm hard to starboard! Brace the yards! sharp!"

The orders followed each other rapidly, and were as rapidly executed by the able and well-disciplined men whom Captain Webb commanded. As the vessel drove between two of the stupendous masses of ice, the yards were sharply braced, and she ran through the narrow passage with so little room to spare that the ends of the yards must have struck

the ice, with the probable result of the loss of much of her standing rigging, but for the orders given with so much promptitude by the captain, and executed with so much alacrity by the crew.

"That was a close shave, Morton," observed the second mate, as the vessel ran safely between the two bergs.

"We mayn't get off so well next time," returned Morton. "And we may have a squeeze in ten minutes, for anything I can see."

"What a mercy!" ejaculated Willie Webb, with a slight shiver; but he was prevented from dwelling upon the peril that had been avoided by the danger that was impending.

More icebergs were before them, and the violence of the gale rendered it difficult to avoid them.

"We must hook on to another berg, Mr. Morton," said Captain Webb, as he looked forward through the blinding spray; and in another moment the grapnels were ready, and they were attached to one of the largest bergs as the vessel drove past it, only prevented from driving against it by the promptitude of the commander and the alertness of the steersman.

The grapnels held fast, and the ropes withstood the strain upon them, so that the vessel was again brought up, restrained from driving into danger by the berg, which at the same time prevented collision with any other mass of ice on that side. So the iceberg and the vessel drove on together for several hours, when the gale abated, and the carpenter and his mate came on deck to repair the bulwarks, where they had been broken by the fragments of the disrupted mountains of ice.

"What do you think of arctic weather now Charlie?" said Captain Webb to our young hero.

"It is not always like this," returned Charlie.

"Too often," said the weather-beaten seaman, with a shrug. "But we have had as narrow escapes to-day as any that have fallen to my fortune Don't forget your prayers to-night, boys; for the strong arm and the stout heart are powerless to save unless it be God's will."

The boys did not disregard Captain Webb's admonition, nor was there a man aboard the whaler who did not give thanks to God that night for the loving mercy by which they had been preserved from the dangers with which wind and waves and ice had threatened them.



CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN ON THE ICEBERG.



URING the night the wind again rose to a gale, and the crew of the whaler, though inured to the rough weather and many risks of the arctic seas, con-

gratulated themselves on the protection afforded by the iceberg, to which the vessel remained secured. As the wind howled through the rigging, and lashed the dark current into foam, they heard above the elemental strife the icebergs around them grinding and crashing as they were driven against each other, and several times during the long night felt the shock of one of the driving masses against the berg by which they were protected.

About midnight, the watch on deck were startled by the sudden flashing into the darkness of a bright light on the port bow, which shed a livid illumination over sea and ice for a few moments, and then died out. Its evanescent brilliance lighted up during its brief duration the masts and rigging of a vessel which was beset by ice about a mile distant.

"We will look after you when day breaks, my friends, if the gale moderates," observed Markham, who was the officer of the watch, as he gazed towards the vessel, which did not seem to be in any immediate danger, so far as could be discerned by the brief illumination of the signal light.

The vessel from which the signal had proceeded was in an upright position at that moment, and nothing is more common than for vessels to be hemmed in by ice so closely that they cannot be extricated by any efforts of their crews, and to remain in that situation for several days, and even weeks, without sustaining any serious damage, so strongly are they constructed to meet the perils of those icy seas.

It was with much surprise, therefore, that Captain Webb, on looking, as day began to dawn, in the direction in which the vessel had been seen, could discern no trace of her. The icebergs, standing out in spectral whiteness against the sombre sky, advanced or receded, rose and fell upon the tumbling and foaming waves, like phantoms performing a ghostly dance; but their pale and glassy sides were uncrossed by the black lines of mast or yard, shroud or stay.

"Can she have gone down, or has she got out and stood away?" he asked himself, as he swept the dim horizon with his telescope.

"Man on a berg!" shouted the look-out man at that instant; and at that cry all who were on the deck ran forward, some leaning over the bulwarks, and others springing in their eagerness into the fore-shrouds.

"Where away?" bawled the captain.

"On the port bow!" replied the look-out man.

Looking in that direction, Captain Webb discerned, without the aid of his telescope, a dark object on a projecting pinnacle of a huge iceberg.

"Then she must have gone down, and that poor devil alone is left to tell the tale!" he exclaimed. "Cast off from the berg, and set the royals and the foretop-gallant-sail. We shall soon see whether the fellow has any life in him."

The grapnels were cast off, and the vessel again ran freely before the wind, which had now diminished to a moderate breeze. As the current runs southward in Baffin Bay, and there is as large a portion of an iceberg submerged as appears above the waves, the motion of the mass on which the man was perched was very slow, and the distance between it and the ship rapidly diminished.

As the light increased, and a gleam of sunshine struggled through the clouds, every eye was again turned in the direction in which the ice-begirt ship had been seen the preceding night, but no vestige of a vessel was now to be seen. Captain Webb scanned the horizon with his glass, but could see no ship, nor even a boat, or so much as a fragment of wreck.

A little northward of the spot upon which the blue light had shed a brief illumination floated the huge iceberg upon which a dark form was now distinctly visible. Broken into many clefts and hollows, it rose and fell with a gentle motion, with water rolling in and pouring out of the cavities in its base, which was of a deep neutral tint, while the upper portion displayed the gradations of colour between the blue of the sapphire and the green of the emerald.

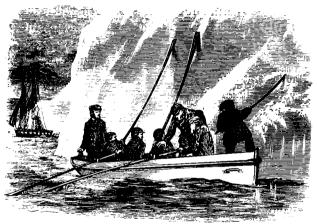
Seated upon a projecting point, and embracing a pinnacle with his left arm, while he waved his right hand to attract the attention of the whaler's crew, was a man in the warm clothing of the hardy mariners who navigate the northern seas in quest of the whale and the seal. Either from exhaustion, or from the conviction of a speedy rescue, he betrayed no excitement, sitting motionless and silent upon the iceberg, and only waving his hand at intervals, without uttering any cry.

"He takes it coolly enough," observed Willie Webb, who came on deck just as the sun glim-

mered over the snow-covered mountains of Greenland, and the human character of the object on the iceberg became clearly determinable.

"I should say that icy perch would make any fellow cool," rejoined Charlie Wilson.

"Man a boat, and bring off that fellow!" shouted



THE RESCUED SEAMAN.

the captain, as the vessel rapidly ran down towards the mass of ice upon which the solitary waif was seated.

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried three or four of the crew, as they hastily prepared to lower one of the boats, which in a few minutes they were sturdily pulling towards the iceberg. As the boat approached the mass of ice upon which that solitary man had found a precarious resting-place, he was seen descending towards the base, from which, as the boat ran alongside, he slipped into it.

"What ship, mate?" said one of the rowers.

"'Alert,' of Dundee," was the reply, as the rescued mariner seated himself in the boat.

"'Alert!'" exclaimed two or three voices together. "Has the good ship 'Alert' gone to Davy Jones's locker?"

"Not a plank of her left," replied the stranger, with a shuddering glance towards the scene of the disaster. "She got a terrible nip between two bergs, and the water rushed into her, and filled her."

"But she stood all a-taunt last night," observed one of the rowers.

"You saw our signal, then?" said the shipwrecked mariner. "Ay, she was held up awhile by the pressure of the bergs; but when they left her, she went down like a stone."

Charlie Wilson, who had watched the rescue of the man, was gazing at the returning boat, when, as it came near the ship, he thought he had seen the stranger before.

"Why, Willie!" he exclaimed, clutching the arm of the captain's son. "Look! Isn't that the

man who spoke to me when-you know who I mean."

"The queer Swedish fellow?" returned Willie. "It does look like him."

"It is!" exclaimed Charlie, as the boat came alongside; and then, as he recollected the remark of Svendson on the occasion of their last meeting, he muttered, "How strange!"

"Why? What is strange?" inquired Willie.

"That he should be picked up amidst the ice of Baffin Bay, and by this ship, of all others," returned Charlie.

"You are getting as mysterious as the Swede," said Willie. "What do you mean?"

"I will tell you," replied Charlie, lowering his voice. "I saw the fellow a few days before we left Dundee, and he said he should see me somewhere up this way."

"Well, he is a queer fellow," observed Willie, as the mysterious seaman stepped upon the deck, and saluted Captain Webb. "But he surely has not got himself wrecked for the chance of falling in with you?"

They listened with interest to the story which was told by Svendson to Captain Webb of the loss of the "Alert," and his own preservation by leaping from the rigging to the iceberg upon which he was found as the ship was going down amidst the coar of the elemental strife.

"Go to the cook for a basin of warm cocoa," said the captain, when the Swede had told his story, which he delivered in plain and simple terms, and without any indications of insanity. "We shall find work for you, if we cannot put you aboard one of the whalers in the Bay."

The dark eyes of Peter Svendson wandered round the ship as Captain Webb turned away from him, and met those of our two lads.

"Ah, Wilson!" said he, without testifying any surprise at meeting our young hero, upon whom he bestowed a friendly nod of recognition; "I told you we should meet somewhere up this way."

"You have a queer fashion of making appointments, friend, and as queer a way of keeping them," observed Morton, who had overheard the remark.

Svendson made no rejoinder, but proceeded to the cooking-place, where a basin of warm cocoa soon restored to his limbs the warmth of which exposure on the iceberg had deprived them.



CHAPTER VIII.

ASHORE IN ELLESMERE LAND.

ERE is the gateway of the Pole!" said Charlie Wilson, when, a few days after the gale, the explorers sailed into Smith Sound, and he saw

with delighted eyes, from the deck of the whaler, the stupendous cliffs of the Greenland coast towering to the height of from twelve to fifteen hundred feet, and presenting towards the water a perpendicular face of at least half that height.

The scene was marked by the sublimity of frigid sterility and dreariness. On the right rose the frowning cliffs in rude magnificence, from masses of ice heaped along their base by the stormy waves, with enormous icicles still pendant from their lofty edges, and snow glistening, white and crisp, on every ledge and slope. On the left the cliffs were low, and a broad slope above their edges

was covered with snow of dazzling whiteness. Before them, towards the north, a broad channel of blue-grey water stretched as far as they could see, its cold uniformity broken by numerous masses of ice, some of them of enormous size, which, as they floated down the Sound with the current, exhibited in the bright sunlight all the colours of the rainbow.

"Ay, this must be the way, Charlie," responded Captain Webb, as he gazed earnestly and hopefully up the broad channel. "Confound those dogs, what an uproar they make!" he added, with a little asperity, as a rough-coated dog snuffed the air and barked, and the chorus was taken up in various keys by some forty animals of the same kind—sharp-muzzled, erect-eared, and bushy-tailed, which had been taken on board at Upernavik.

"The brutes are hungry," observed the second officer. "They turn up their noses at meal, and Hans tells me there is nothing else left for them."

"We must look out for a bear or a walrus," said Captain Webb. "But I cannot lose this wind by anchoring while food is looked for on shore."

A fine south-westerly breeze was impelling the vessel towards her goal at as much speed as the drifting icebergs made consistent with safety, and it was important to the success of the enterprise that no time should be lost in pushing towards the

Polar ocean. But in a few days the wind sank to a dead calm, and Captain Webb had the vessel moored by hawsers to a rock on the coast of Ellesmere Land, both to prevent her from drifting southward with the current, and to keep her clear of the floating masses of ice.

"Now for a run on shore with the dogs!" exclaimed Willie Webb, skipping about the deck. "Father says you and I may go, Charlie, and Mr. Morton, and Hans and Christian, and half a dozen of the men. We shall have such a time!"

"I hope we shall come across a bear!" said Charlie, his blue eyes sparkling with anticipated pleasure. "I should like to take a bear's skin home, and be able to say that I shot the beast myself."

While the boys were talking, several active seamen were handing up muskets and whaling lances, or preparing to lower a boat, and the two Esquimaux sledge-drivers were unchaining the wild-looking dogs, which raised a fearful clamour as they ran about the deck. Some of the excited animals sprang into the water and swam ashore, and others accompanied the men in the boat, which in a few minutes conveyed the whole party to the shore.

Landing near a gap in the cliff, they secured the boat, and scrambled over snow-covered rocks and masses of ice, amongst which the dogs ran in wild confusion, snuffing the ground, and thrusting their noses into every cranny. The party were soon upon level ground, and saw the land stretching to the north and west as far as they could see,—a dreary, treeless waste, covered with snow, and rising in the distance into low round-headed hills. A few birds, probably partridges or grouse, were skimming over the ground, but no other living thing was visible.

There was little scope for the choice of route, no wooded dells or ferny hollows; not a stunted fir, or even a juniper bush, was anywhere to be seen. While Mr. Morton hesitated whether to proceed northward, parallel with the Sound, or to advance into the interior, the dogs, after scuffling about wildly for some moments, decided the question by starting westward at full speed.

Following them as rapidly as they could over the snow, which was losing its crisp firmness under the influence of summer, a stumble and a flounder in the snow occurring to several of the party, to the diversion of those who succeeded in keeping on their feet, they overtook them at a spot where a stain of blood and a few morsels of brown hair indicated that a hare had been caught and devoured by the ravenous animals, who were eagerly snuffing the ground, as a cat does after eating a mouse or a bird. "There was not a mouthful for each," observed Hans, who had learned sufficient English from the whalers to express himself intelligibly. "The poor brutes will be keener than before."

"There is something yonder," observed Mr. Morton, pointing to some object protruding from the snow at some distance. "Is it a bush, Hans, or—what is it?"

Hans made no reply, but the strange object had already caught the eyes of the dogs, who were careering over the snow towards it. The seamen and the Esquimaux followed, and, after tramping some distance through the snow, found the dogs vainly gnawing the bleached skeleton of a deer. Near the spot was a hollow, in the bottom of which a little pool had been formed by the melting of the snow, from the remains of which there peeped out, on the northern side of the hollow, little patches of moss, tufts of grass, and a few low-growing herbaceous plants.

"Flowers!" exclaimed Charlie Wilson, in a tone of enthusiasm, as he sprang into the hollow. "Look here, Willie! Here are mosses and grasses, and chickweed, and purple lychnis, in bloom!"

"And something like a wallflower!" added Willie, as he joined his companion, and both bent delightedly over the flowery bank.

"Who would have thought of finding flowers in

this latitude?" said Charlie, proceeding to pluck a few of the white star-like blossoms of the chickweed, a sprig of the lychnis, and some flowering grasses. "I must dry these for aunt, and—why, here is a bird's nest, Willie!"

In the thickest growth of the moss there was a neat little cup-like structure of dry grass, lined with feathers and hair; and in the bottom laid four small eggs, marked with numerous blotches of purple and a circle of brown spots, upon a ground of greenish white.

"It is the nest of a snow-bunting," observed Mr. Morton, who had followed the lads into the hollow. "The builders are tawny buntings now, though, for they are white only in the winter, their snowy plumage being moulted in the spring, as the snow disappears."

"Ah, the Almighty is very kind to the little buntings!" said Hans. "He gives them white feathers when the snow covers everything, and in the summer they are the colour of the rocks, so that the hawk and the owl may not see them."

"But they do not remain in this cold and dreary region through the winter?" said Charlie, in an inquiring tone, as he raised his wondering eyes from the nest to the broad, dark face of the Esquimaux.

"No," replied Hans. "They could not live here

then; so they fly southward in flocks, as far, I am told, as your own country."

"Don't disturb it, Willie," said Charlie, as his companion was about to take possession of the nest; but at the same moment one of the dogs sprang into the hollow, and thrusting its nose into the moss, pulled out the nest, and swallowed the eggs, together with a considerable portion of the soft lining of feathers and hair upon which they rested.

"Ravenous beast!" exclaimed Willie, angrily.

"He knows no better," observed Hans, in a deprecatory tone. "And he is famishing, poor brute!"

"I am sorry for the poor birds," said Charlie, as he picked up the wreck of the bunting's nest, and contemplated the neat arrangement of the materials with a look of blended admiration and pity. "What a time they must have worked at their little home!"

A shout suddenly diverted their attention from the nest and the flowers, and, looking up, they beheld a large white bear looking at them from the edge of the hollow. The shout startled the bear, which raised its head, snuffing the air, and then disappeared. Bounding up the mossy side of the hollow, they saw the shaggy beast shuffling off, and heard the report of a musket.

The dogs started off on the trail of the bear, which continued its retreat, unscathed by the bullet which had been fired by one of the seamen; but on a second shot being fired by Mr. Morton, and grazing one of the animal's hind legs, the bear turned round, growling savagely, and the dogs paused, showing their teeth, however, and growling as savagely as the bear. Another of the seamen fired immediately, and the bear, struck in the shoulder, rushed forward with long strides, open-mouthed, and bellowing with pain and rage.

The dogs, hungry and savage as they were, gave way before the bear's furious advance, but formed a circle around him, and showed very plainly that they longed to taste his blood and tear his flesh. One of the pack, not being sufficiently alert, was prostrated on the snow, with its back broken by a blow of the bear's right paw; but at the next moment Willie Webb discharged his musket, and the bear stumbled and fell forward, one of his fore legs being broken by the shot.

The fiercest of the dogs immediately rushed upon him, fastening their sharp teeth in his shoulders and haunches, and Christian pierced him with a lance, inflicting a mortal wound. The bear seized the lance with his teeth, and strove to break it; but it was his last effort, and the dogs

tore the flesh from his bones before he had ceased to breathe.

The party then turned towards the ship, which was reached without any other adventure or mischance.



CHAPTER IX.

IN THE WAKE OF KANE.

N the following day, a steady breeze again blew from the south-west, and, the hawsers being cast from the rocks, the vessel proceeded on her voyage.

The weather was still clear, and the quantity of ice which was met, as well as the size of the masses, was much less than Captain Webb had been led, by the narratives of former explorers, to expect.

"Have we still deep water, Mr. Morton?" he inquired, as the chief officer entered the cabin, where he was attentively examining a chart of the Sound.

"Yes, sir," responded Morton, with an expression of anxiety on his countenance which the announcement did not seem to warrant. "And it is the soundings that make me anxious about our position. According to calculation, we are beyond Kane's

farthest with the ship, and he was stopped by shallows."

"Ay," said Captain Webb, with the muscles of his forehead gathering into a pucker. "I can't make that out. Kane's ship grounded several times, even at high water; and once she heeled over in the night, pitching the men out of their berths, and upsetting the cabin stove, which set fire to the deck. They put the fire out with a few buckets of water, and got the ship off with the flood-tide; but Kane came to the conclusion that she could not be got any farther, and had her warped into Rensselaer Bay for the winter. She must be there now, if she has not been knocked to pieces by the ice, for they never got any farther, and after passing two winters amidst the ice, left her there."

"It is very strange!" said Morton, plucking his moustache with an air of perplexity. "Rensselaer Bay is below the seventy-ninth degree of latitude, and Captain Hall worked his ship up to eighty-two twenty-six, which is the highest latitude ever reached by a ship."

"Ay," rejoined Captain Webb, "and then he was not out of the Sound; but a party from Kane's ship saw the Sound opening into a Polar ocean more than a degree lower, which shows that a serious miscalculation must have been made by one or the other."

Morton assented by a nod, and his gravity remained undiminished

"Kane's ship must have been nearer to the shore than we are," observed the captain. "They encountered more ice than we have, and must have been forced too near to the Greenland side of the Sound. That must be it, Mr. Morton."

The chief officer made the same sign of assent as before, and slowly quitted the cabin. Charlie Wilson, who had passed the cabin door a few minutes before, and caught a few words of the conversation, observed the grave expression of Morton's countenance, and sought Willie Webb.

"See how grave Mr. Morton looks," he whispered. "He has been having some talk with your father about the navigation, and they have been studying the chart, and talking about Kane's exploration of the Sound. I wish I knew more about that expedition."

"Sandy Macfarlane can tell you all about it," returned Willie. "He has read Kane's book, and pretty well got it by heart; and there he sits in the forecastle, smoking his pipe."

Charlie stepped at once towards the forecastle, followed by Willie, and Sandy Macfarlane, a little weather-beaten sailor, whose light auburn hair was beginning to be streaked with grey, needed little prompting to repeat the oft-told story.

"You see, my lads," he began, "only two ships have ever been up the Sound before, and neither of them ever got back again; though some of our Dundee skippers talk about sailing into the open sea seen by Kane's men, and going straight to the Pole, as if it was as easy as running across to Norway. Though it is more than two centuries and a half since Baffin discovered this Sound,—it sound it can properly be called,—he only sailed across the mouth of it, and not a keel ever ploughed these waters until Kane sailed up some twenty years ago. He got into the Sound about the beginning of August, but meeting with a great deal of ice, and terrible gales of wind, was a month getting as high as Rensselaer Bay, where he found the water so shallow that he didn't try to get any farther. He tried to get up in a boat, but the navigation was so much obstructed by ice that he gave that up too, and started in a sledge, along the wild and rocky coast we have passed. Sledging was found to be as bad as boating, however, for they often had to carry the sledge over steep ridges of rock and projecting points of glaciers; so the sledge was abandoned, and they proceeded on foot, carrying their rations and instruments in knapsacks. They didn't make much way, however,-only forty miles in five days. Several skeletons of deer and musk-oxen were passed, but they didn't see any living animals, though the tracks of deer were numerous. Just beyond seventy-nine degrees, they reached the bold headland now laid down as Cape Hawke, from which they could see, on the left, the dreary shore stretching north-ward as far as they could see, and on the right the rugged north-western coast of Greenland, backed by snow-covered hills, intersected by glaciers. Then they turned back, and the ship was warped into Rensselaer Bay for the winter."

"They never got any farther, did they?" said Charlie, as Sandy Macfarlane paused to relight his pipe.

"The ship didn't," replied the narrator. "But wait a bit. You lads are always so impatient. Kane's plan was to explore the Sound in the spring with a sledge; but he began too early, and the first start was a failure, and a very shocking affair it was. Five of the party broke down with frost-bite and scurvy, the cold being intense, and a sharp breeze blowing from the north-west; and they had to be carried back to the ship, which they reached in a terrible state of exhaustion and suffering, some insensible, others delirious. One of the poor fellows died. That was the latter end of March, and the attempt was not renewed till the beginning of May, when Kane started himself, with seven men, and, after a rough journey through

deep snow-drifts and over hummocky ice, were stopped by a tremendous glacier. A month later, another party started, and got round the glacier, after a severe struggle with snow and ice, and discovered Peabody Bay. There, from the top of a great mass of ice, they saw, beyond the glacier, an extensive plain stretching northward as far as they could see. They were stopped from getting farther on the Greenland side of the Sound, however, by broad openings in the ice; and they crossed over towards what they call Grinnell Land, and sledged along that side till they came to a lofty headland, nearly five hundred feet high, which is now laid down on the maps and charts as Cape Constitution. That was where they saw the open sea. They looked right down upon it, and heard the surf dashing against the rocks below."

"But how was it, then, that they could not get the ship any farther?" inquired Charlie, who had listened to the narrative with the keenest interest.

"The ice never broke up all through the summer," replied Sandy Macfarlane. "The crew blasted and sawed, but the ice was too much for them, and they had to pass another winter in it, and to bury another of their mates under the deep snow. Then, when the next spring came, their provisions were pretty nigh exhausted, and Kane determined to leave the ship, and sledge southward

until open water was reached, and they could launch the boats. So the boats and the remainder of the provisions were placed upon sledges, and they followed the Greenland coast, experiencing many perils and privations, and losing another of the crew by the way. After a journey of seventeen days, they reached Littleton Island, and from its highest point saw open water in Baffin's Bay. They were ten days more reaching it, and then they launched their boats, and coasted down to Upernavick. By that time all their provisions were gone, and they were living upon seal's flesh. They were very kindly treated by the good people of the settlement, where they stopped some time, waiting for a ship. They got down to Godhaab in a Danish vessel, and there found a ship that had been sent in search of them by the American Government"

"Now, how far north do they put down the northern opening of this sound or strait?" inquired Willie Webb.

"Just beyond eighty-one degrees," replied Sandy Macfarlane.

"Then how are we to account for Captain Hall going a degree farther, and not getting into the open sea?" said Willie.

"There must have been a miscalculation somewhere," replied Sandy, after a pause. "But Captain

Hall saw the open sea as well as Kane's men, and there it must be, though we may not be more successful than them that have gone before us in pushing into it, and seeing Greenland stretching away to the east'ard, and Grinnell Land to the west'ard."

"Ice ahead!" was shouted at that moment, and the lads ran out of the forecastle, and hung over the bows to observe the coming obstruction.

"Put the helm to starboard, and stand by the braces!" cried Morton, at the same moment as a large mass of ice was seen floating down the Sound directly in the vessel's course.

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the seamen, as they seized the braces, and awaited the next order.

"Starboard it is!" cried the steerer, as the vessel's head obeyed the helm.

"Brace the yards!" was the next command given by the chief officer, and as the yards were swung in the new direction given to the vessel, the mass of ice glided harmlessly past.



CHAPTER X.

THE WRECK OF THE "POLARIS."

ESS ice was encountered as the explorers advanced, and, as the favouring breeze wafted them quickly through the Sound, — which it would be more

correct to call Smith Strait,—every heart beat high at the prospect of their acquiring the fame and more substantial rewards that would be won by the discoverers of the North Pole.

"We are spanking along, Charlie," said Willie Webb to our young hero one morning, when the broad strait was almost free from ice, and the green waves broke in foam against the vessel's bows as she was driven against the current by the strong southerly breeze. "Father says we are sure now to find open water in the Polar Ocean, and the only doubt about our reaching the Pole this summer arises from our want of knowledge concerning the

ocean,—whether it rolls over the Pole, and, if not, how much of the intervening distance is water, and how much land."

"Shall we ask Svendson?" said Charlie, with a smile.

Willie looked around, to assure himself that the Swede was not near them, before he replied.

"I don't believe he knows much about it," he then rejoined. "Between you and I, Charlie, I think the fellow is a bit daft, or else he has got something very terrible on his mind. I have not seen a smile on his face since he has been aboard, and I have noticed that he associates very little with the other men, and often stalks about the deck, absorbed in thought, or staring intently at nothing."

Charlie gave vent to what was passing in his mind by an expressive shrug, and the lads walked towards the forecastle.

"Let us ask old Sandy to tell us about the wreck of the 'Polaris,'" said Willie. "I know he has got an old newspaper containing the narrative of Captain Buddington, and has spelt it over until he can run the yarn off like a book."

"I have read it myself," returned Charlie, "but I don't mind having my memory refreshed. Willie wants to hear about the 'Polaris' expedition, Macfarlane," he added, as they entered the fore-

castle, where the old sailor was reading a dog'seared book, which he held away from the blue smoke that curled upward from the bowl of his pipe.

"About the 'Polaris'?" said Sandy. "Ah. that was a most unfortunate expedition, my lads! You see. Kane had got so far that it was thought another might get farther, and so Captain Hall was sent from New York, with instructions to push as far as he could in the same direction. They steamed into the Sound at the latter end of August, and got on pretty well till the eighty-first degree was passed, when a dense fog came on, and the ship was made fast to a floe. According to their calculations, they must then have been near the northern mouth of the strait, and they went a degree farther: but I reckon there was a miscalculation. However, the ice bore down upon them with so much force, that they were driven southward; and at the beginning of September anchored in an inlet, now called 'Polaris' Bay, on the Greenland side. Hall then made a sledge journey northward, the chief officer and a couple of Esquimaux going with him. They were absent fourteen days, and soon after their return to the ship the captain was taken seriously ill, and died in about a week. Captain Buddington, the sailing-master, took the command, and nothing was done till the following summer. They got through the winter pretty well,

except that the ship broke adrift once, and got into collision with an iceberg. In the beginning of the following June, an attempt was made to get to the northward in boats; but the ice was so troublesome that they abandoned the boats, and returned on foot along the cliffs. The ship remained fast in the ice until the middle of August, and then, as the season was so far advanced, Captain Buddington determined to steer homeward. So they hove the anchors, and she drifted out with the ice, but so slowly that they did not double Cape Alexander until near the middle of October. There a violent gale arose, and the ship got a severe nip in the ice. As she was very likely to sink when the floes parted, her boats and stores were placed on the ice; and these precautions had just been completed when, between nine and ten o'clock at night, the ice opened; the hawser by which the ship was made fast to one of the floes snapped, and the ship drifted away into the darkness, leaving fifteen of the crew and the two Esquimaux, with their wives and a child, on the ice."

"Like those poor Germans!" said Charlie, with a lively recollection of what he had read of the disaster that befell the "Hansa" while exploring the eastern coast of Greenland.

"And they built houses, like the Germans, didn't they, Macfarlane?" said Willie.

"They built snow-houses upon the floe, same as the Esquimaux do," returned the old sailor; "and there they were all through the winter. Once they drifted very near to the shore, but a gale sprung up, and drove them from it; and then they drifted slowly down Baffin's Bay, and through Davis's Strait. Their provisions were exhausted by November, and after that they lived upon seals and birds, which they caught in traps, and sometimes they shot a bear."

"What size was the floe?" inquired Willie.

"Originally it was about five miles in circumference, but towards the end of the following March a strong westerly gale broke it up, and reduced it by degrees to a piece about twenty yards across. In a few days, however, they were able to launch their boats, which they steered to the westward, hoping to reach the coast of Labrador, because, you see, there was a strong north-east wind blowing. They knocked about Davis's Strait until the last day of April, when a steamer drove against a floe to which they had moored the boats, owing to a thick fog having come on, and with which they were drifting into Grady Bay."

"How the crew of the steamer must have stared when they found a lot of people on the floe!" observed Charlie.

"Ah!" ejaculated Sandy. "So, after drifting

and rowing more than sixteen hundred miles, they were picked up, and carried to St. John's, in Newfoundland."

"And what became of the ship?" inquired Willie. "Was it lost?"

"I'll tell you the rest of the story in Captain Buddington's own words," replied Sandy, and, after rummaging a locker in which, to use a sailor's common mode of expressing such a state of things, "everything was at top, and nothing at hand," he produced an old newspaper, from which he read as follows:—

"We were in a critical condition, without boats, anchors, or hawsers; but there was no time for reflection, as the water was gaining fast, and would soon reach the furnace fires, and the ice around us would not bear the weight of a man. water in the boiler was hot, and by pouring several bucketsful down the pumps, we thawed them sufficiently to enable us to keep the water from gaining. and never did men use their strength with more energy than upon that occasion. Fortunately the engineer reported steam up, by which additional aid we were enabled to keep her afloat. On the morning of the 16th we found our position a few miles north of Littleton Island. The gale had subsided, and it was shortly afterwards quite calm. We looked from the mast-head for our companions on the floe, but could see nothing of them. The current must have taken them in a different direction from the course the wind took us. About noon a breeze sprang up from the north, and we began drifting out of the Sound again. By the aid of steam and sail I ran the vessel as near shore as the ice would admit, and made her fast with lines to heavy grounded hummocks in Kane Cove.

"We kept an anxious look-out all the time for signs of the other party, but the sharpest eyes aboard failed to see aught of them. On the 17th I surveyed the ship, and found the stern entirely broken off. I considered her lost, and immediately made preparations for leaving her, and wintering on shore. We were assisted by the Esquimaux, who came to us the day after we got ashore. We put up a house, those not engaged in building being occupied in getting provisions and fuel, which they did with great difficulty, as they had to leap from one detached piece of ice to another all the way to the shore.

"We spent the winter in getting ice for melting, supplying galley and house-stove with coal, and keeping passages to and from the house free from snow. We were visited continually by the natives, who were suffering a great deal from cold and hunger. Several families made their residence

with us during most of the winter, building snowhuts for themselves. We supplied them with a share of the provisions we had, but still they had to kill a great many of their dogs, to give their children fresh meat.

"February brought us daylight. On the 15th the sun was seen for the first time since the 16th of November. We had now to consume the masts and yards for fuel. The following months were occupied in building boats. Shooting parties went out occasionally, but, with the exception of a few hares, generally returned unsuccessful. A great many deer were seen, but only one was shot. Although the natives had left us some time for their respective settlements and hunting-grounds, they still continued to visit us, and as if in memory of our former kindness to them, which they appeared to have appreciated, they brought us quantities of walrus liver, which made a great improvement in our health."

"Sandy! Sandy Macfarlane!" Markham was heard calling at that moment, and the old sailor hastily folded his newspaper, thrust it into his pocket, and hurried aft.

"I can tell you the rest," said Charlie, observing that Willie's countenance assumed an expression of disappointment. "They launched their boats early in June, and rowed down to Cape York, where they were picked up by a whaler from Kirkcaldy. And so ended one of the strangest stories in the strange history of Arctic exploration."



CHAPTER XI.

THE POLAR OCEAN.

by the breadth of the channel, and its comparative freedom from ice, they were now able to admire more leisurely

the grand scenery of the Greenland shore, with its stupendous cliffs and glittering glaciers. The Sound narrowing as they proceeded, they were able to discern on their left the blue ridges of Grinnell Land, from which the snow was rapidly disappearing, and on their right the towering cliffs and the masses of ice which, glittering like blocks of sapphire, filled up the gaps in the rocky wall.

The northern extremity of the Sound began at length to be watched for with eagerness, not unmingled with anxiety on the part of Captain Webb, uncertain as he was of the breadth of water which might be found between the northern coast of Greenland and the North Pole, and upon which seemed to depend the success of the quest for the spot around which a halo of mystery had been drawn for ages.

It was a fine evening, and the air was comparatively mild for that high latitude, when a group of the explorers, standing with their backs to the setting sun, saw the glaciers tending to the eastward, and the blue waves, merely rippled by the breeze, widening as they were ploughed by the vessel's bows. Captain Webb looked towards the coast of Grinnell Land, which still stretched northward, and resumed his anxious pacing of the deck.

"We are getting out of the Sound!" exclaimed Charlie Wilson, eagerly and excitedly, as he directed the attention of Willie Webb to the eastward curve of the Greenland glaciers, which flashed and glittered in the level beams of the setting sun like masses of opal.

Another hour passed, and the rainbow hues of the glaciers had faded out, leaving ice and water of a cold pale blue tint, as the sun sank behind the distant ridges of Grinnell Land, and the colour of the sky changed from rose to grey, when a lofty promontory was passed, which seemed the northeastern point of the land on their left. "Three cheers for the Polar Ocean!" cried Captain Webb, doffing his cap, and waving it enthusiastically; and the cheers were given by his hardy crew with an energy that startled the seabirds from their resting-places among the cliffs, and sent them skimming and screaming over the waves. "We are the first men that have reached these waters, which the Yankees only saw from yonder tall headland, and we will splice the mainbrace on the strength of it."

Acclamations greeted this announcement, and those of the crew who were between decks came scrambling up the companion to see the new ocean, and what might prove to be the utmost limits of the land. A glass of spirits was served out to each man, and all the talk that evening, as the crew gazed northward over the far-stretching waste of dark water, longing to penetrate the unknown secrets beyond, was concerning their prospect of reaching the northern axis of the earth.

"What do you think the Pole is like, youngster?" said the second officer to Charlie Wilson, with a merry twinkle of the eyes that belied the assumed gravity of his countenance. "Do you think we shall find a tall pole sticking out of the ground, like a flag-staff?"

"We may do that, if the Germans get there before us," returned Charlie.

"Well answered, Charlie!" exclaimed Mr. Morton.

"Well, shall we find land or water round the Pole?" said the second officer. "Answer me that, and I will bet a shilling the answer will be wrong."

"I will not bet, Mr. Markham," rejoined Charlie, "but I fancy we shall find land—a large island, in the midst of a calm ocean, free from ice."

"At the back of the north wind, eh?" said Markham, with a smile of incredulity.

"The Esquimaux have a tradition of a far northern island," observed Morton, in a more serious tone. "I am rather doubtful about the calm and iceless ocean, Charlie; and I see no reason for anticipating land, rather than water. That there is land all around the South Pole is no reason for expecting a like state of things at the North Pole; for it was always held that an extensive tract of land was to be expected round the South Pole, to balance the preponderance of land north of the equator."

"We are now about five hundred miles from the Pole, aren't we, Mr. Morton?" inquired Charlie, as he looked once more across the fast darkening waters."

"Not much less," replied Morton.

"And with this wind and such an open sea, we

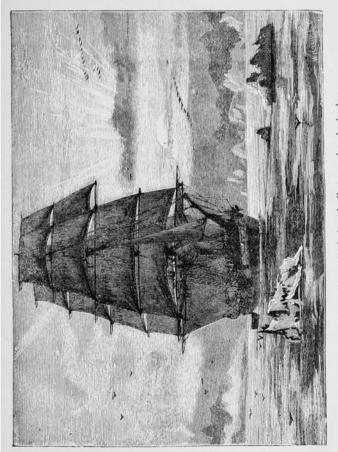
could run that distance in two or three days," said Charlie, whose blue eyes sparkled at the thought.

"It is possible," returned the chief officer, with a thoughtful air. "But dead calms, contrary winds, dense fogs, and the suddenness and rapidity with which ice sometimes forms in these seas baffle all calculations. A sailor's maxim is, to hope for the best, and be prepared for the worst."

He glanced round the horizon as he spoke, and then walked away from the group, followed by Markham, leaving Charlie and Willie still gazing upon the darkening waters, and pondering the mystery of the North Pole.

Captain Webb had, in the meantime, detected on the horizon the signs of an approaching change of weather, and the lads were roused from their reverie by the sound of creaking spars and falling blocks as the requisite alterations were made in the disposition of the sails. The breeze diminished gradually to nearly a dead calm, and a thick mist began to fall, moistening the deck and the rigging, without being perceptible to the sight or the touch. Charlie retired to his berth, to dream that he had discovered the Pole; and through the long night the vessel, veiled in mist and darkness, remained almost motionless.

When Charlie ascended to the deck on the following morning, a dense fog rested upon the



The breeze diminished gradually to nearly a dead calm.

ocean, and the ship seemed to float within a cloud. Nothing was visible beyond her dark sides; no sound was heard but the low and melancholy roll of the ocean current against her bows, for even the sea-birds could not take their accustomed flight through that dense vapour, and in that high latitude the blowing of the whale is unheard.

During three days and nights this thick fog covered the ocean, and then a breeze blew from the west, and, as the grey vapour slowly rose and dispersed, the explorers pursued their voyage on the larboard tack. To the joy of every one on board the vessel, the highest of the blue knobs on the southern horizon sank below the waves with the red sun; and when the luminary of day again gilded the crests of the billows no land was in sight—no iceberg broke the uniformity of the greyblue waters around them.

"The great problem will soon be solved now, Mr. Morton," said Charlie, as he encountered the chief officer in the exercise of his duty. "We are not running a straight course, it is true; but we are nearing the Pole, and there is nothing in sight."

"Plenty of time, Charlie," returned Morton. "Who knows what wind, or what weather, we may have to-morrow?"

"Well, if the ship doesn't reach the Pole, we may," said Charlie, with the sanguine disposition of

youth. "If we should be ice-bound, or separated from the Pole by land, we shall have the dogs and sledges; and, if they can do what Hans and Christian say they can, we can push on to the Pole in winter or summer. I long to emulate the sledging feats of Wrangell, the Russian explorer, who made such wonderful journeys on the ice."

"The provisioning makes those ice expeditions so difficult and so hazardous," observed Morton. "You have got to provide food for the dogs as well as for yourselves, and there is the chance of your deposits being plundered by the bears."

"Then the chances of success are greater in proportion to the smallness of the party?" said Charlie, with ready apprehension; and, as Morton walked away, hesitating to commit himself to an affirmative reply, the lad thought what a famous exploit it would be, if he and Willie Webb were to start with a sledge, career over the frozen sea or snow-covered land, and discover the Pole by themselves.



CHAPTER XII.

STOPPED BY ICE.



ISMAL was the prospect next day from the whaler's deck. A grey vapour again covered the sea, and through it large flakes of snow fell, whitening the

deck and the rigging. If there was land ahead, it could not be seen through the fog and the thickly falling snow, which obliged the explorers to proceed with cautious slowness.

Towards night the temperature fell several degrees, and the moisture on the rigging became converted into hoar-frost, giving the ship a very remarkable appearance, every spar and rope standing out distinctly in its spectral whiteness against the sombre sky. Ice formed at midnight about the ship, and this indication of the early approach of winter forced upon the mind of Captain Webb

the necessity of taking immediate measures for her security.

"What thickness of ice have we, Mr. Morton?" he inquired, as he sat at breakfast on the following morning, and Charlie and Willie, forgetting the North Pole for the moment in the contemplation of the meal, warmed their fingers by folding them upon the cups containing their hot coffee.

"Scarcely an inch, Captain Webb," replied Morton, as he took his seat at the table. "But this is the first ice, and it has formed since midnight."

"It is time to decide upon the course to be taken, with winter coming upon us so suddenly," observed the captain. "In such thick weather, we cannot tell whether we have land or water ahead; and, though there may be land within a day or two's sail, there would be too much risk in pushing northward without knowing."

Willie Webb was disposed to make a joke about securing the vessel to the Pole by a hawser, but the grave expression of his father's weather-beaten countenance restrained him.

"We might run on for twenty-four hours," observed Morton thoughtfully.

"If I could be sure of finding land, I would do so," said the captain; "but we should be just as likely to have no land in sight, and the ice around

us thickening every hour. In that case, we should have twenty-four hours to run back again, and the coast of Greenland to reach afterwards."

"And the nearest part of that coast is as unknown to us as the Pole itself," observed Markham.

"Which is another point to be borne in mind in arriving at a decision," added Captain Webb. "We don't know how much the coast tends to the south-east, nor how far we may have to run before we find a harbour."

"The Germans saw land on the east coast as far as the eighty-third degree," Charlie Wilson ventured to observe.

Captain Webb shook his head.

"Ice has been mistaken for land in these regions, and one explorer has sailed through a broad channel which another has mistaken for a valley," he observed. "So, all things considered, I think our safest course will be to run to the north coast of Greenland, and seek a harbour there for the winter."

A feeling of disappointment clouded Charlie's countenance at this decision, for he had anticipated nothing less than a bivouac at the North Pole before the summer was over, and now they were to winter amid the snows of Greenland.

The snow had ceased when they went on deck,

and a strong breeze was blowing from the south, breaking up the ice in every direction.

"I have half a mind to clap on sail," said Captain Webb, as he looked upward at the driving clouds, through which a gleam of sunshine penetrated, brightening one part of the icy waters, while all the rest was overcast.

"Much might be done with this wind," observed Morton.

Captain Webb hesitated but a moment longer, and then ordered every stitch of canvas to be spread to the favouring breeze, which once more promised to waft them to the Pole. Charlie Wilson's countenance brightened again as the yards were hauled up, and the sails unfurled; and, when the ship had run before the breeze for several hours, and the atmosphere had become tolerably clear, he looked ahead frequently, and awaited with eagerness the result of the look-out aloft.

No land was seen, however, and darkness came again, with the cold grey-blue waves still rolling around the ship on every side. Charlie went cheerfully to his berth that night, hopeful that the Pole would be reached, or land seen, on the following day, a feeling that was shared, in various degrees, by every one on board.

At daybreak on the following morning, Charlie and Willie hastened on deck as soon as they were

dressed, and, to their grievous disappointment, saw ice stretching from west to east, as far as they could see, without any visible opening through which progress northward was possible. It resembled the Middle Pack of Baffin Bay, seeming to consist of a long range of immense floes, which had drifted together, and been frozen into one far-stretching expanse of ice.

The crew were furling the sails in a leisurely manner, and Morton, who was directing the operation, glanced from time to time at the sombre sky, as if he anticipated some change which would render it unnecessary.

"I thought so!" he at length muttered, as the jib and stay-sail suddenly flapped in the wind, and then swelled in a different direction. "Put the helm down hard!" he immediately shouted to the man who was steering, and then he called to the men who were furling the sails, "Shake out the royals! Man the braces!"

The wind was now blowing from the east, and, in order to avail of it to run towards the coast of Greenland, the yards were swung round by the braces, so as to present the square sails to the wind, while the helm was kept down to facilitate the operation of turning the ship's head in the required direction.

"We shall not see the Pole this season," observed

Willie Webb, in a tone of disappointment, as the vessel turned in the direction of the wind.

"Don't you know the Pole may always be reached out of season, though it cannot always be reached in the season?" said a low, deep-toned voice behind him.

The lads turned round quickly, and beheld Peter Svendson.

"What do you mean?" inquired Willie, who was very far from being prepossessed in favour of this singular man.

"These seas can be navigated in the summer only by ships," replied the Swede. "In the winter they are one great ice-field, as fit to travel over as the land, and a sledge may be driven over them from Greenland to the Pole, and from the Pole to Siberia."

"I say, you have not played Robinson Crusoe in these latitudes, have you?" said Willie Webb, in an ironical tone.

"I know more about these regions than you may think I do, youngster," replied Svendson, without evincing any displeasure at the tone in which Willie questioned him. "I ought to know something about them, for—"

He paused suddenly, and, with a hasty remark that he must give a pull at the braces, left them to assist in the operation of swinging the yards, which the zigzag course, rendered necessary by the easterly wind, obliged the crew to repeat at frequent intervals.

"Why did you question what he said?" Charlie Wilson inquired of his companion, when the Swede had left them. "The ice has been traversed for hundreds of miles in much lower latitudes, not only in the channels west of Baffin Bay, by the searchers for Franklin, but on the broad seas by Parry and Wrangell."

"I know that," returned Willie. "But this fellow seems to assume to know more about the matter than anybody else."

"Perhaps he does," said Charlie. "There are no symptoms of insanity about him now, though he is certainly a singular character."

"I don't half like him," returned Willie, lowering his voice, and glancing towards the object of the aversion he expressed. "Have you observed that he seldom speaks to the other fellows, but works in silence, and when unemployed often gazes across the sea, as if he saw, or was striving to make out, something unseen by others?"

"I have observed that," replied Charlie, "and I think he may be a little wrong at times, but he don't seem exactly a lunatic."

"He is not short in seamanship, certainly," observed Willie. "And he is as sharp as any of

the younger hands in taking in a reef or shaking out a reef, clewing up or hauling down."

The approach of Svendson put an end to the conversation concerning him, and a heavy tall of snow, which commenced shortly afterwards, induced the lads to go below.



CHAPTER XIII.

AN ARCTIC WINTER.

OG and snow, with an easterly wind, made the navigation tedious, and several days elapsed before the explorers saw, when the fog rose for a few

hours, the rugged and dreary coast of Greenland. High cliffs rose almost perpendicularly from the icy waters, and, while they were yet distant, the snow-covered peaks of lofty mountains of sugarloaf shape were seen in the interior, towering far above them. Fog again closed the prospect, as if a grey curtain had been drawn between the explorers and the land, and Captain Webb could only sail slowly along the coast, taking frequent soundings in order to avoid running in such thick weather into shallow water.

In the meantime, the temperature continued to fall; and the water around the ship froze as fast as

the ice was broken, so that the obstacles to free navigation increased every day. At length, however, the fog dispersed, and Captain Webb was enabled to look for a secure harbour, wherein to lay up his vessel until the following summer.

The coast did not present a very inviting aspect. The lofty and almost perpendicular cliffs, fringed with enormous icicles, and bordered along their base with ancient icebergs, seemed to forbid access to the land, which they were the first Europeans to gaze upon, if indeed its snows and glaciers had ever been trodden by human foot.

At length, however, a chasm was discerned in the cliff, and Captain Webb ordered a boat to be lowered, that he might ascertain the extent and depth of the water between the two points of rock. The ice had to be broken as the party proceeded, but the situation promised so much security that the captain would not allow difficulties to deter him from pushing into the little natural harbour, from each side of which the cliff rose perpendicularly to the height of between three and four hundred feet, while at the head a snow-covered hill rose steeply from a narrow beach, covered with fragments of rock.

Sufficient depth of water being found, Captain Webb had the ship run in, and moored by hawsers and grapnels to the masses of rock piled up on the beach, which in so well-sheltered a situation afforded ample security. The top-masts were then lowered, an awning rigged over the deck, and arrangements made for living through the long and dreary winter as comfortably as the surrounding conditions rendered practicable.



THE SHIP IN WINTER QUARTERS.

In a few days, the ice around the ship was several feet thick, and in a week or two more a faint gleam of light on the horizon was the only indication of day. This soon faded out, and then for many months only the twinkling stars and the fitful flashes of the aurora illumined the long night of winter. Snow fell heavily for many days in

December, and was availed of for the formation of a high and thick embankment round the ship to exclude the intensely cold air as much as possible.

Freedom from their ordinary duties allowed the crew a large amount of leisure, which was employed in hunting expeditions, and in various sports and exercises upon the ice. The hunting parties were not attended with much success. The deer had migrated southward on the approach of winter, as the birds had been observed to do in large flocks soon after the arrival of the explorers on the coast. A few hares were shot, and a fox was now and then taken in a trap; but only one bear was killed during the winter, though several were seen, keeping, however, at a wary distance from the ship. The dogs, who were kenneled in snow-houses on the ice, depended for food, therefore, upon the killing of seals and walruses, in which Hans and Christian showed themselves very expert; but even these animals were scarcer than Captain Webb had ever found them before, and many of the dogs died in consequence of the insufficient supply of food and the intensity of the cold.

The scenery around the ship now presented the sublimity of desolation. White walls of snow enclosed the little harbour, protecting the explorers from the strong gales which at times swept over the ice, and increased, while they lasted, the inten-

sity of the cold. On three sides rose the precipitous cliffs, fringed with stupendous icicles; and on the fourth, towards the north, stretched an undulating expanse of ice, apparently illimitable in extent.

The greatest extent of ice ever seen in temperate regions affords no idea of the frozen seas of the polar zones. In the beginning of the arctic winter, the ice is frequently broken by the waves, when they are raised above their ordinary height by the force of the wind; and the fragments are cast upon thicker portions of the ice, where the whole becomes compacted by snow, and spray, and frost, into a solid mass.

In this manner the hummocks are formed which, when covered with snow, cause the sea to resemble an undulating plain, and present impediments to progress upon the ice which are sometimes difficult to be overcome. The strange scene towards the north was as unfamiliar to the rest of the whaler's crew as to Charlie Wilson, none of them having ever passed a winter in the arctic regions.

"I should have been hard to convince that I was looking at the sea, if I had not seen it before it was frozen," Charlie observed one day to Willie Webb, as they stood upon the cliffs which shut in the little harbour in which the ship was moored. "It looks as if an enchanter had pronounced a spell, and waved his wand over the billows while they were

rolling round this rock-girt coast, and frozen them in an instant."

"It is a dreary prospect!" rejoined Willie. "I like these parts very well in the summer,—that is, not these parts exactly, but the west coast of Greenland, and the shores of Lancaster Sound and Barrow Strait;—but they are horribly dismal in the winter."

"There are so few animals," observed Charlie.
"If we could shoot a bear now and then, or if there were any deer to stalk, it would be tolerably jolly. But we must make the best of it, Willie; the sun will shine again some day, and the ice will break up, and we shall make another attempt to get to the Pole."

"Well, we are nearer to it now than the Americans got," returned Willie. "That mysterious Swede makes out, though, that he has been here before; and yet when you try to test his statements, you can make nothing of the fellow."

"He has got more conversable lately," observed Charlie. "Without losing any of his strangeness of manner, though."

"Has he?" returned his companion, with a stare and a shrug. "You have had the sole benefit of his conversation, then; for I don't find that he has become any more amiable towards the rest of the people. He never speaks to me, if he can help it; and, I fancy, avoids me." "I don't know why he should do that," observed Charlie.

"There he is now," said Willie, pointing to a dark figure on the ice. "I don't pretend to distinguish his not very agreeable features at this distance, but the man yonder is roaming solitarily about the ice in just the same way as I have observed Svendson doing of late."

Charlie had himself remarked this habit of the Swede. He had seen him tramping to and fro, at a distance from the ship, on several occasions, and always alone, sometimes with his eyes fixed upon the snow, at others looking across the trackless waste towards the north. Before these walks he was invariably taciturn and morose; when he returned from them he was usually less unamiable in his manners, and more disposed to converse with the crew of the ship, but it sometimes required two of these solitary walks to divert him from the dark ideas over which his mind seemed to be almost constantly brooding.

"If he has got anything on his mind, I should think dwelling upon it would aggravate the weight of it," observed Charlie. "But it is after these moody fits and solitary walks upon the ice that he is more disposed to talk, and be companionable."

"I should think he is about as companionable as

an old bear," returned Willie, with a smile at the idea. "Why, what does he talk about?"

"Well, he is not a jolly fellow, that is certain," rejoined Charlie. "But he talks about the object of the voyage, and that, you know, is a subject in which I feel a great deal of interest. He is a believer in the practicability of getting to the Pole, and persists that we might get there upon the ice in much less time than with the ship."

"Father doesn't think so," said Willie. "And what should Svendson know about the matter? Does he pretend that he has been there?"

"Not exactly," replied Charlie. "But he talks as if he knew more about it than we do, and at times I fancy he must have been; yet his manner is so strange, and he breaks off so abruptly when questioned, that I cannot make him out. He is a riddle that I cannot guess, Willie; that is the sort of man Peter Svendson is."

While the lads were talking, the dark figure on the ice prowled restlessly among the hummocks and snow-drifts, sometimes pausing for a few minutes to gaze intently towards the north, and then resuming his lonely walk. He was still there when they left the cliff, and descended the precipitous path leading to the inlet in which the ship was moored; and he was the last to appear between the decks when the evening meal was served.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNKNOWN LANDS.

S S

S the time approached when the sun might be expected to become visible again, there was much discussion among the explorers of the question whether

the five hundred and odd miles between their position and the Pole consisted entirely of water, or partly of land and partly of water. Charlie Wilson clung so pertinaciously to the theory that the Pole would be found in the midst of land, that Markham one day raised the question at the cabin table, and asked Captain Webb if he did not think they were more likely to sail over the Pole.

"I should like to be sure of finding open water all the way," replied the captain, exhaling as he spoke a huge whiff of tobacco smoke. "But there is much to be said in support of Charlie's idea, though the lad can have got hold of it only by reading about the arctic regions. It shows that he is a thinking lad, though, and a lad that thinks over what he reads, and forms a rational opinion out of the views of different persons, is likely to make a long-headed man. Now, it is the opinion of many great explorers of the arctic seas that there is a large tract of land extending from Smith Sound towards Behring Strait, and probably across the North Pole"

"What makes them think so?" inquired Markham.

"The smallness of the tides, the direction of the ice-bearing currents, and the immense accumulation of ice off the northern shores of America, west of Banks Land," replied Captain Webb. "We have done something to solve the problem by getting so far along the north coast of Greenland, and the German explorers have done something on the east coast; but we don't know yet whether the coast trends to the north or the south beyond this point. nor whether Gillis Land and Wrangell Land are islands, or the southern extremities of an unknown You see, Mr. Markham, the arctic continent. eightieth parallel of north latitude has been passed only in two places, namely, in Smith Sound, and to the northward of Spitzbergen."

"I know Wrangell Land is laid down on maps," observed Markham, "but I have always understood that its existence was thought doubtful."

"It was thought so, because nobody had seen it but the natives of the coast of Siberia," returned the captain. "Wrangell never saw it himself, though he made a journey to look for it. But it was seen by Captain Kellett five and twenty years ago, when he was searching for the unfortunate Franklin expedition."

"And Gillis Land?" said Markham. "I have never heard of that."

"Nearly a hundred and seventy years ago," returned Captain Webb, "an unknown land was sighted to the north-east of Spitzbergen, and received that name; but it has never been seen since. Seven years ago a German expedition went in search of it. The explorers sailed round the north coast of Spitzbergen, and then ran to the northward, ice and contrary winds preventing them from taking the direct course. The adverse wind continuing, and the weather becoming stormy, they ran to the south-west, and endeavoured to reach the coast of Greenland in a higher latitude than it had been explored by Scoresby. Baffled by the ice, they returned to the coast of Spitzbergen, and Gillis Land remains unknown."

"It seems, then," said Markham, after a pause, "that there is nothing that we know of the polar lands that supports the idea of an unknown land extending across the Pole, and that the theory rests on observation of the currents and the drifting ice of the ocean. Gillis Land and Wrangell Land may be islands, and the sea probably flows all round the northern part of Greenland."

"That is true," returned Captain Webb. "But where does all the ice come from, if there is no land to the north of Greenland and Spitzbergen? How is it that the tide rises so little, if it is all water?"

"The more water, the more ice," replied Markham.

"Av. floes: but not bergs," said the captain. "They must come from creeks and rivers, Mr. Markham. But with regard to Greenland, I think you are right, and that the coast we are on continues eastward until it joins the coast explored by the Germans. In the spring I hope to solve that problem by following it in a sledge until I find it trends to the south or the north. The east coast was known before Koldewey's voyage, six years ago, only as far north as Wollaston Foreland; leastways, it was only known that headlands three and four degrees farther north had been sighted by whalers more than two hundred years ago. Kane's discoveries showed that the west coast extended three degrees higher than the most northern of these, and the extreme points known were more than fifty degrees of longitude apart. Captain Koldewey made a sledge journey parallel with the

coast, and planted the German flag five degrees beyond the discoveries of Scoresby, and two beyond those of Clavering and Sabine. But when he turned back he was still five degrees south of the latitude reached by Kane's men, and the coast still trended northward, as far as they could see; so his discoveries have not done much to solve the problem as to Greenland's northern limits."

Markham was now silent, and Charlie Wilson, who had listened attentively to the conversation between the captain and the second officer, availed himself of the pause to make a remark.

"Supposing," he said, "this coast extends eastward until it trends southward to Koldewey's farthest exploration, may not Gillis Land extend to the Pole, or may not the Pole be found on an island?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Captain Webb. "I think it is very probable that what is laid down on the charts as Gillis Land may be a part of the land discovered by the Austrian expedition two or three years ago, and partially explored in the following summer."

"I had a very vague idea of what they did discover," observed Charlie. "I was doubtful whether it was not some part of Greenland."

"It is a long way from Greenland, my lad," said the captain. "More than eighty degrees eastward; not that degrees of longitude count for much in these high latitudes."

"Can you tell me anything about their discoveries, Captain Webb?" inquired Charlie, with that desire for the acquisition of knowledge which was almost a passion with him.

"I will tell you all I know, Charlie," replied the captain. "The steamer commanded by Captain Weyprecht left Bremen three years and a half ago. She was provisioned for three years, and was intended to sail round the north of Nova Zembla, winter on the coast of Siberia, explore the islands out that way in the following summer, and return through Behring's Strait. But, as the old proverb says, 'Man proposes, God disposes.' pedition was well planned, for the seas around Nova Zembla had been almost free from ice during the preceding summer: but I know by experience that calculations of that kind are not to be depended on, and so Captain Weyprecht found. The ice around Nova Zembla had increased from its ordinary breadth of four miles to about seventy miles, and he had much difficulty in working through it. When they had succeeded in making the coast they were detained on it by stormy weather, and 'did not leave until near the end of August. Then they ran into the pack-ice, and got completely frozen in. They drifted with the ice

for more than a year, at first to the north-east, and then to the north-west. It carried them to a new land to the eastward of Gillis Land, and more to the southward, and they drifted for two months along the coast. Then they were frozen in, and there passed their second winter. In the following spring they sledged to the north and west, getting beyond eighty-two degrees north, and seeing land to the eighty-third. It seemed to extend a long way to the westward, and I think it very likely that Gillis Land may prove to be its south-western extremity. When the sledgers returned, the ship was abandoned as unseaworthy, and they put the boats on sledges, and travelled over the frozen sea from the latter end of May till the middle of August, keeping a south-west course. Then they came to open water, and managed to reach the north coast of Nova Zembla in their boats. They tramped round to the westward, looking out for one of the Russian vessels that go there for furs, and about a week after their arrival on the coast found one, which carried them to Norway."

"All the north polar expeditions seem doomed to leave their ships behind them," observed Charlie, looking grave at the reflection.

"Parry didn't," said Markham.

"Because he left it in a harbour of Spitzbergen, and dragged his boats over the ice," rejoined Charlie.

Captain Webb was silent. He had held the opinion so confidently expressed by the Dundee whaling masters that, provided the open sea seen by Kane's men could be reached, it would be easy to reach the Pole in the same summer, supposing no considerable breadth of land intervened. But the summer had passed, and he was still on the coast of Greenland.

Was he, too, destined to leave his ship amongst the ice, and realize the terrible experiences of the crews of the "Hansa," the "Polaris," and the "Tegethoff"? The gravity of Charlie Wilson's countenance communicated itself to his own as he asked himself the question; but he shook off the feeling of doubt which had for a moment crept over him, and went upon deck.

Ice and snow all around as far as he could see, except where the cliffs rose perpendicularly from the rocks that strewed the beach, and where they were so precipitous that the snow lodged only on the slopes and ledges. Beyond the far-stretching waste of almost uniform whiteness, varied only by the grey shadows of the hummocks, an over-arching canopy of darker grey, spangled here and there with a star. Such was the prospect which met his eyes, and which had met them for nearly six months.



CHAPTER XV.

THE MYSTERIOUS SWEDE.

OWARDS the end of February an orange tint on the horizon heralded the reappearance of the sun, and in another week the peaks of Greenland's

icy mountains began to be tipped with silver during a short portion of each day. Towards the north, however, a vast and trackless ice-field still stretched in sombre dreariness, cold and grey, and without one sign of life.

"Thank Heaven we are at the end of our long night!" Charlie Wilson ejaculated one morning, as he and Willie Webb stood on the cliff near the little harbour in which the ship was moored, and watched the lofty cones southward exchange their cold grey tints for the rosy hues shed upon them by the rising sun.

"Amen!" ejaculated his companion. "I shall be

glad to see the birds coming this way again, but we shall have to wait some time longer for them. Let us go and look at our trap."

The trap to which he alluded had been set on the cliff, in consequence of the cunning animals having of late become too wary to be caught in the appliances for their capture which had been standing all the winter on the ice, in the vicinity of the ship. The bait had not been touched, and the lads again looked around upon the glistening snow, as if seeking some object to induce a prolongation of their walk.

"Let us run as far as the gap," said Charlie, alluding to a narrow opening in the cliff about a mile distant, through which a stream tumbled in summer in a succession of cascades.

They started immediately, but were nearly an hour in reaching the gap, owing to the depth to which the snow had been drifted by a recent gale. Standing on the edge of the chasm they looked down a series of precipices, over which the stream tumbled in foam and spray when released from its icy fetters. Now it was motionless and silent, and a miniature glacier filled its narrow bed, while icicles hung from the edges of the steep banks which rose on either hand.

"I don't hear a drop fall," observed Charlie, after listening for a few moments.

"It is far too soon to expect it," returned Willie, who was looking so earnestly towards the beach that his companion thought that he also was listening for the descent of the first drops of water that might flow. "But look below, Charlie! Is not that the Swede?"

A man had just emerged into sight from the beach, and was moving slowly about the bottom of the gap, as if looking for something.

"It is remarkably like our mysterious friend," returned Charlie. "But what is he about? He seems to be looking for something."

"For his wits, perhaps," said Willie, with a shrug.
"I fancy the fellow is a wee bit daft—just a bee in his bonnet."

The dim light did not reach the bottom of the gap, which was open only towards the north, and the lads could discern only a dark figure, resembling Peter Svendson, moving about between the precipitous side of the chasm and the frozen cascade. For about a quarter of an hour he continued to move about within a circle of a few yards only, with his head bent down, as if looking for something, and occasionally stooping down to examine the ground.

"I wonder whether we can get down there, and see what he is about," said Charlie, but before the attempt to descend the ravine could be commenced the man below began to ascend, clambering up the precipices, and springing from one ledge of the rock to another, with more agility than from a middle-aged man could have been expected, unless he was a practised gymnast.

"Come away!" said Willie, lowering his voice, and clutching his companion's arm. "It is Peter Svendson, and he may not like us to be watching him."

The lads drew back, and turned towards the interior; but looked round after walking rapidly for a short time, and beheld the gaunt form of the Swede step into sight from the chasm. As he gazed around upon the dreary expanse of snow, his eyes soon rested upon Charlie and Willie, and he stood still, either awaiting their approach, or pondering in his mind something suggested by their presence.

"Let us go back," said Charlie. "He will think else that we are running away from him."

Willie assenting, they turned towards the cliff, along which the Swede then began to walk in the direction of the ship.

"Where did you spring from, Svendson?" inquired Charlie, as they met on the track which they had trodden in their walk to the frozen cascade.

"Up the gap there," replied the Swede, with a movement of his hand towards the chasm. "From

these cliffs we shall every morning be able to see farther towards the Pole. There lies the terminal point of our search," he continued, pointing across the frozen sea towards the darkest portion of the northern horizon. "Where those dark grey clouds are condensed almost to blackness they hang above the land around the pole."

"Have you ever been there, Svendson?" inquired Willie, with the quiet manner of one who seeks to humour the fancies of an insane person.

The Swede regarded him intently for a moment, as if trying to read what was passing in his mind; and then replied, in a tone which showed that he was not quite satisfied with the scrutiny; "I have been nearer to it than any man of your father's crew."

"When was that?" inquired Willie, in the same tone as before, and the same seriousness of manner.

"On that terrible voyage with Charlie's father," replied Svendson, with a sigh. "We ran up the east coast, and got caught in the ice."

"And then?" said Charlie, with an air of deep interest.

"We separated," continued Svendson. "Perils and disasters fell to the lot of both parties, but we who came this way suffered most of all. I dare not tell the story now."

He shuddered as he uttered the last words, and

a shade of deep melancholy came over his features. The lads did not press him, and they walked towards the ship in silence.

"That is a strange story," Willie Webb observed to our young hero, as soon as they were relieved from the presence of the Swede.

"He has told me something about it before," rejoined Charlie, who seemed to be reflecting upon it.

"What do you think of it?" inquired Willie, regarding his companion with a look that evinced both perplexity and interest.

"I don't know what to think," replied Charlie, after a brief pause. "The man can have no interest in inventing such a story, and, besides that, he is evidently deeply impressed with the horrors of the disaster which brought my father's life to an untimely end. On the other hand, it is so strange that his story should never have been heard of until he told it to me, and just now to you and me together."

"That is not so strange, if he had any motive for concealing it," observed Willie. "Has he ever told you what ship picked him up, and where he was landed?"

"No," replied Charlie.

"It may have been a foreign ship, and have landed him in a foreign port," observed Willie.

"Very likely," said Charlie. "But if he passed round the northern coast of Greenland, an unknown and unexplored region, it is strange that the story which he must have told to his rescuers never became known."

"Is it certain that he was one of the shipwrecked crew?" inquired Willie, after a reflective pause.

"I take that on his own assertion," replied Charlie. "I never heard the names of all the fellows."

"Suppose we hear what father has got to say about it?" suggested Willie.

Charlie acquiesced, and they went to the cabin, where Captain Webb was again studying the chart of the north polar regions, and making calculations relating to the object of the expedition.

"Are you busy, father?" inquired Willie. "Charlie wants to ask you something."

"If it will not disturb you too much," added Charlie.

"Say on, my lad," said the captain. "What is it about, that you look so grave?"

"It is a grave subject, Captain Webb," rejoined Charlie. "It is about my father's ship, and the survivors of the crew. The man that we took off the iceberg in Melville Bay has been telling us that he was one of the crew, and that after the destruction of the vessel he and my father came this

way in a boat, with others of the crew, who all died, and that he and my father separated near this spot."

"That is a strange story!" said the captain. "It is stranger still that it has never been told before."

"Was this man, Peter Svendson, one of the crew?" inquired Charlie.

"I don't remember the name," replied Captain Webb, after tasking his memory for some moments. "I can ascertain the fact when we get back to Dundee; but I should think he was if he says he was. Why should the man speak falsely about the matter?"

"On the other hand," observed Charlie, "why should he not have told the story at the time?"

"There is something in that too," observed the captain, stroking his beard with an air of reflection.

"Willie suggests that he may have been picked up by a foreign ship, and carried to a foreign port," said Charlie. "But a story involving the discovery of the northern limits of Greenland would surely have become public, if the man told it then as he tells it now."

"He has not told you all, it seems," rejoined Captain Webb, "and something may be due to his being, as I fancy, a little bit crazed. The men who returned to Dundee could give only an imperfect account of their wanderings, and some of them had

been delirious, and were never quite right afterwards. The Swede may have suffered in the same manner."

"But they also said that my father and some of the crew went to the westward," observed Charlie.

"True," returned the captain. "Svendson's story agrees with theirs, but it was always supposed that none of the other party survived. However, I will some day take an opportunity of questioning him myself on the subject."

This resolve was carried out a few days afterwards, but Svendson proved very uncommunicative, and all that could be elicited from him was, that he was picked up on the west coast of Greenland by a Danish vessel, and carried to Tromsoe, and that he did not visit Dundee again until the period when he made the acquaintance of Charlie Wilson, as related in the first chapter.



CHAPTER XVI.

A JOURNEY ON THE ICE.

S the days grew longer, and the cold less intense, Captain Webb determined to conduct a sledge expedition to the eastward, in order at once to vary the

monotony of the long sojourn in harbour, and to ascertain the extent and configuration of the coast in that direction. Two sledges were prepared for this journey, one of which was to be driven by Hans, and the other by Christian. Both were heavily loaded with provisions and other necessaries for a long journey, and a couple of rifles, with a good store of ammunition, was placed upon each.

Charlie Wilson and Willie Webb begged hard for permission to accompany the captain on this expedition, but, as the results of the exploration would depend very much upon the quantity of provisions that could be carried, their request could not be complied with. Hans was to drive the foremost sledge, with Captain Webb seated behind him, and Christian the other, in which Markham was selected to travel.

The explorers started on a fine morning, the snow-clad mountain peaks of Greenland standing up against the pale blue sky like cones of frosted silver, and the frozen sea extending its far-stretching undulations northward and westward until they blended on the horizon with the grey clouds. Aquatic birds of various species, but all of sobercoloured plumage—black, and white, and grey—skimmed along the ice, or wheeled over the cliffs, uttering harsh and discordant cries; but as yet they had not arrived in great numbers, and the amphibious and land animals had received no augmentation.

All the crew assembled on the ice to witness the departure of the sledges, and when Captain Webb had shaken the hands of Willie and Charlie, and Mr. Morton cried, "Success to you, Captain Webb!" the cry was echoed from every mouth. The Esquimaux drivers cracked their long whips, and the dogs barked in a wild canine chorus as they strained against their collars, and the heavily-laden sledges began to move slowly over the rough and undulating surface of the frozen sea.

The ice had been chosen for the route, in pre-

ference to the land, on account of its more uniform surface; as, heaved up into ridges and hummocks as it had been by the winds and waves of autumn before it compacted for the winter, it presented much less formidable obstacles to the progress of sledges than the hills and valleys, ravines and precipices, of North Greenland.

The cliffs eastward of the little harbour in which the ship was secured trended northward to a point at which they seemed to sink into the sea; and the chief object of the expedition was to ascertain their direction beyond that point. Towards that dim promontory, therefore, the Esquimaux sledgedrivers directed their course, keeping one before the other at the distance of about half a mile from the coast. The obstacles to a straight course which the ridges and hummocks of ice presented necessitated a devious course, and the weight of the provisions, fuel, &c., on the sledges, rendered their progress slow. The short day was drawing to a close, therefore, when they halted in the shadow of the stupendous cliffs, with the northern point of Greenland still at some distance

The spot which Captain Webb selected for their bivouac was protected from the nipping wind that swept over the frozen sea by large masses of ice, the remains of the bergs which the storms had driven against the cliffs, and a deep drift of snow. Here, after taking the harness from the dogs, and dividing amongst them the carcase of a seal, the explorers erected a tent, and lighted the lamp which was to melt the snow with which they filled their kettle, and boil the water for their cocoa. In some parts of the region within the arctic circle drift-wood enough for fuel may be found along the coasts, but in the higher latitudes this source of supply fails, and, beyond a little dry moss, explorers have to depend upon the fuel which they carry with them.

The party were seated round their lamp upon a bear-skin, smoking their pipes, when a sudden and violent barking of the dogs caused them first to look at each other with surprise and wonder, and then to start to their feet, and seize their rifles.

"Bears!" exclaimed Hans and Christian as with one voice.

Captain Webb hastily drew aside the opening of the tent, and stepped into the darkness without, followed by Markham and the Esquimaux. The night was moonless, and they saw only the ice and snow piled up in wild and drear confusion around the tent.

They stood still, and listened for sounds that might indicate the cause of the disturbance among the dogs, but the violent and continued barking of the animals was the only sound that reached their ears.

"They have certainly seen or heard something," said Hans, glancing at the holes in the snow, in which the dogs had been kenneled, and from which every animal was now absent.

The dogs were concealed from view by the icebergs and snow-drifts, amidst which the explorers had pitched their tent, and seemed to have run off in pursuit of a bear, as their barking grew every moment less loud.

"Come on, then!" said Captain Webb, setting the example of pursuit; and the four men followed in the tracks of the dogs as rapidly as the darkness permitted them to thread their way amongst the ice and snow.

The barking was presently succeeded by a savage growling, and the explorers, guided by the sounds, followed them to a spot about a quarter of a mile from the tent, where the growls seemed to proceed from a dark mass upon the ice.

"They have run down some beast, and are devouring it," said Hans, pointing to the dark mass before them.

They ran forward, and found the whole of the dogs, though so recently fed, gathered around the carcase of some animal, growling savagely, and tearing away morsels of the flesh, which they

greedily devoured. The darkness, the crowding of the dogs, and the mangled condition of the carcase prevented them from determining whether the animal had been a young bear or a seal.

"This is very strange, Captain Webb," said Hans. "A bear would not have been so easily mastered by the dogs, and a seal could not have been scented at this distance, nor have got so far on the ice, if surprised near the tent."

"Hark!" whispered the captain, raising a forefinger, and listening to some undefined sound which he fancied he heard just then at some distance from them.

All listened intently, but, though the dogs were now less noisy, no other sounds than those which proceeded from their bloody jaws could be heard.

"I thought I heard a rustling in the snow yonder," said Captain Webb.

"A fox prowling about, perhaps," observed Markham.

"The same object may have led both fox and dogs to the spot," said Christian, stooping down, and placing a hand on a portion of the mangled carcase, of which little but the bones now remained. "The dogs have not killed it, for it is quite cold."

"That is still stranger!" said the captain, stroking his moustache with an air of thought, and looking at the ice and snow around them. Markham stepped quickly from his side at that moment, and stooped over the ice.

"Look here, Captain Webb!" he exclaimed hurriedly. "Here is the track of a sledge! See, you may trace it round the hummocks from the west; and here are footprints in the snow!"

"What can this mean?" said Captain Webb, whose grey eyes dilated widely as he bent over the traces to which his second officer called his attention. "Even the sledge track cannot be our own, for there is only one, and it stops here, amidst the tracks of the dogs. Can it be a man the animals have devoured? But where, in that case, is the sledge? And who can the man have been?"

"This is not man's hair, Captain Webb," said Christian, gathering from the soiled and trampled snow a handful of short, soft hair; "this grew on the back of a young seal."

"That is a relief!" said the captain, drawing a long breath. "I began to fear something had happened at the ship, and one of our fellows, coming with the news, had come to grief. But still this sledge track troubles me."

Abandoning the remains of the seal as a problem which had been solved, he began to search among the hummocks, assisted by his companions, and presently discovered a rudely-constructed sledge, overturned in a snow-drift.

"This cannot have got here without human agency, Mr. Markham," said Captain Webb, regarding the sledge thoughtfully. "What can it mean?"

"I am afraid that question cannot be answered by this light, sir," replied Markham, shaking his head, as he too bent musingly over the rude sledge.

"We will examine the spot by daylight, then," said the captain, "and in the meantime you and I will watch by turns, and keep a good look-out round the tent."

With that resolve they returned to the tent, the Esquimaux calling off the dogs, which, having gorged themselves with food, followed them to their lairs in the snow, and once more curled themselves up, with their bushy tails over their snouts.



CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

AYLIGHT brought strange and startling revelations to the hardy explorers who had bivouacked under the cliffs of North Greenland, amidst the icebergs

and snow-drifts of a frozen sea. One of their sledges was gone! When the dogs had been relieved of their harness on the preceding evening, the sledges had been left on the ice, where the travellers had stepped from them, the dogs being considered sufficient protection against the approach of bears or foxes, which might be attracted by the provisions, and disposed to help themselves. Owing to the smallness of the tent the harness had also been left on the ice, and one set had disappeared with the missing sledge.

"This is a strange business," observed Captain Webb, as the explorers stood around the spot from which the sledge had disappeared. "What do you think of it, Mr. Markham?"

"I cannot form a feasible idea, sir," replied the second officer. "All our dogs are here; but the sledge may have been drawn off by the dogs belonging to the sledge which we found last night abandoned amongst the hummocks."

"Ah! we will have a look at that concern," said Captain Webb, and he immediately proceeded to the spot on which the dogs had devoured the dead seal.

Markham and the Esquimaux followed, wondering at the disappearance of the sledge, and alternately forming and dismissing conjectures as to the agency to which it might be due.

"The hands that made that sledge did not belong to any of our people," observed Hans, as they gathered round the abandoned sledge.

This was assented to by Captain Webb and his second officer, who found, on examining the sledge, that all the materials were of European origin, and recognized portions of the wood-work as having belonged to the ship.

"I hope young Wilson has had nothing to do with this," observed Markham, gravely regarding the rudely constructed vehicle. "He is a daring lad, with a head full of romance and adventure, and was very desirous of coming with us."

"That is true," returned Captain Webb, with an air of perplexity. "But I have always found him trustworthy and obedient, and I don't think he would play such a trick as this. Without an older head and stronger arms than his, such an adventure would be madness; and Charlie Wilson, with all his keen love of adventure, has as much common sense as any lad of his age."

"Who, then, do you suspect, sir?" inquired Markham.

"I suspect no one, Mr. Markham," replied the captain, speaking quickly and firmly. "At present there are no grounds for even suspecting any one, though it seems evident that we have been followed from the ship, and that the person or persons who last night arrived in that sledge have run off with one belonging to the ship."

While the captain and second officer were perplexedly regarding the abandoned sledge, the two Esquimaux examined the ice around, gradually extending the circle of their search beyond the spot where the snow had been trampled by themselves and the dogs on the preceding night. A cry from Hans drew the attention of the Englishmen to them, and, on the latter running up to the spot, they found the sledge-driver bending over the track of a sledge in the snow.

"This is the way they have gone, Captain Webb."

exclaimed the Esquimaux, pointing to the track, which disappeared northward among the hummocks.

"They cannot have got far in the darkness, and with the sledge loaded," said the captain. "Harness the dogs, Hans, and unload the sledge. I will pursue them. You must remain here, Mr. Markham, with Christian, until I return."

Hans ran back to the other sledge, followed by Christian, and by their united exertions it was unloaded, and the stores placed on the ice.

"If I do not return by noon to-morrow," said Captain Webb, as he and Markham returned to the tent, "secure the stores in the best manner against the weather and the attacks of wild animals, and return to the ship. If another day should pass without my return, Mr. Morton will organize a partyto search for me, and—but I had better leave complete instructions in writing."

On reaching the tent he wrote for a few minutes, and, having folded and sealed the document, handed it to Markham, who saw that it was addressed to the chief officer. He then pulled on his fur gloves, lighted his pipe, and prepared to follow the track of the stolen sledge.

"They cannot have got far, Hans," he remarked, as he took his place behind the Esquimaux.

"You know at what rate we travelled yesterday,

Captain Webb," returned Hans, shrugging his shoulders, and exhaling a great whiff of tobacco smoke. "And we had the advantage of daylight, as we have now of having a plain track before us."

He cracked his whip, and away flew the dogs, through a snow-cloud raised by the rapid motions of the sledge. Hans kept his eyes on the track, which meandered northward among the hummocks, smacking his whip from time to time to keep the dogs to their work, and guiding them with the dexterity of a practised sledger.

Captain Webb, though shaken by the rapidity with which the sledge was drawn over the ice, and confused by the snow that flew in clouds around him, and soon covered him with fine white particles, reflected as they careered over the ice on the strangeness of the incident which had given occasion for the journey, and endeavoured to form a judgment concerning the persons by whom the missing sledge had been stolen, and the motive which might have prompted so strange and unexampled an act. But he had left no one at the ship whom he could suspect, and there was no motive which he could surmise to have impelled any one to commit so wild a freak.

There could be no doubt, however, that the abandoned sledge had been constructed by some of the crew, and as little that the persons who had followed him to his bivouac had stolen the missing sledge, and were now driving northward over the frozen sea. No Esquimaux had been seen since the vessel left the Danish settlement at which the dogs and their drivers had been shipped, and it was as yet too early for any of the migratory tribes to have moved northward, even if they ever advanced to the extreme northern limits of the land.

The anxiety which these thoughts created prompted him to return at once to the ship, and only the hope of ascertaining the truth more speedily induced him, as the day wore on, to continue the pursuit. At noon he halted for half an hour to rest the panting dogs, who lay down upon the ice, without being relieved of their harness, while he and Hans partook of a hasty meal, and stretched and warmed their cramped and benumbed limbs by a run on the ice.

The track still led northward, but, about half an hour after the journey was resumed, snow began to descend thickly from the dark grey clouds that had gathered in the east. Hans drove on, however, until the sledge was nearly overturned, through being drawn at full speed over a ridge of ice, which was not seen in time, owing to the snow, either by himself or the dogs.

"Hold, Hans!" cried the captain. "It is useless to proceed in such a heavy snow-storm."

The Esquimaux checked the dogs as soon as he could, and, as he turned their heads southward, Captain Webb saw that the track of the sledge they had been pursuing was no longer visible.

"You have lost the track, Hans," said he.

"I saw it but a few minutes ago, as it seems," rejoined the Esquimaux, "and I am pretty well sure that we are still on it; but the snow is fast covering it, and we could not see the sledge if it were only a hundred yards before us."

"Back, then, to the tent!" said the captain, and again the sledge flew over the ice, through the thickly falling snow and the cloud of drift raised by its passage.

Darkness was falling upon frozen sea and snow-covered land when the dogs stopped instinctively at their lairs near the tent, and were welcomed by their canine companions with a barking chorus.

"Any news, sir?" said Markham, running with Christian from the tent on hearing the barking of the dogs.

"None, Mr. Markham," replied the captain, stepping from the sledge. "We followed the track northward until it became covered by the snow, but neither saw the sledge nor any other indication of the persons who have run away with it. Tomorrow, therefore, I shall go back to the ship, and

base my further measures upon the information which I may glean there."

A warm mess of preserved meat and vegetables was then prepared for the evening meal, after which a pipe was indulged in by each of the party, and then they folded themselves in their rugs, and lay down to sleep upon the bear-skin.



CHAPTER XVIII.

A NOCTURNAL ADVENTURE.



E must now return to the ship, where speculation was as rife as in the tent as to the mysterious incident with which was connected the disappearance of one

of the sledges.

About an hour after the expedition to the east-ward had started, Charlie Wilson and Willie Webb recovered from the disappointment which they had felt at being refused permission to accompany it, and resolved upon a ramble on shore. Equipping themselves in their fur garments, and carrying their rifles under their arms, they left the ship, and ascended the steep hill at the head of the creek. They paused on the summit, and looked southward, where peak rose behind peak in far-stretching succession, not blending with the atmosphere in the extreme distance, as in Britain, but the remotest

sugar-loaf shaped summits sharply defined against the pale blue sky—a wilderness of snow, varied in the foreground by bare precipices and glaciers that looked like masses of emerald and sapphire, mounted in frosted silver.

"I don't see any deer," observed Willie Webb.
"I suppose they have not begun their migration yet; if, indeed, they ever come so far north as this."

"Let us descend into the valley," said Charlie, withdrawing his eyes slowly from the wild scene. "We may perhaps come upon a bear, and get some fresh meat."

Willie shook his head as they began to descend slowly through the deep snow.

"No deer, no bear," said he. "At this time of the year the bears are found only on the ice, where they prowl about, looking for a chance of making a meal of some unwary seal or walrus."

The little valley into which they were descending was watered in summer by a stream which tumbled down to the sea at the narrow glen at the bottom of which Peter Svendson had gone through the mysterious movements which they had witnessed on the occasion of a former ramble in that direction. By a curious coincidence Willie Webb felt his arms grasped by some person behind him, as he and Charlie were tracing the stream, and looking

eagerly for the first appearances of vegetation, and turning quickly round beheld the Swede.

"How you startled me, Svendson!" he exclaimed. "Have you dropped from a cloud?"

"You look as if you thought so," returned Svendson. "But I don't perform my journeys in the clouds, though I have made some strange ones. I got here in the same way as yourselves; but the snow deadens the sound of one's feet."

Though he spoke in his ordinary quiet manner, there was something in the expression of his countenance which inspired a feeling of mingled fear and dislike,—one of those antipathies which we feel towards certain individuals of our own kind, and certain species of inferior animals, without being able to account for the feeling. The air of gloom which his features often wore was deeper, the wandering light that often gleamed from his deep-set eyes more brilliant, than they had ever observed before.

He walked with them to the point where, when the breath of spring had unlocked the frozen stream, the water would begin to tumble down the glen in foam and spray.

"Come with me to the bottom," he then said, addressing Charlie Wilson. "I will show you the place where I parted from your father, and something more."

He leaped down several feet, and, looking upward from the ledge of rock upon which he alighted, bade Charlie follow him, instructing the lad to draw up his knees, and spring forward only just enough to clear the precipice. Charlie did not hesitate a moment; he did not feel, to the same extent at least, the habitual dread of the Swede which his companion exhibited, and the significant look with which Svendson accompanied his promise, was suggestive of the mystery and romance which were so congenial to his mind. Following the Swede's instructions, he alighted on the ledge below in safety.

"Now, Willie!" said he, looking upward.

"No!" exclaimed Svendson, in a sharp, decisive tone. "Willie Webb is not to come; he can go back to the ship the way he came, or any way but this."

"Why am I not to come?" said Willie, in a tone of dissatisfaction. "I suppose I can come if I like."

"Dare to follow us, and I will shoot you!" exclaimed the Swede, dropping the barrel of his rifle into his left hand, and speaking in a tone of stern menace.

"Don't be rash, Svendson!" exclaimed Charlie, putting his hand upon the seaman's arm. "And you, Willie, had better wait for me."

"Ay, he may wait if he will," said Svendson,

slinging his rifle, and preparing to continue the descent.

For some twenty feet below the ledge upon which they were standing, the glen was craggy, but not precipitous; and when they had descended this portion, and looked upward, Willie Webb was standing still where they had left him.

"I shall soon be back," shouted Charlie, and then he followed the Swede, now leaping down a precipice of ten or twelve feet, now scrambling over a pile of rocks, until they reached the bottom of the glen.

"This is the spot!" said Svendson, his dark eyes roving around it, with the look of one who fears that something which he wishes to be unseen may be discerned by a companion. "Ay, just there he stood—and then he went seaward," he added, first fixing his eyes for a few moments upon a spot which he indicated, and then walking towards the beach. "That way he went, and he must be there now."

He waved his hand northward as he made this startling announcement, and led the way to a recess in the base of an iceberg, which had been heaved against the cliff by the gales of the preceding autumn, and remained grounded on the beach.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Charlie.

"Don't tell me it is impossible," returned Svendson. "There is nothing impossible."

"But he would not have gone northward, unless he had first lost his senses," said Charlie, who doubted, and yet could not entirely discredit, the assertions of the Swede. "And if he did, how can you know that he is still there?"

"That is my secret," replied Svendson. "To no human being will all I know concerning your father ever be revealed; but the truth of my assertion is so easily proved that, if Captain Webb would permit me, I should not hesitate to drive a sledge over the frozen ocean straight to the North Pole. There, I have some thoughts of undertaking the enterprise on my own account, in that poor concern."

He pointed as he spoke to a rudely constructed sledge, with dog-harness of old rope, which stood in the recess of the iceberg, almost invisible until they stood close to the mouth of the cavity.

"I should not like to go with you in such a frail craft," observed Charlie, smiling at the rude sledge and the hempen collars and traces.

"I shall not ask you," said Svendson, turning away from the recess. "So we won't talk about it any more; but you need not mention the sledge to that boy above, or to any one else; it might get me into trouble with Mr. Morton."

Charlie promised silence, and they ascended the gap, at the head of which Willie Webb impatiently

awaited their return. As they walked along the cliff, in the direction of the ship, Svendson was abstracted and moody, walking most of the way in advance of the lads, and taking no part in their conversation.

Night was drawing her sable mantle over land and sea, and Charlie Wilson was standing on the ice, at a little distance from the ship, gazing intently towards a spot where he thought he discerned something moving, and holding his rifle before him, ready to be raised in an instant to his shoulder.

"They are not foxes, Charlie," said a voice close to him, though he had thought himself alone.

He turned quickly, and beheld Peter Svendson, who had approached him so quietly that his footsteps had been inaudible.

"It is a fine night," said the Swede, glancing upward at the star-spangled sky. "What say you to a career over the ice in my sledge?"

"With all my heart!" replied Charlie, laughing as he slung his rifle at his back. "But will Mr. Morton let you have the dogs?"

"Yonder are our dogs," replied Svendson, indicating the animals which Charlie had supposed to be foxes; and at a low, prolonged whistle from the Swede, they came rapidly towards them.

They walked quickly towards the spot where the sledge was concealed, drew it from the recess,

harnessed the dogs, and stepped into it, Svendson taking the front seat. The dogs immediately dashed forward, the clumsy sledge bumping over the rough and snow-covered ice, and sometimes oscillating so much as to threaten the excursionists with a spill. Now dragging the sledge up a ridge of ice, and descending the opposite declivity with fearful velocity,—now making a sharp curve round a hummock at a speed which nearly overturned the vehicle,—now setting it fast in a snow-drift, and obliging Svendson to dismount, and assist them in extricating it,—the rough-haired beasts careered onward until they had covered a greater distance than Charlie would have deemed possible.

At length the sledge was overturned, and Charlie and the Swede were pitched into a snow-drift, and the dogs paused, turning their heads to look at the vehicle and its late occupants. The latter scrambled to their feet, none the worse for the mischance, Charlie laughing, and Svendson looking anxiously towards the cliffs.

"We had better return now, I think," observed Charlie.

"Stop a bit," said the Swede, stooping down to unhook the traces by which the dogs were attached to the sledge. "Remain here till I return; don't budge an inch, and don't ask why, for I shall not tell you."

Without waiting for any reply that Charlie might have made, he ran towards the cliff, leading the dogs, and was soon lost to view among the hummocks. But a few minutes had elapsed when Charlie saw with surprise a sledge coming from the cliff, and while he was still lost in wonder at the



THE START FOR THE POLE.

incident, it was driven up to the spot where he stood, and Svendson, who was the driver, caught his hand, and dragged him into it. The lad crouched down, holding on to the sledge, too much bewildered to utter a word, and the dogs pursued their career towards the north.



CHAPTER XIX.

CHASED BY BEARS.

HE dogs soon slackened their pace, for the sledge to which they were now attached was, as the reader knows, laden with provisions and fuel for the

eastward expedition of Captain Webb. Charlie Wilson remonstrated.

"What are you about?" he exclaimed, leaning forward, and grasping Svendson's arm. "Whose sledge is this? and where are you driving to?"

"To the North Pole!" was the Swede's startling reply, as he smacked his whip, and urged the dogs forward.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Charlie, beginning to feel alarmed. "Stop the sledge, and let me get out; or I will leap out as soon as the dogs slacken their pace, which cannot be long."

"Sit still, or I will brain you!" said Svendson,

and, rising quickly in the sledge as he spoke, he grasped the barrel of his rifle with both hands, and raised the stock with a menacing gesture.

Thus threatened, the lad did not dare to quit the sledge, even when, as he had anticipated, the weight of the stores with which it was laden compelled the dogs to slacken their pace. In the meantime, the clamour of Captain Webb's dogs was borne to their ears by the wind that swept over the frozen sea, and showed that the exploring party at the tent had discovered, or would soon discover, their loss.

Charlie looked back, but could see only a wilderness of ice-hummocks and snow-drifts, backed by the dark line of the Greenland cliffs. The fierce barking of the dogs ceased suddenly with the patter of their feet upon the ice, and the voices of men mingled with their savage growling. Charlie half resolved to leap from the sledge, and shout for Captain Webb; but fear of Svendson's violence restrained him, and the sounds in their rear gradually ceased to be heard, as the Swede still urged the dogs forward at the utmost speed which they were able to attain.

Charlie now blamed himself for starting with the Swede on this excursion, the end of which could not, he thought, be other than disastrous, if his strange companion persisted in the execution of the wild project which he had announced to him.

"The fellow must be mad!" he thought, as Svendson still drove northward through the darkness. "His violence, his strange talk, his design of driving to the Pole, all prove it. And yet there is method in his madness, as his preparations, and especially his stealing the sledge, show. I don't know what to think of it! What if his wild stories about my father should be true, after all?"

Just as this thrilling thought rushed upon his perturbed mind, a sudden illumination fell upon the far-stretching waste of ice and snow over which they were driving; and on raising his eyes to the firmament, which a moment before had been of a deep neutral tint, with a star glimmering here and there, he beheld an arch of light, composed of rays of great brilliancy, stretching across the northern horizon, and becoming brighter every moment, as it rose towards the zenith.

"How beautiful!" he murmured, for though he had witnessed the phenomenon before, he had never before seen one nearly so brilliant.

"It is a good sign," observed Svendson. "It is the welcome of the spirits of the Pole to their mysterious abode."

"They are false and delusive spirits, then," said

Charlie. "Many have seen the sign before us, but none have ever reached the Pole."

"We shall!" exclaimed the Swede, half turning his head, and flashing a wild glance upon his anxious companion from his dark deep sunken eyes.

Then he smacked his whip again, and the dogs bounded forward in the brilliant light of the aurora, beneath the arch of which long streamers of various colours now began to wave, as if the spirits of which Svendson spoke held the ends, and kept them in a continual quiver. Rose and violet mingled with silver and blue in these mysterious splendours, which continued to flash athwart the northern sky for nearly twenty minutes, and then rapidly faded out, leaving the sombre heavens and the frozen sea as dark as before.

On went the sledge, however, all through the dark night, until the wearied dogs at length stopped as if by common consent, and laid down upon the ice, breathless and panting. Svendson stepped from the sledge, with a scowl upon his weatherembrowned features, and listened as he looked towards the south.

"I hear no sound," he said, after a pause.
"Either they have not guessed what has happened,
or they are waiting for the daylight."

Charlie said nothing, but ran about on the ice,

to restore the circulation in his cold and stiffened limbs, until he was called by Svendson, who had, in the meantime, made a fire and prepared some cocoa, which was among the stores on the sledge. When they had partaken of this needful refreshment, the Swede laid down in the sledge, covered himself with a bear's-skin, and, bidding Charlie keep a lively look-out for bears, went to sleep.

For some time the lad tramped monotonously to and fro upon the ice, without seeing any object emerge from the darkness around, or hearing any other sound than the deep breathing of Svendson and the dogs. But, as the grey light of dawn extended the range of vision, he discerned two objects, distinguishable from the ice and snow only by their moving, which were approaching the sledge.

"Bears!" he shouted, as he strained his eyes into the dim light, and dropped the barrel of his rifle into his left hand.

"Where?" exclaimed Svendson, bounding from the sledge, and grasping his weapon.

"See!" returned Charlie, pointing to the shaggy monsters that were shambling with long strides towards the sledge. "They must be bears,—a couple of them!"

"Help me to fix the dogs," said Svendson, after a hurried glance towards the bears; and in a few moments the task was accomplished, and the sledge was rushing over the ice, with the adventurers seated in it, as fast as the dogs could draw it.

As they turned their heads from time to time, they became conscious, however, that the bears, which had accelerated their pace on witnessing the attempt of their hoped-for prey to escape from them, were gradually gaining upon them.

"We must give them a shot!" said Svendson, and, as soon as the dogs could be brought to a stand, he levelled his rifle at the foremost of the ferocious brutes, and fired.

The aim was good, and the bear, struck by the bullet between the eyes, sank down upon the ice at once, death seeming to be almost instantaneous. Its mate paused on reaching the carcase, looked for a moment at the blood that flowed from the wound, and then, with an angry growl, continued the chase.

Charlie had his rifle at his shoulder in a moment, and pulled the trigger as the bear raised its head from its dead mate. The ball grazed a fore leg of the animal, inflicting a wound so slight that it did not check for a moment the bear's advance.

Svendson cracked his whip, and the dogs again careered over the ice. The bear followed on the track, growling savagely; and the Swede and his young companion hastened to reload their rifles,

knowing that the pertinacity of their shaggy foe would soon oblige them to renew the conflict.

The bear gained upon them in a greater degree than before as the weary dogs began to abate their speed, while the savage pursuer, now as intent upon revenge as it was hungering for a meal, came on with longer strides. Each glance that Svendson and Charlie threw behind them showed them the bear nearer than before; and the Swede at length stopped the sledge, and stepped upon the ice, rifle in hand, with the vehicle interposed between himself and the bear.

Charlie followed his example, and watched with anxious eyes the quick movements of the Swede, who, stooping behind the sledge, and resting the barrel of his rifle on the stores with which the vehicle was loaded, took a steady aim at the bear's head. The ball grazed the object, and the infuriated animal shook its head, and came on, growling savagely, and showing its white teeth.

Charlie fired immediately, and, as the bear was now only a few yards distant, succeeded in lodging the buliet in the animal's right shoulder. The bear stumbled, and its growl of fierce resentment changed to a howl of pain for a moment, and then was subdued into a lower and hoarser growl as it threw itself forward upon the sledge.

The dogs at that moment faced the bear so

suddenly as nearly to overturn the sledge, and Charlie found himself within a yard of the ferocious brute, whose hot breath he felt upon his face. Clubbing his rifle with a feeling of desperation, he brought down the stock with all his force upon the bear's nose, eliciting another howl of pain, which mingled in horrible discord with the fierce barking of the dogs.

The onset of the bear was checked by the blow, and Charlie was enabled to leap backward, beyond the reach of the animal's paws, which had been extended to seize him. Svendson, in the meantime, had rapidly re-loaded his rifle, and the muzzle was less than a yard from the bear's head when he again pulled the trigger. The savage animal rolled at his feet, shot through the brain, and the blood that flowed upon the ice was eagerly lapped by the dogs.

"Thank God for that!" gasped Charlie. "You will take the skin, Svendson, won't you?"

The Swede nodded, and in another moment they were both busy with their knives, flaying the dead bear, and throwing portions of the flesh to the dogs. Their task accomplished, the skin was thrown upon the sledge, and they resumed their flight.



CHAPTER XX.

THE SNOW-STORM.

HE vast expanse of ice and snow whitened as the daylight increased, extending with the adventurers' range of vision until it reached the horizon

on every side, its dreary uniformity unbroken in any direction. As far as they could see the prospect embraced only ridges of hummocks, looking like the billows of a stormy sea suddenly frozen. No bird winged its flight over that icy waste—no sound of life was heard, nothing was visible that indicated the presence of other beings than themselves.

The dogs toiled steadily on with their burden, Svendson and our young hero alighting occasionally, and running by the side of the sledge, with the double purpose of warming their benumbed limbs, and lightening the labour of the dogs. Even on these occasions, few words were exchanged between Charlie and the Swede, the former being anxious about the issue of the enterprise, and the view that might be taken of his conduct by Captain Webb; and his mysterious guide seeming to be plunged in the mental gloom induced by those past horrors that were fully known to none but himself.

Noon was at length past, and the sun, which had glimmered above the southern horizon for a short time, was beginning to decline; but Svendson, who had discerned the signs of a coming storm, drove on, anxious to put as long a distance as possible between himself and the pursuers who might be in the rear before he was compelled to halt. Darker and darker grew the sky, and soon snow began to fall heavily, but still he drove on, looking back upon the track of the sledge from time to time to see whether it was yet obliterated by the white flakes.

So fast they fell, however, that he was obliged to drive more slowly and carefully, lest the sledge should be plunged suddenly into a snow-drift, or overturned on the steep side of a hummock; for dogs, unlike horses, rush on headlong, regardless of any obstacles which may exist to the progress of the vehicle to which they are attached. The animals were very willing to slacken their pace, and when Svendson, observing that the track

behind them was well covered with snow, brought them to a halt, they lay down contentedly upon the ice.

"We are now safe from pursuit," observed Svendson, as he stepped from the sledge. "The snow soon hides everything in these regions. Even a dead man, Charlie, may soon be buried beneath it, perhaps to be preserved for years in the heart of an iceberg, or for centuries in a glacier."

He placed his hand on our hero's shoulder as he spoke, and regarded him so intently and significantly as to convey the impression that he was striving to overawe him with a vague terror. Charlie made no rejoinder, but stepped from the sledge, and proceeded in silence to assist his companion in making a fire on the lee side of a hummock, and cooking some preserved meat and vegetables for their dinner. Snow was thawed at the same time to provide water for the dogs.

The adventurers sat down in the sledge to partake of their warm and nourishing meal, having first drawn the vehicle close to a high hummock which afforded partial protection from the storm, and made a canopy of the bear's skin and their rifles. From this rude and imperfect shelter they looked out upon the snow, which seemed to fill the air as thickly as it covered the ice, interposing a

white and fleecy veil between their eyes and the dark grey sky.

"If this storm ceases before we are buried beneath the snow," Charlie observed, after a long silence, "I think we had better turn round, and return to the ship."

"And not go to the Pole?" returned Svendson, elevating his dark eyebrows. "Why, we shall be there to-morrow, or the day after! I thought you had more of the spirit of enterprise in you."

"You don't rightly estimate my motives," rejoined Charlie. "The enterprise would have delighted me, if it had been undertaken with the knowledge and consent of Captain Webb."

"What is the want of his consent to the glory of discovering the North Pole?" said the Swede. "And we shall discover it! And you will join your father, Charlie."

"Ah!" ejaculated Charlie. "When you talk about the North Pole, I can understand you; but as soon as you begin to talk about my father, the look-out becomes foggy."

"Ah!" said Svendson, shaking his head. "That is because you don't know what I know; but the objects which the fog hides from us are there, though they are hidden from our sight."

Charlie was silent, for he could not entirely divest his mind of the suspicion that his companion was somewhat deranged in intellect, and feared to arouse his resentment by persistent contradiction or too evident incredulity. So he looked out once more upon the white flakes that still fell thick and fast upon the vast expanse of ice around them; and the Swede lighted his pipe.

When the storm at length ceased, darkness was fast gathering over the frozen sea, and, as the sky was still overcast by murky clouds, Svendson determined not to proceed until the sun rose, or the stars shone out brilliantly enough to light them on their way. He advised Charlie, therefore, to repose for a few hours in the sledge, where the lad, needing no second telling, was soon fast asleep, while the Swede stalked up and down the ice, the solitary watcher of their lonely bivouac.

When Charlie awoke, darkness still covered the billowy waste of ice, and the solemn silence was disturbed only by the deep breathing of the sleeping dogs and the monotonous tramp of the watchful Swede upon the crisp snow. The dark figure passed the sledge two or three times before Charlie rolled himself out of the rugs and skins which composed his bed and covering, and assumed an erect posture on the ice.

"Will you lie down now, Svendson?" he inquired, as the Swede again approached the sledge.

Svendson started, as if the lad's voice had roused

him from a deep reverie; and for a moment he stood silent and motionless, regarding Charlie with an air of bewilderment.

"No, no!" he at length exclaimed. "I don't need sleep,—I can't sleep to-night."

He then resumed his solitary round, and Charlie, after glancing towards the south-east, to see if there were any signs of the dawn on the distant horizon, stepped into the sledge again, rolled himself up in the rugs, and drew the bear's skin over him.

Dark clouds interposed between the frozen sea and the star-spangled firmament throughout the night, and the hours passed wearily until a grey light suffused itself over the south-eastern portion of the sky, and was followed by a gleam of silvery lustre—more like the light of the moon than that of the sun—which divided the billowy waste into light and shadow, the snow glistening in dazzling whiteness in the faint beams of the luminary of day, and showing dull and grey where the light had not reached it.

Charlie now turned out again, and when he and his companion had breakfasted on biscuit and cocoa, the dogs were again attached to the sledge, and the journey was resumed.

The day passed without a single incident of greater importance than the mid-day halt for rest and a warm meal of preserved meat and vegetables.

There was no food for the dogs, who, as they inhaled the appetizing smell, regarded the adventurers with longing eyes, and would have made an attack on the mess while in the pot, if Svendson had not kept them off with the whip.

All day, as they drove over the ice, nothing was seen but the white and glistening waste around them,—nothing was heard but the scraping and crunching of the crisp snow under the sledge. Not a track of bear or fox was seen,—not a bird winged its flight over the dreary waste of undulating ice and snow. The monotony of the scene, the profound silence that reigned over it, the gloomy bearing of his companion, inspired Charlie with a feeling of awe, which became deeper as they fled farther from the most northerly abiding-place of their kind, and saw the icy ridges of the frozen sea still stretching northward as far as they could see,—the same white waste, bounded by the same grey sky.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE LONELY ISLAND.

NOTHER lonely bivouac amidst ice and snow, but this time enlivened by the brilliant flashes of the aurora until near midnight, when the semi-circle of

rays that had over-arched the frozen sea faded from the sky.

Svendson assigned the first watch to Charlie, who, with his rifle under his arm, walked quickly in every direction, but always starting from and returning to the sledge, from which he was never absent more than ten minutes. The night passed quietly, the solemn silence being undisturbed by the footfalls of a prowling bear, or the howl of a hungry fox, however distant. Those lone wanderers over the frozen sea seemed to be the only living things within sight or hearing

Svendson reposed in the sledge, but his sleep

seemed to be broken by dreams of horror, for he often moved uneasily, uttered inarticulate sounds between his set teeth, and extended his arms, sometimes as if engaged in a desperate struggle, at others as if deprecating the advance of some object of dread. Sometimes he opened his eyes, which stared fixedly into the darkness, with an expression of terror; but he seemed still to sleep, and to be unaware of the presence of Charlie, who gazed upon him with feelings of mingled wonder, fear, and compassion, vainly endeavouring to connect the few articulate words which escaped the dreamer's lips.

He awoke at length with a cry that might almost have been called a shriek, and Charlie, running towards the sledge, found him standing near it, gazing wildly about him, as if seeking some invisible object of the terror which had haunted his sleep.

"What ails you, Svendson?" said our hero, as he came up to him.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Swede, regarding him wildly for a moment, as if he did not immediately recognize him.

"You know me,—Charlie Wilson?" said the lad, in a soothing tone, but without venturing to approach nearer to him.

"Ay," returned Svendson, in a calmer tone; and

as he gazed around him, the reality of the situation seemed to slowly impress itself upon his mind.

"You have been dreaming, I think," observed Charlie. "Will you turn in again?"

"No more to-night," replied the Swede, with a shudder. "Better the lone watch upon the ice, even with the thoughts that in solitude come unbidden to my mind, than such another dream as I have dreamed to-night."

He took his rifle and strode away between the hummocks; and Charlie laid down in the sledge, at first to watch his strange companion as he paced backward and forward on the ice, in the pale light of the stars that twinkled in the dark concave above them, but gradually to fall asleep, and sleep soundly, until the sun was gleaming with level beams along the snowy ridges of the frozen sea.

Breakfast was then prepared, and when the meal was concluded the adventurers started again,—Svendson calmer than when he awoke from his troubled sleep, but still moody and taciturn. He had not driven more than a mile when the tracks of a fox were observed, and the dogs, scenting the animal, started from the course, a chorus of savage howls bursting at the same moment from their hungry jaws.

Svendson pulled the reins, and used the whip freely, in order to keep the dogs on the northward course; but the famished animals were ungovernable, and a struggle for the mastery ensued, ending with the dogs rushing wildly against the side of a steep hummock, overturning the sledge, and pitching Charlie and the Swede into the snow. The traces being broken by the strain, two of the dogs were released, and started off at full speed on the trail of the fox.

"Confound the brutes!" exclaimed Svendson, scrambling to his feet, and laying about him furiously with the whip, until he saw that the dogs, in their struggles to escape the lash, were likely to destroy their harness, and follow their liberated fellows.

"Let us leave the sledge as it is, in which position the dogs cannot move it, and go after the runaways." said Charlie.

"And return to find the stores plundered by a bear!" returned the Swede, in an angry tone. "Let the brutes go; there will be the fewer to feed, and these will have to work the harder."

"I daresay they will follow us," said Charlie, ascending a hummock to look after the runaway dogs, who were, however, hidden from sight behind a ridge, though their cries could still be heard.

He then assisted Svendson to right the sledge, and reload it with the scattered cases of provisions and bags of tuel. Again the journey was resumed, but at a diminished rate of speed, owing to the loss of the two dogs that had gone in pursuit of the fox. They had travelled in this manner about an hour when they saw, a little westward of their direct course, a dark object on the horizon, like pinnacles of a rocky mountain rising abruptly in the midst of the surrounding waste of ice and snow.

"An island!" exclaimed Charlie, rising so suddenly in the sledge to obtain a better view, that he nearly lost his balance, and narrowly escaped a tumble.

That it was but a precipitous mass of barren rock was evident even at that distance, for no snow rested upon it,—its steep cliffs frowning over the frozen sea, without any ledge upon which snow could lay, or a gull rest from its flight. Svendson directed his course towards it, however, and Charlie's eyes were bent upon it, as it rose higher and higher above the ice as they advanced, with the interest inspired by the relief which it afforded to the monotony of the white and dreary waste which they were traversing.

As they approached the lonely island, Svendson directed our hero's attention to a bright line on the horizon, on which the sun shone as on a wall of emerald and sapphire.

"We are near the Pole!" said he.

"If that glassy ridge behind the island is a line

of glaciers, the *ultima Thule* must certainly lie behind them," returned Charlie, straining his eyes northward; "but it may be the barrier of ice which we sighted last summer."

"The circumpolar land lies behind it, and at no great distance in either case," said Svendson. "But we shall find it difficult, I fear, if not impossible, to surmount that barrier in a sledge."

Charlie's spirits rose with the prospect of being one of the first to plant his foot on the most northern spot of the globe, and he sprang upon the ice, and ran by the side of the sledge, to lighten the labour of the weary and hungering dogs.

The island seemed, on a nearer view, to be inaccessible to the foot of man, so steep were the dark cliffs that encircled it, and so enormous the masses of ice which the waves had heaped up around their base. An imaginative mind might have pictured a race of polar Titans assailing with these icy masses an outwork of the Ice King, in such wild confusion had they been hurled against the cliffs, and piled one upon another.

The island appearing to be inaccessible on its southern and eastern sides, Svendson kept a northerly course until its northern cliffs came into view, and were seen to be much lower than those on the opposite side, and less heavily girt with ice. The circumference of the island did not seem to

exceed three or four miles, and no vegetation was perceptible from the ice, nor did a single bird fly from the rocks as the adventurers approached.

Pursuing a devious course among hummocks of more than ordinary elevation, Svendson drove as near as was practicable to the cliffs, and halted



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under the lee of an enormous mass of ice. He and Charlie then made a hasty meal, and the latter mounted guard upon the sledge, while the Swede made an attempt to reach the island.

While the panting dogs stretched their shaggy bodies on the ice, our hero watched with interest the progress of his companion. He saw him disappear amongst the piled-up masses of ice, emerge into view again as he scrambled over them, and vanish again at a narrow gap in the cliff.

An hour elapsed before he again appeared, waving his cap from the summit of one of the loftiest pinnacles of the rock. He stood there for a few minutes, gazing northward, and then began to descend. He was soon lost to view among the rocks, and more than an hour passed before Charlie saw him emerge from the gap, and scramble over the masses of ice that impeded his progress towards the sledge.

"What have we ahead?" cried Charlie, as he approached. "What saw you beyond the icy barrier?"

"Glaciers and snowy peaks!" replied Svendson, who was almost breathless with his exertions.

He sat down, and, when he had fully recovered his breath, expressed his determination to deposit most of the fuel and a portion of the provisions on the island, and, with the sledge thus lightened, to make a rush at the Pole.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE BARRIER OF ICE.

S their stock of gunpowder was too small to permit its use for the purpose of blasting a hole in the ice, it was necessary, in order to secure the deposit

from the possible depredations of bears or foxes, to carry the stores over the icy girdle, and place them in a cavity among the rocks, which the adventurers closed by their united exertions in rolling upon it some of the heavy fragments of granite which were strewed about the gap.

By the time their task was accomplished the light was fading from the sky, and grey shadows were creeping over the ice. Svendson would lose no time, however, and he was driving northward, with Charlie behind him, at the utmost speed of the dogs, within a few minutes after their return to the sledge from the rocky gap of the lonely island.

The dogs, relieved of their burden to an extent that more than counterbalanced the absence of their two companions, dashed forward at a good pace, urged by the voice and whip of Svendson, who seemed to be exalted by the sight of the peaks and glaciers of the *ultima Thule* to a state of mind that disregarded every obstacle. Though the ice between the island and the barrier which seemed to be interposed between the explorers and the land around the Pole was upheaved into ridges higher than any they had encountered before, he continued to urge the dogs forward at their utmost speed, even when the fast-increasing darkness rendered such a pace more dangerous.

The sky assumed a deep neutral tint, spangled by myriads of stars; and the icy barrier, which had long lost its emerald and sapphire hues, changed from white to grey; but still the sledge containing those strangely associated adventurers rushed on, now up a steep ridge, now at headlong speed down the opposite declivity,—now turning a hummock so sharply as to threaten them with an upset, now plunging through a snow-drift, and raising a cloud of the white particles which for the moment blinded and seemed to nearly bury them.

Charlie expected every moment that the sledge would be overturned, and, as the shocks increased in violence, as well as in frequency, he crouched down, and prepared for the accident that seemed inevitable. The surface of the frozen sea became rougher as they approached the icy barrier, which presented a front even more formidable when seen more closely than it had at a distance. It looked as if a strong wind had driven myriads of icebergs towards the land, and tempestuous waves had afterwards heaved up immense floes, and packed them one upon another against the line of bergs.

The upset which Charlie anticipated at length came. The dogs dragged the sledge with difficulty up a ridge of ice, the opposite declivity of which was so steep that one of the dogs stumbled and fell—the others rushed on, and in a moment the traces were broken, the fallen dog killed by the sledge, the vehicle overturned, and Svendson pitched to the bottom of the furrow.

Charlie rolled out unhurt, and, scrambling to his feet, ran to the assistance of the Swede, who lay motionless and insensible on the ice. For some minutes Charlie feared that he was killed; but at length he raised his hand to his head, and uttered a sound which seemed to be composed of a sigh and a groan in equal parts. Charlie then ran to the sledge, and found among the scattered stores a tin flask containing brandy, a small quantity of which he poured between Svendson's lips.

In a few minutes the Swede opened his eyes,

and sat up; and Charlie then left him, to collect the scattered stores, upon which the hungry dogs were vainly employing their teeth and claws, the whole being enclosed in tin cases. By the time this was done, Svendson, who had been stunned by the fall, but had received no serious injury, was able to assist him in righting the sledge.

"Not that we can get it over yonder icy barrier," observed Charlie, as the vehicle was once more restored to its upright position on the runners; "but we shall want it on our return, and it may be well to leave it ready. I suppose we cannot get it much farther?"

"We shall see about that to-morrow," returned Svendson. "We will get on as far as we can tonight, walking by the side of the sledge, and halt when we can get it no farther."

The stores were replaced upon the sledge, therefore, the traces mended, and the dogs assisted in dragging the sledge towards the icy barrier by a less direct course than had hitherto been pursued, but which presented less formidable obstacles to their progress. When they had proceeded in this manner about two hundred yards, they found themselves confronted by the floes which the stormy waves had packed one upon another along the base of the icebergs.

"Here we must halt," said Svendson; and

when the sledge had been drawn under the lee of an upheaved floe, a fire was lighted, and the dogs suffered to run at large, in the hope that they might discover a dead seal, or run down a halffamished fox

Weary as they were, the dogs, instead of lying down upon the ice, were impelled by the cravings of hunger to run hither and thither, scrambling over the ice, vainly sniffing the air, and uttering cries that varied from a complaining yelp to a savage howl. The savoury steam of the mess of preserved meat and vegetables which the explorers were preparing for their supper soon attracted them back to the bivouac, and they gathered around with such unequivocal manifestations of a design upon the contents of the pot that Svendson was obliged, more than once, to have recourse to the whip, to deter them from the onslaught.

"They will become dangerous, I fear, if they don't soon procure food," observed Charlie. "Their white teeth would reconcile me to the apparition of a bear among these masses of ice."

"We have seen bears too recently to believe that they don't extend their prowlings even to the Pole," returned Svendson; "and the next we kill must not be left upon the ice, but made to feed ourselves as well as the dogs. We may have to complete our journey on foot, and our stock of provisions is by no means ample."

"Then we have the more reason to pray for a bear," said Charlie, as he prepared for repose by rolling himself in the rugs in the sledge, while the Swede lighted his pipe, and shouldered his rifle, to keep solitary watch by their lonely bivouac.

The dogs again dispersed in quest of food—a quest which seemed almost hopeless in such a high latitude, and at a period so early; and Charlie soon fell asleep, with his loaded rifle, as usual, by his side.

When he awoke, a grey light was stealing over the frozen sea, and the highest portions of the icy barrier were tinged with rose, while the lower faces were assuming their delicate shades of blue and green. Svendson stood by the side of the sledge, packing the stores in skins, so as to admit of their being carried on their backs; and the cocoa-pot was over a scanty fire, around which the weary dogs were huddled in sleep.

"Have you not slept, Svendson?" said Charlie, as he cast off the hoar frost with which his breath had covered the bear's skin, and stepped upon the ice. "Why didn't you wake me?"

The Swede replied that he had not felt sleepy; and the cocoa being ready, they proceeded to breakfast. The dogs roused themselves, and shook

the snow from their rough coats, while the meal was in progress; and when it was concluded, the explorers strapped their knapsacks upon each other's shoulders, slung their rifles at their backs, and commenced their scramble over the heaved-up floes, followed by the dogs.

At the distance of a quarter of a mile from the spot where they had left the sledge, they reached the foot of the line of icebergs which, according to Svendson's report of the preceding day, belted the circumpolar land, and hid its peaks and glaciers from their sight. They saw its lofty walls and towering pinnacles, now flashing in the sunlight like a jewelled palace of the Ice King, stretching to the right and left as far as they could see, without any visible opening. They separated, therefore, and walked in opposite directions, hoping that one or the other would succeed in discovering a practicable passage.

The older icebergs were, as usual, perforated deeply by the action of the waves and the percolation of fresh water from above; and Charlie entered several cavern-like apertures, but found no egress from them, other than by the way he had entered. At the distance of a couple of miles from the place where he and Svendson had parted, he found, however, a much decayed berg, in which was a passage high enough to admit

him without stooping, and winding steeply up ward.

The icicles which fringed this fairy-like grotto showed that water trickled through the crevices when the sun shone warmly on the upper surface of the berg, as Charlie knew, by the light which was diffused through the thick walls of ice, it was then doing. The path being steep, and the ice smoother than that which covered the sea, the ascent was rendered difficult by its slipperiness; but the pale blue sky at length became visible through an opening in the upper part of the berg, and our hero, rushing towards it so eagerly that he nearly lost his footing, looked out upon a scene that filled his mind with wonder and delight.



CHAPTER XXIII.

A MYSTERIOUS SHIP.

HE opening at which the passage through the iceberg terminated was high above the sea, and faced the north, where glaciers and snowy peaks

of mountains glittered in the sunlight as they rose one above another against the pale blue sky. Weary as our hero's eyes were of looking continually upon ice and snow, he could yet admire the emerald and sapphire tints of those portions of the glaciers upon which the sun shone, and the peaks that towered above them like cones of frosted silver. Lower down, where the sun's rays did not penetrate, and where slope or precipice lay in shadow, the snows assumed a dead whiteness, and the glaciers faded into various shades of neutral tint.

When Charlie had gazed his fill upon this unwonted scene, he looked down upon the foreground of the view, and saw to the right and the left masses of ice piled up against the granite cliffs, with the summits of which their wasted pinnacles were in many places level. Immediately below him was the worn and weather-beaten hull of a ship of small size, and apparently the construction of an earlier age and a foreign country.

The deck was inclined towards the iceberg, and the bows were slightly elevated above the stern. The masts had evidently been cut away by the mariners, or torn out of the vessel by the violence of the gale, long before she had drifted to that last resting-place, where, heaved-up as she was by the ice, she reminded our hero of the ark of Noah, standing high and dry among the rocks of Ararat.

Charlie gazed and wondered at the weather-beaten hull for some time, and then began to look about him for some means of reaching it. The landward face of the iceberg was almost perpendicular, and the inclined deck of the ship was at least twenty feet below him. Without a rope or a ladder, neither of which was available, the deck could be reached only by leaping, which was rendered dangerous by the inclination at which the position of the hull placed it to the iceberg, and by the probable decay of its planks and beams.

Beyond the weather-worn old hull was a mass of ancient and discoloured ice, the summit of which was only a few feet lower than that of the granite cliff against which it had been heaved by the winds and waves long years before. But how came the ship there? Had she been abandoned by her crew, and then drifted to her last and lonely harbourage, as the winds and the current impelled her?—or had she been driven from her course by adverse winds, and been cast upon that rock-bound and inhospitable coast, with her unfortunate crew?

Charlie felt eager to explore the mysterious vessel, but he thought of Svendson, and reflected that time would be gained by joining him with as little delay as possible. He retraced his steps through the water-worn passage of the iceberg, therefore, and hurried along the platform of packed floes in quest of his companion.

Before he could reach the place at which they had parted, he saw Svendson coming towards him, and immediately made signs to him that he had discovered a passage. The Swede thereupon accelerated his pace, and soon joined him, with the information that there was no passage westward within the distance which he had traversed. Charlie eagerly communicated the double discovery which he had made, and they both hurried towards the perforated iceberg.

The mouth of that singular grotto reached, they were not long in scrambling through the upward winding passage and gaining the opening from which Charlie had obtained his first view of the circumpolar land, and looked down upon the mysterious hulk. Svendson said nothing, but



ON THE DECK OF THE MYSTERIOUS SHIP.

gathered himself up for a leap, and the next moment was on the vessel's deck.

"Come on!" he immediately exclaimed. "Since her deck has not given way under me, it will support your lighter weight."

Charlie followed without hesitation, and alighted

safely on the deck. The exploration of the vessel was immediately commenced, the main hatch being off, and the companion affording ready access to the darksome interior.

"Suppose we find a bear below!" observed Charlie, as they descended the companion, in some doubt as to its stability.

"Then we shall have fresh meat for the dogs, and for ourselves," returned Svendson, stepping on the lower deck, and looking warily around.

Darkness reigned between the decks, however, except where light, subdued by the intervention of the icebergs among which the hull was wedged, came through the hatchway. Svendson struck a match, therefore, and having lighted a small lamp, went into the cabin, which contained a few articles of old-fashioned furniture, but no charts or nautical instruments of any kind.

The vessel had been strongly built, and her stout timbers had suffered much less from decay than might have been expected, while the frigidity of the climate had precluded the possibility of their being ravaged by destructive insects. Extreme cold had caused the planks to contract, but they had been laid double, and there were no open seams to admit the air.

"She has been abandoned by her crew," observed Svendson, "and may have been tossed about by arctic storms for years before she was driven upon this rock-bound coast, and held here by the ice. She is a very old ship, and her timbers, if they could speak, could probably tell some strange and terrible yarns."

"She may have been the vessel in which the unfortunate Willoughby wintered on the coast of Lapland," said Charlie, "and was found the following spring by some Russian fishermen, frozen to death—he and all the crew; or she may have been the vessel in which Barentz was driven upon the coast of Nova Zembla; or one of the Russian vessels which, a century and a half ago, were lost in attempting to beat through the ice-encumbered ocean that washes the northern coast of Asia."

"Or, perhaps, some unfortunate whaler," added the Swede, as they proceeded in their examination, raising dismal echoes from the stout sides of the storm-beaten hulk.

Some cooking utensils remained in the caboose, but in a very rusty condition; and some tin cases of biscuits and a cask of wine were found, the former in good preservation, and the latter sound and bright, as they ascertained by drawing a small quantity, and tasting it. Some other casks, and several wooden boxes, which had contained provisions of some kind, had been broken open, and their contents devoured by bears or foxes, as was

evident by the marks of their teeth upon the hoops

When they had completed their examination of the vessel between decks, they made a fire, and cooked some of their preserved meat, which, with biscuit and wine from the stores aboard the hulk, furnished them with an excellent meal. Having refreshed and rested themselves, Svendson lighted his pipe, and they ascended to the upper deck, whence they scrambled with little difficulty to the summit of the cliff.

The ground, which seemed to be the bare rock, without the most scanty covering of earth, but mantled thickly with snow, rose before them for about half a mile, at which distance they found it decline towards a valley filled with a glacier Beyond the glittering pinnacles and blue hollows of this obstruction there rose a lofty cone, sharply defined by its dazzling everlasting snow against the pale blue sky.

"If that high peak is not the very centre of the arctic circle, it must be very near it," said Svendson, when he had gazed for some moments at the snowy cone before them. "At all events, if we can reach it, we shall have a view over the land which, with the help of our map, will enable us to fix upon the central point which has so long been sought in vain."

They walked along the brow of the hill, therefore, until they found their progress stopped by another glacier, occupying a narrow gorge opening towards the sea amongst piled-up masses of ice, forming a continuation of the barrier by which the land seemed engirdled. As it was now growing dark, they retraced their steps to the ship, which they resolved to make their quarters for the night, as, rude as was the accommodation it offered, it at least would afford better protection against wind or snow than the bear's skin which they had been in the habit of stretching over their sledge.



CHAPTER XXIV.

LOST ON A GLACIER.

HE shadows lengthen rapidly in the arctic regions, and darkness was settling upon land and sea when Charlie and the Swede regained the dark hull

of the lonely and long-abandoned ship. A better fire than they had enjoyed for some time was soon blazing upon an iron plate in the cabin; for there was much old wood about the ship, besides the broken casks and boxes which wild beasts had plundered; and the hatches being closed, as well as the cabin-door, the temperature soon rose to a degree that was quite enjoyable.

"We will have some wine," said Svendson, when they had supped on biscuit and cocoa, which was their usual morning and evening fare. "Wherefore not? What we don't drink, we must leave behind, never to moisten human lips." He spoke more cheerfully than our hero had ever heard him speak before, and, after drawing about a pint of wine from the cask, threw some more wood on the fire, and lighted his pipe.

"We will drink to the discovery of the North Pole!" said he, as he poured out the bright red wine. "It is we, my boy, who will make that discovery, and our names will be remembered ever more."

"Captain Webb will be anticipated," said Charlie, with a smile, as he sipped his wine.

"Never mind him," returned Svendson. "Who cares for him? We are monarchs of all we survey—From the centre all round to the sea!"

He refilled the cups, and, approaching his own to our hero's, said, as they clinked together, "Here's to your father, lad!"

"You had better not talk of him, Svendson," observed Charlie, in a tone of mild deprecation.

The Swede looked intently at him for a moment, as if trying to read his thoughts, and then turned away from him, and gazed into the blazing fire. For a few minutes he was silent, and then he drank his wine, and hummed a verse of a Swedish song. As the unwonted sounds died away, a distant howl was heard, and as Charlie and the Swede looked at each other, and both were about to speak, it was repeated from a shorter distance.

"Is that a fox, or one of our dogs?" said

"One of the dogs, I expect," replied Svendson; "they are as wild as foxes though by this time, and savage as bears."

The howl was not repeated, and our hero presently spread a rug and a bear's skin in one of the berths, and laid down for the night. He saw Svendson fill his cup with wine several times, and, as the fire flickered and glowed upon his weather-beaten countenance, his eyes seemed again to flash with the wild expression which Charlie had observed on more than one previous occasion. Gradually our young hero fell asleep, but each time that he opened his eyes, the dark figure of the Swede intercepted the firelight.

The fire burned low while Charlie slept, and at length only the red embers glowed upon the hearth. Still Svendson sat near it, with his arms upon the table, supporting his head. Several times during the night a dismal howling might have been heard, now nearer, now more remote; but the Swede either heard it not, or hearing did not regard it. But no other sound disturbed the silence of the long night.

Our hero was startled from slumber by a loud report, and springing immediately from his berth, he saw a cloud of white sulphurous smoke rolling



" Are we besieged by a Bear?"-Page 193.

between the decks, and through it the figure of the Swede, looking wildly towards the hatchway, and grasping his rifle.

"Are we besieged by a bear?" he exclaimed, snatching his own weapon, and running forward.

Svendson made no reply, but rushed up the companion, and threw off the hatch. In another moment he was on the deck, gazing wildly around him. Charlie followed, and his eyes roved eagerly from the deck to the icebergs, and thence to the summit of the granite cliffs, but saw nothing else. The echoes of the report had died away, and no sound was heard until Svendson spoke.

"Did you hear nothing?" said he, turning to Charlie, and speaking in a voice which evinced wonder and excitement as plainly as his wild and haggard countenance.

"I heard the report of your rifle," replied Charlie. "It awakened me from sleep; it was time, it seems, for it is nearly light."

"Ah, you were asleep!" said Svendson, turning towards the companion. "You could not hear, then, what I heard."

"What did you hear?" inquired Charlie, as they returned to the cabin.

"Never mind," returned the Swede, shaking his head.

Charlie did not deem it advisable to repeat the

question, and proceeded to prepare breakfast, while Svendson paced the deck, with knitted brows and downcast eyes. When he came to the table, his excitement had disappeared, and was succeeded by a moody silence, varied by fits of abstraction. After the meal, he loaded his rifle with more than usual care.

"Now for the Pole!" said Charlie, in a cheerful tone, as they left the ship, and again scrambled over the ice.

"Ay, he must be there!" muttered the Swede, knitting his brows and seeming to grasp his rifle more firmly, as if meditating some desperate deed.

"Still thinking of my father?" our hero ventured to say.

Svendson did not immediately reply, and seemed not to have heard; but a few minutes afterwards he turned to Charlie, with a mysterious air, and said, in a low voice, "I saw him last night; but it was only for a moment. When I went towards him, he glided into the darkness, and must have gone up the companion; for he had disappeared."

"Was it at him you fired this morning?" inquired Charlie, who was now convinced that the Swede, as he had before suspected, was the subject of some delusion concerning his father.

"I saw nothing then," replied Svendson; "but I heard a noise, as if some one was trying to

remove the hatch, and I thought—" He paused suddenly, and then uttered a wild laugh as he added, "But he could have got below as he did in the night!"

There was then a long pause, Charlie pondering on what he had heard, and Svendson absorbed in his own terrible and bewildering thoughts. Thus silently they crossed the hill, and stood beside the glacier, where the shadows yet laid coldly blue, while the cone that rose above it on the opposite side was tinged with rose by the rising sun.

To the surprise of our hero, the Swede stepped upon the first ledge of the stupendous accumulation of ice and concrete snow, and strode across it in a direct line towards the lofty cone, which seemed to be the highest point of the circumpolar land. Charlie followed, after a moment's hesitation, but with more caution than Svendson seemed to use, taking care to tread in his companion's footsteps, as long as the Swede contrived to scramble over the frozen mass without a slip.

When they had advanced about a hundred yards, they reached a deep chasm, the sides of which were so steep that there seemed no possibility of crossing it, unless by leaping over it. Svendson did not hesitate a moment; he seemed, indeed, to have resolved to go forward at all hazards. He poised himself on the brink of the chasm for a

moment, and then leaped into the air, alighting safely on the other side, where, however, he seemed for a brief space of time to be in danger of slipping backward into the abyss.

Charlie looked up and down the long fissure in the glacier, and then into its blue depth, which, deepening into a dark neutral tint as it receded from the light, seemed unfathomable. Then he braced nerve and muscle for the leap, and sprang forward. Svendson caught his hand as his feet touched the opposite side of the chasm, and drew him forward, holding his hand until he had obtained a secure footing upon the slippery surface.

Then they again struggled forward, sometimes slipping about upon the ice, sometimes plunging up to their middles in snow, until they reached a steep slope, against which the snow had drifted to a considerable depth. Crisp as the white mass was, they sank into it deeply, and Charlie at one moment sank up to his shoulders, and would have disappeared altogether, if his companion had not promptly grasped his arm with his right hand, while with the left he clutched an enormous icicle. A struggle was then made to keep their footing on the upper edge of the snow-drift, and in this they for the time succeeded, though it became every moment evident to Charlie that their situation became more precarious as they advanced.

"We must have poles and ropes," he at length observed, pausing a little in the rear of his companion.

"Come on!" said Svendson, waving his hand. "It will be as dangerous to return as to go forward."

A few yards farther they struggled on, and then the icy steep which they were traversing sloped so gently that they were enabled to scramble to its summit, and look around them. The glacier was not half crossed, and presented on every side a wilderness of glittering eminences, blue-looking chasms, and snow-filled hollows.

Svendson knitted his brows as he recognized the difficulty of the undertaking, but in another moment, muttering some words which did not reach the ears of his companion, he descended a depression which was intersected by a chasm nearly as broad as the one they had leaped, but crossed by a natural bridge of ice and snow. Charlie followed, and in a few minutes reached the chasm, the bottom of which was filled with snow, so that its actual depth could not be ascertained.

The Swede strode towards the natural bridge, which had probably been formed by the filling of the chasm with snow, and the subsequent thawing of the white mass immediately below the more compact portion that spanned the gulf. As he

stepped quickly across it, Charlie saw a shower of snow fall from it into the chasm below, and the next moment Svendson slipped backward, and fell, with the bridge of snow, into the soft white bed below.

The Swede uttered a despairing cry as he fell, which was echoed by Charlie, as he looked, with



SVENDSON FALLING INTO THE CHASM.

staring eyes and blanched cheeks, into the gulf. A cloud of snow-flakes veiled the depth from his sight for some moments, and when it settled Svendson had disappeared, and a depression in the snow which filled the chasm was the only indication of the catastrophe.



CHAPTER XXV.

A NIGHT OF HORRORS.

HARLIE stood as if rooted to the spot, looking into the snowy abyss in which the Swede had disappeared, and vainly listening for a sound that might indi-

cate whether he yet lived, or the depth to which he had fallen.

"Svendson!" he cried, but no sound came up from the abyss, and the solitude and silence around him filled his mind with a vague feeling of awe. "He has perished!" he murmured, as he listened vainly on the brink of the chasm; "and I am alone in the heart of the circumpolar region!"

Though he had no hope that his companion lived, he lingered for some time on the spot before he could compose his mind to the task of deciding upon the course to be adopted in this terrible emergency. Then he determined to endeavour to

retrace his steps to the old hulk amongst the icebergs of the coast while daylight remained, and in the rude shelter and comparative comfort of that retreat ponder the new situation in which he found himself.

Oppressed by dejection and a sense of loneliness, he turned away from the chasm, and toiled over the glacier, avoiding the deep snow-drift in which he had himself had a narrow escape of being inextricably plunged, and leaping the chasm beyond with a confidence strengthened by his successful passage of the morning. Then he paused to eat a little preserved meat and drink a gill of wine, which re-invigorated him for the completion of his toilsome and perilous journey.

The rosy hues of sunset had faded from the sky when he reached the hulk, and a grey haze was creeping over the snow-mantled land and the frozen sea. Removing the hatch, and dragging it over the opening again when he had passed through, he descended into the darkness between the decks, and shut himself in the cabin. The feeling of loneliness came upon him with even greater force than when he stood upon the glacier now that he was enclosed within four walls, but he strove to shake it off, and proceeded to light a fire and prepare his solitary evening meal.

Moody and strange as Svendson was, there is in

the human mind so strong a tendency to sociability that persons situated as our young hero was sadly miss a companion, however ill-assorted they may have been. The brotherhood of the human race is never felt so strongly as when some bold explorer sits down in his tent, the only European among half-naked negroes in an African wild, or fur-clad Esquimaux within the Arctic circle.

The genial warmth which the blazing fire soon diffused through the little cabin failed to lighten the burden of dejection and anxiety which laid upon Charlie's heart. His thoughts recurred to the awful fate of the Swede, and thence to the mystery which surrounded that of his father, and, by a natural transition, to the terrible possibilities that were involved in his solitary journey over the frozen sea to the rock-bound coast upon which he had left the ship.

As he pondered these disturbing thoughts in his mind, the silence of the night, which had hitherto been broken only by the crackling of the blazing wood upon the hearth, was interrupted by the horrid howling which had been heard during the preceding night. The sounds were distant, as if the animals from whose throats they proceeded were prowling over the ice; but in a few minutes they came nearer, and seemed to mingle the discordant notes of half a dozen canine organs, as if

the dogs had come upon the scent of a bear or fox.

"Even a dog would be company," thought Charlie, as he rose from his seat near the fire, and approached the door.

Again the savage chorus burst forth louder than before, and the lad's steps were arrested by the fearful thought that the animals, if they were still fasting, might tear him to pieces if he ventured to admit them. He returned to his seat, therefore, and the dogs, after prowling around the hulk for some time, uttering the most savage cries, ceased to be heard.

Silence again reigned around the lonely hulk, and our hero prepared for the necessary repose of the night. The perturbation of his mind long kept him awake, but the canine disturbance was not repeated, and his thoughts at length yielded to the demands of his physical nature, and he fell asleep.

The current of thought continued to flow through his brain, however, and, as the imaginative mingled with the real, he dreamed that he stood with Svendson in a gloomy ravine, down which a cascade foamed, and that a man whom he knew to be his father approached them from the shadow of a rock. Then the Swede and his father had a desperate struggle, and the latter was dashed violently upon the ground.

The dreamer awoke with a start. The red

embers of the fire glowed upon the hearth, and gave light enough to enable him to see that he was in the cabin of the lone old hulk. No sound disturbed the solemn stillness, for the Ice King still held the waters under his spell, and not a stunted pine, nor even a lowly juniper, waved upon the snow-clad hills.

Just as he was about again to compose himself for slumber, however, he heard footsteps on the deck above so distinctly that he felt that he could not be mistaken—that he really heard them, and that they were the footsteps of a man. But whose could they be?

With his brain in a whirl, he slipped out of his berth, and stepped towards the door; but before he could grasp the handle, he heard the footsteps coming slowly down the companion. He opened the door cautiously, and saw a dark figure standing in the dim light that came down the open hatchway.

"Who is there?" he exclaimed, straining his eyes into the obscurity, while a torrent of strange and bewildering ideas surged over his mind.

There was no response. The figure stood motionless in the dim light.

"Svendson!" said Charlie, in as firm a voice as he could command, for it was as difficult to believe that he saw his late companion in the flesh, or that the figure could be any other, as that he beheld an apparition.

Still the figure neither moved nor spoke, and Charlie, with a vague feeling of awe stealing over him, stepped back a pace or two, and grasped his loaded rifle, still keeping his eyes fixed upon the dark form below the hatchway. At that moment it seemed to glide into the darkness, and disappeared from his sight.

He stepped quickly towards the companion, but the figure was gone! Footfalls sounded upon the upper deck, however, and Charlie, still grasping his rifle, crept cautiously up the companion, and looked around. Not a living creature met his gaze; only the icebergs rose in spectral whiteness on the right and the left.

He listened, but the footfalls had ceased, and no sound disturbed the solemn silence of the polar midnight. He stood in the chill air for a few minutes, listening intently; and then he descended the companion, again dragging the hatch into its place, and entered the cabin to ponder perplexedly what he had seen and heard.

Feeling that he could not sleep again that night, he threw some wood on the fire, which soon burst into a flame, and sat down before it. His dream recurred to his mind, and he thought long of the probability that he had seen in it the truth of that closing scene of his father's life which had been hidden from the world amongst the rocks and snows of Greenland.

Then he thought of the figure which he had seen that night, and reflected upon the slight probability which there seemed that Peter Svendson had survived his fall, and succeeded in extricating himself from the accumulation of snow at the bottom of the chasm. But, if the figure was not the Swede, who was it? Could he have seen a ghost?

His reverie was interrupted by a renewal of the savage howling which he had heard at an earlier period of the night. Nearer and nearer sounded the cries, which now came from the land; but they were faint and hoarse, as if the strength of the dogs was exhausted by hunger and fatigue, and their throats parched by thirst.

The report of a musket suddenly interrupted their horrid chorus, and caused Charlie to start to his feet, with a new cause for surprise and bewilderment. The cries of the dogs ceased for a moment, but before the echoes of the report had died away among the hills, they burst forth again, mingled with the sharp cry of a human being for help.

Charlie snatched his rifle from the table at that cry, and rushed from the cabin to the deck. Darkness still covered land and sea, and the air was damp with fog; but he scrambled over the ice, and reached the summit of the cliff, though not without several slips and stumbles. The cries had now ceased; even the dogs were silent. Fog covered

land and sea with an impenetrable veil, which permitted him to see only the snow at his feet.

"The struggle has ended!" he thought, shuddering at the probabilities which such a struggle involved; and again he listened intently, hesitating to advance into the fog lest he should be lost in it while endeavouring to regain the hulk.

Not a sound reached his ears, and the silence was now even more appalling than the horrible sounds which he had just heard. He lingered for some minutes upon the cliff, without hearing a sound, and then returned to the hulk, and again shut himself in the cabin.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FATE OF PETER SVENDSON.

HICK fog prevailed during the day that followed the night so full of horrors for our young hero. Several times during the hours of daylight he left the

hulk, and scrambled to the summit of the cliff; but on every occasion the same impenetrable veil shrouded every object from his sight.

The day wore slowly away in gloom and silence, and Charlie more than once wished himself aboard the ship that was so snugly moored on the opposite coast. He strove, however, to shake off the depression which his situation produced, and occupied himself, as a means to that end, in searching the hulk. The investigation resulted in the finding of a boat-hook, which he thought might be useful in the attempt which he resolved to make, before leaving the land, to reach the pole.

The night passed without interruption. No sound disturbed his waking hours, or startled him from slumber; and when he awoke, and went upon deck, the fog had been dispersed by a breeze, and the icebergs glittered in the first rays of the sun. Quickly despatching his breakfast, he slung his rifle and knapsack at his back, grasped the boat-hook, and started on his journey.

He did not purpose, on this occasion, to cross the glacier on which he believed Svendson to have perished, and on which he had himself had more than one narrow escape. He had observed, while on the glacier, a ridge towards the north-west, by crossing which it seemed practicable to reach the cone which, as well as he and Svendson could calculate, was the central point of the northern hemisphere.

The tracks of dogs or foxes were discernible in several places as he walked towards the slight elevation between the cliff and the glacier, and on reaching its crest he perceived, with horror, unequivocal indications of the catastrophe which had been announced by the cries he had heard, and which had drawn him from the cabin of the ancient hulk into the darkness of the night.

A few yards below the crest of the hill, a dark object lay in the snow. It would have been scarcely recognizable as human, but for the shreds of clothing which still hung about the remnants of mortality, and which had evidently been the garments of a seaman. All around were the footprints of dogs or foxes, and the snow was reddened with the victim's blood.

Charlie nerved himself to approach the ghastly



THE VICTIM OF THE DOGS.

object, and regard it more closely. The torn garments seemed those of Svendson, but the features of the corpse had been so shockingly mangled by the savage assailants that they were totally unrecognizable. Overcoming, by a powerful effort, his repugnance to touch the dead man,

Charlie stooped down, and examined the pockets of the jacket of thick blue cloth which he wore.

The first article with which his hand came in contact was a folded map of the arctic regions, which he had often seen in the Swede's hands during the voyage, and while the ship was in winter quarters, as well as on the journey from the coast of Greenland. Next came the mysterious man's pipe and tobacco-box, the last article having his name engraved on the lid, and thus leaving no doubt on Charlie's mind that the corpse was that of the unfortunate man whom he had seen disappear in the snow at the bottom of the chasm in the glacier.

How Svendson had escaped immediate death was a mystery. Charlie had now no doubt, however, that it was he whom he had seen between decks, and that the unhappy wretch had wandered back to the land in a fit of mental aberration, and there perished by the dreadful death indicated by the torn garments and the blood-stained snow.

Transferring to his own pockets the map, pipe, and tobacco-box of the dead mariner, with a view to their delivery to Captain Webb, our hero proceeded with his search, in the hope of discovering some relic of his father, or something that might serve as a clue to the mystery in which his fate was enveloped. In the breast-pocket of the Swede's

jacket he found several sheets of note-paper, folded down the middle, and held together by an elastic band. There was nothing else, and Charlie, resuming an erect position, slipped the ligature from the packet, and endeavoured to decipher the writing with which the sheets were covered.

This was not an easy task. The packet had been wetted by sea-water, which had stained it throughout, and rendered some portions of the manuscript illegible. Other portions were so badly written, or in language so incoherent, that Charlie could gather from a hasty perusal only that the writer had jotted down and preserved some reminiscences of a voyage in which he had endured dreadful sufferings from hunger and cold. Consigning the manuscript to his pocket for a less hasty perusal at a more suitable time, he resumed his journey, therefore, keeping to the westward of the glacier and descending a gentle declivity.

Directing his course by the lofty sugar-loaf mountain which was his goal, and the snows of which were now glistening in the sunlight, he soon reached the hill which he regarded as a stepping-stone to the accomplishment of his adventurous purpose, and from its summit saw the glacier on his right, and another rugged and snow-clad eminence on his left.

The glistening cone was before him, and acces-

sible along a ridge, which seemed a spur of the mountain of which the sugar-loaf was the highest part. There was very little snow on the ridge, but Charlie found, on reaching it, that it consisted of bare rocks of granite, sloped at every angle, and in every direction, as if the beings whom Svendson had called the spirits of the Pole had piled them up irregularly to form a causeway to the Ice King's throne. Progress along such a path was practicable only by scrambling over the rocks like a monkey in some places, and leaping from one to another like a goat in others.

Fatigue soon obliged him to pause, and he sat down upon the bare rock in a little hollow, to rest his weary limbs, and prepare his scanty meal. The air, fanned by a breeze that blew across a frozen sea and a land of glaciers and snow-covered mountains, was extremely cold at that elevation, and the glare of so much snow was distressing to the young explorer's eyes.

On he went, however, when he had rested and refreshed himself, and by alternately climbing, scrambling, and leaping, he succeeded in reaching the cone just as the rosy flush of evening faded from its snows. Fatigue now combined with the warning conveyed by the shadows that were creeping over the snow to induce a halt, and he selected for his bivouac a hollow among the rocks into

which no snow had drifted, and which was protected from the wind by being under the lee of the ridge.

To have slept in such a situation would have been death. Charlie made a little fire, therefore, and boiled some melted snow for his cocoa, which, with a biscuit, formed his supper. Having partaken of this refreshment, he passed the night in alternately sitting upon the rock until he found himself yielding to the somniferous influences, and pacing like a sentry a tolerably level platform of rock just below his resting-place.

The night was cold and still, though a keen breeze swept over the ridge. There were no trees or shrubs for the wind to rustle; not a blade of grass even to make the softest murmur. Myriads of stars shone in the dark concave above, but no calm lake or gently-flowing river reflected their brilliance—no eye watched them from cottage-door or sequestered lane. All around that solitary young explorer was the solemn stillness of perpetual solitude.

The night passed slowly, but at last the stars began to fade out of the neutral tint of the overarching sky, and a faint light dawned over the frozen sea, which again became visible towards the south. Then a red line glowed along the horizon; it grew broader and more intense, and the flaming

disk of the luminary of day rose through it, and dyed the peaks of even that distant land with a tinge of rose.

The aspect of the sugar-loaf mountain was less formidable from Charlie's present point of view than when it was seen from a greater distance. It was much less precipitous, as well as less covered with snow, than he had expected to find it when distance obliterated the inequalities of its surface, and gave the appearance of uniform whiteness to crag and hollow, slope and precipice. The young explorer regarded it attentively in the increasing light as he recruited his physical energy with a warm breakfast, and felt no doubt of his ability to scale it at least to a height that commanded a view over the whole, or the greater part, of the circumpolar land.

As there seemed to be no animals in the region by which he could be plundered, or from which an attack might be feared,—for he was many miles from the coast, which he thought the dogs would not leave,—he resolved to leave his rifle and knapsack in the hollow in which he had rested, in order to lighten the labour of ascending the mountain. With only some biscuits and a tin flask of wine in his pocket, and the boat-hook in his right hand, he commenced the ascent.

A steep projection from the lower part of the

cone had first to be surmounted, and proved the least difficult portion of the task. From its rounded summit the cone rose precipitously for a considerable height, and Charlie found that he must here abandon his boat-hook, in order to use his hands as well as his feet in the toilsome ascent. There was no vegetation to assist him, as the climbers of mountains find in lower latitudes; nothing for his fingers to clutch but the rough projections of the rock, nothing upon which he could set a toe but those granitic prominences, and sometimes a crevice from which the less enduring components of the rocks had disappeared during thousands of years by the operation of the atmosphere.

Bringing to the task a stout heart and the activity of youth, he accomplished the escalade without an accident, but with lacerated fingers and broken nails, and his strength almost spent with his exertions. He had now, however, reached a ledge upon which he could rest, and which commanded an extensive view over the peaks and glaciers by which the cone was surrounded. Southward and eastward the prospect extended to the sea, but to the west the white points dwindled away as far as the unassisted vision could penetrate, while the northward view was closed by the mountain on which he stood.

Resuming the ascent as soon as he was suffi-

ciently rested, the young explorer found that the ledge extended round the southern and eastern sides of the cone, with a gradual ascent, which brought him, about noon, to a point from which he could see the sea on three sides, the westward prospect alone being closed by the interposition of the mountain, which still towered, a glistening cone of snow, hundreds of feet above our hero's head.

Here Charlie halted. The cold was intense, though the sun was shining brightly, and the ice and snow below and around glistened like masses of sapphire, set in mountains of frosted silver. Beyond the peaks and glaciers the frozen sea stretched on every side as far as he could see. No living thing was in sight, no sound disturbed a silence which had probably never been broken since those granite peaks were shaped out of the primeval chaos.

Tired as he was, Charlie was fain to leave his exposed and lofty perch, and retrace his steps to the hollow in which he had rested the preceding night. The descent of the precipice was even more difficult than the ascent, as he had to feel with his toes for inequalities which might assist him, and in descending feet foremost, with his face to the rock, he could receive no guidance from his eyes. Every step diminished the chances of an accident, however, and he reached the bottom in safety.



CHAPTER XXVII.

BESIEGED.

HE light was fading from the sky when Charlie reached the hollow in which he had rested the preceding night, and the need of sleep which he felt, and to

which he dared not yield in the open air, exercised his mind in no small degree. He was too weary to proceed farther, even if the continuance of the journey during the hours of darkness had been less dangerous, and he felt that he could not repose his limbs without falling asleep.

Knowing that the Esquimaux constructed beehive-shaped houses of snow, he raised a thick wall of the convenient material during the period of twilight, sloping it gradually towards the rock until he had formed a half arch. He then made a small fire, with which he cooked for his supper some preserved meat, adding about a gill of wine; and, when he had made a sufficient meal, folded himself in his bear's skin, and composed himself for the sleep which he so much needed.

Slumber was not long in falling upon his weary eyelids, but he awoke with a shiver before the stars had disappeared from the dark concave of the firmament, and was fain to pace quickly the ledge below the hollow to restore the vital circulation in his cold-benumbed limbs. When he had in some measure succeeded, he made a fire, and prepared cocoa for his breakfast, which the intense cold and the lassitude arising from the fatigue of the preceding night made even more than ordinarily welcome.

He traversed the granite ridge once more in the faint light of early morning, and, with a halt at noon for rest and refreshment, reached the hulk as the sun dropped behind the icebergs in which it was embedded. Descending at once to the lower deck, he placed his rifle, knapsack, and boat-hook on the table, and, having recruited his flagging energies with a cup of wine, threw himself wearily upon his rude couch.

"I have reached the Pole!" he exclaimed. "I have traversed the silent and dreary solitudes of the circumpolar land, magnificent even in its dreariness; and to-morrow I will set out for the ship, and deliver to Captain Webb the memorials

of poor Svendson's wild adventure. I wonder whether he will believe me!"

He rested awhile in his berth, too weary even to make a fire, but the cold damp air of the cabin at length admonished him to arise, and he had soon a good fire blazing on the hearth, and a kettle of melted snow over it. A cup of warm cocoa did much to aid his reinvigoration, and a feeling of comparative comfort and contentment stole over him as he sat before the crackling blaze, which soon began to diffuse its genial influence through the cabin.

Then he remembered the manuscript which he had found in the breast-pocket of Peter Svendson's jacket, and, lighting his lamp, he once more endeavoured to decipher it. With the first two or three sheets he was as unsuccessful as before, only a few words at most of any sentence being legible; but the next sheet had suffered less from the action of the sea-water by which it had at some time been wetted, and Charlie, finding his father mentioned in it, pored over it until he had succeeded in deciphering the whole of that portion of the manuscript, with the exception of a few lines at the top and bottom of each page.

"We did not know till then how weak we were," was the first complete sentence which was decipherable. "We could not drag our stiff, benumbed,

and debilitated frames over the rocks; and we looked blankly at each other when we withdrew our gaze from the precipitous gap, and the lofty cliffs that towered perpendicularly on the right and the left, and sat down upon the rocks at their base. We did not speak, but sat still, looking vacantly at the sea, until we had recruited our strength, which was utterly spent in our feeble attempt to ascend the gap; and then we rose, as if by mutual consent, and dragged ourselves along the beach, with what purpose I am sure I do not know. I have not a very clear recollection of what followed."

Here a few lines were illegible, and beyond these the narrative continued as follows:—"I seemed to see objects through a mist, and to have only a dreamy and imperfect conception of what was done, either by Mr. Wilson or myself. I think I must have slept part of the time, or been in a state of insensibility from exhaustion and the intense cold. My mind retains only such a dim recollection of the affair, as we have long afterwards of a dream. I remember rousing from an unconscious condition, and seeing Mr. Wilson doing something to or by the boat. I thought he was going to steal away in it, and I crept towards him, and grasped him by the throat. He turned and struck me on the face. As I staggered under its

force, I caught hold of one of the oars, and thrust it against him, for I was too weak to strike with it. He fell upon the beach, and then I lost my senses again for awhile, and a crimson mist came before my eyes, as if the air was filled with blood. Presently I became aware that he was dead, and I knew that I had killed the man. Shuddering in every nerve, and turning away from the stony glare of the dead man's eyes, I strove to drag the corpse towards the sea; but my weakness compelled me to leave it where he had fallen."

Much of the next few sentences was illegible, but Charlie gathered from them that the corpse was lifted by the tide, and carried seaward.

This, then, was the terrible secret which the Swede had so long borne about with him and concealed from the world, but which had proved too heavy a load for his mind, and had haunted him to the last hours of his life. Charlie sighed as he laid down the manuscript, and he fell into a reverie, in which his thoughts wandered without his will from the Swede's revelation to the adventures which he had encountered since he left the ship, and the manner in which his story would be received on his return, and by the world.

He was roused from his abstraction by the howling of dogs, so near that he started to his feet, and seized his rifle. The discordant cries receded again,

however, and he again sat down, to watch the redly-glowing fire, and muse upon the past and the future.

An hour passed in silence, and he was thinking of retiring to his berth for the night, when the cries of the savage brutes again reached his ears, and continued at frequent intervals, gradually coming nearer to the hulk.

"They have had their last mouthful of food, I fancy!" our hero murmured, with a shudder, as he listened to their discordant cries, and again grasped his rifle. "It would be a mercy to make an end of them; for I could not hope to bring them into subjection again, nor could I feed them if it were possible. They would make a meal of me before we got half across the ice."

He opened the cabin-door, and advanced towards the companion; but he reflected before he reached it that he would be overpowered by the famished brutes as soon as he had discharged his rifle, as there seemed no means of encountering them with an advantage of position which might counterbalance their superiority of numbers. He returned to the cabin, therefore, and prepared for repose; but just as he was about to roll himself in his bear's skin, the pattering of many feet upon the deck told him that the canine prowlers had scented him to his retreat.

"I will have a shot at them!" he exclaimed; and, dropping upon his feet, he caught up his rifle, and ran to the companion.

The dogs were sniffing eagerly around the hatch as they ran from side to side, uttering at intervals the most horrid and discordant sounds. Charlie moved the hatch sufficiently to see the muzzles of two or three dogs thrust against the opening, which their paws were busily employed in endeavouring to enlarge; and then he raised the rifle to his shoulder, and pulled the trigger.

A sharp cry, which ceased suddenly, as if one of the animals had received a death-wound,—a prolonged howl of pain from another of the pack,—a chorus of terror from the rest, and the scampering of many feet over the deck, followed the report. Charlie ran back to the cabin to reload his rifle, and then ventured to remove the hatch, and ascend to the deck. The carcase of a dog lay, with its feet skyward, close to the hatchway; but no living dog was in sight.

Having replaced the hatch, he returned to the cabin, and again lay down in his berth, hoping that he had effectually scared the dogs from the ship, and would not be disturbed during the remainder of the night. He was soon asleep, and for several hours his slumber was unbroken, and the silence of the night was undisturbed.

In the early hours of the morning, however, he was awakened by sounds from the deck, which, on his listening attentively for a few minutes, suggested that an attempt was being made to remove the hatch above the companion. Slipping from his berth, he threw some dry wood on the embers of the fire, and, taking his rifle from the table, opened the cabin-door.

He could see nothing, but the scraping of feet and the loud breathing of several animals told him that the dogs had returned, and were endeavouring to drag off the hatch. He was about to advance towards the companion with his rifle ready, and his finger on the trigger, when an eager yelping made him aware that one of his canine assailants had succeeded in getting his head below the hatch, and might be expected, in another moment, to come scrambling down the companion. The darkness rendered the situation critical, and he drew back.

At that moment the fire blazed up, and threw a ruddy light through the doorway of the cabin between the decks. Into that fitful illumination there emerged, at the same instant, a wild-looking, rough-coated dog, with staring eyes, ears turned backward, and muzzle dabbled with blood.

Charlie raised the rifle quickly, and, with as good an aim as the light permitted, fired at the animal, which had paused, on seeing him in the red light of the fire, a step or two below the hatchway. The dog, howling terribly, rolled down the companion, and fell dead upon the lower deck; but the feet of one of his shaggy companions pattered down the steps as he fell, and, quickly as our hero clubbed his weapon, and gave this second foe a blow on the head which prostrated him by the side of the other, the rest of the hungry pack followed so rapidly as to give him scant time to retreat into the cabin, and close the door.

The feet of his canine assailants pattered over the lower deck, and scratched against the door as he reloaded the rifle. To have fired through the door would have been a waste of ammunition which he could not afford; he determined, therefore, to wait awhile, hoping that the dogs would raise the siege and retire when they found their attempts on the door fruitless.

The besiegers were more patient than the solitary and youthful defender, however, and the dawn found them still scraping and growling at the cabin-door. Charlie, who wished to start as early as possible, made a good breakfast, and then proceeded to execute a scheme which he had planned while waiting in vain for the retreat of the canine besiegers.

There was a window in the stern large enough for him to pass through, and he had ascertained that there was sufficient space between it and the iceberg to enable him to clamber to the deck. He opened the window noiselessly, and succeeded in reaching the deck unheard by the dogs. Knowing how quick is the sense of hearing in the brutes, he rushed at once to the hatchway, which he reached only in time to brain, with the stock of his rifle, a dog which had scrambled up the companion at the first sound of his footsteps.

Kneeling upon the deck, he pointed the rifle down the companion, and fired at the next dog which came into sight. He missed his aim, however, and had barely time to close the hatchway before the dog reached it. As soon as he had reloaded the rifle, he opened the hatch a little, and seeing the three remaining dogs on the companion, fired immediately. Another of the brutes rolled upon the lower deck, and Charlie, with one foot upon the hatch, loaded again.

Some minutes elapsed before either of the survivors placed itself in the line of fire; they had perhaps by this time conceived a dread of the rifle, which indisposed them to the attack. Supposing that their strength would be unequal to the task of moving the hatch, Charlie resolved, therefore, to evacuate the hulk at once, and returned to the cabin by the window to obtain his knapsack, and replenish his supplies of biscuit and wine.

As he regained the deck, the dogs were struggling through the partially open hatchway. A shot from his rifle stretched one of them lifeless upon the deck; the other sprang over the bulwarks, and disappeared. Charlie looked for the latter as soon as he had again loaded his rifle, and in a few minutes saw the animal scrambling over the ice in the direction of the cliff.

"Poor wretch!" murmured our hero, commiserating its condition and probable fate, "you shall have what chance of life I can give you, but it is a slender and a sorry one."

Then he slung his rifle at his back, and turned towards the grotto of ice.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON THE ICE.

UT there was an obstacle to his reaching the frozen sea which, strangely enough, he had not thought of before it suddenly presented itself to his mind as

he looked up at the aperture in the iceberg.

How was he to reach it? It had required all his nerve and agility to enable him to leap safely from the iceberg to the deck of the old hulk: to leap upward the same distance was impossible. There was no practicable mode of crossing the barrier of ice, but the passage through the grotto; and the means of reaching the aperture were not very obvious.

"If I had but a rope!" he murmured, and then he remembered that he had seen a rope between the decks.

With a faint hope that it might still be service-

able, he descended to the lower deck, whence a sickening smell of blood arose, and, stepping among the carcases of the slain dogs, found the rope, one end of which he attached to the middle of a stout piece of wood, somewhat longer than the narrowest width of the upper passage of the perforated iceberg.

Returning to the upper deck, he threw the wood into the aperture, and then pulled the rope. This he did several times before the wood became jammed into the passage; but at length it held fast, and after testing the rope by hanging from it, and finding that it bore his weight without yielding, he began to climb it, hand over hand, with his rifleand knapsack at his back.

He drew a long breath when he reached the perforation of the iceberg, down which a stream of water was pouring, for the sun was now shining with warmth more proportionate to its brilliancy than he had yet experienced it in the Arctic solitude he was leaving. In a few minutes he stood upon the platform of packed floes which bordered the icy barrier of the circumpolar land, and saw, across the frozen sea, the precipitous mass of dark rock upon which a portion of the stores had been deposited.

Before starting for the island, however, he walked along the base of the icebergs until he reached the sledge, upon which he placed his knapsack. He then converted a portion of the dogs' harness into a collar and traces for himself, and, having adjusted them, started for the island, dragging the sledge. Noon was past when he reached the rocky gap in which the stores had been deposited, and, having made a fire among the crags, he proceeded to prepare his dinner and convey the stores to the sledge.

The sun was low when his task was completed, but he was now so anxious to return to the ship that he immediately resumed his journey, passing round the western side of the island on this occasion, in order to get into a more direct track for the little cove in which he had left the vessel. By the time he had reached its south-western extremity, darkness was gathering over the frozen sea, and he drew the sledge under the lee of a rock, and prepared for his bivouac.

The sun was glowing redly upon the ice through a light veil of fog when he resumed his journey, but the curtain rose before he was many miles from the island, and the flaming disk shone so brilliantly that pools of water were formed by the melting of the snow in the depressions of the frozen surface over which he was toiling. The soft and slushy snow afforded less pleasant travelling than the hard, crisp surface over which he had careered in the sledge, and the frequent occurrence of ridges over which he found it impracticable to

drag the vehicle by his own strength obliged him to pursue a devious course, in order to avoid them.

He often looked back towards the lonely island, and sighed as he saw its dark cliffs rising above the billowy sea of ice almost as high as when he had turned his back upon them. But he continued to pull as stoutly as before, not allowing the toil of the journey to dishearten him, though the feeling of loneliness which had come upon him since Svendson's death oppressed him more heavily than ever when he halted for the night in the midst of the icy water, and saw the darkness gathering around him on every side.

He would have been glad of the society of a wandering Esquimaux, or even of an Esquimaux dog, if he had been provided with the means of feeding the animal. But it is probable that the northern shores of Greenland are visited by the wandering tribes only in summers of more than ordinary warmth, and that the sea that rolls round them has never been crossed by their canoes or sledges. Why should they expose themselves to peril for the sake of visiting a region more barren and inclement than their own?

Even a fox or a seal would have been welcome to his bivouac that night, and there are many instances of both animals having become the companions of man; but no foot-print of fox had been seen by him during his southward journey, and the seals had not yet left their winter haunts.

The nights were yet extremely cold, and, though he rolled himself in his bear-skin, and excluded the air as much as possible, he shivered when he awoke, and felt so uncomfortable, that he resolved to resume his journey at once, though darkness was still spread like a mantle over the icy waste. Thin ice had formed during the night on the pools produced by the thawing of the snow, but it broke under his feet as he advanced, every crack presaging for him a slushy walk during the hours of sunshine.

He looked back at intervals to assure himself, by the bearing of the island, that he was holding a south-westerly course; and when the rising sun tinged the tops of its dark rocks with a ruddy glow, he halted to break his fast with a biscuit and a mug of warm cocoa. When he had satisfied the requirements of his stomach, he again proceeded on his weary way, often pausing to rest himself amidst the diminishing hummocks and the pools of water, over which his eyes wandered with a feeling that sometimes, in spite of his will, approached despondency.

During one of these halts he discerned, while looking towards the north-east, to observe how much the island had sunk below the horizon, some small animal moving upon the distant ice. The Esquimaux dogs are not distinguishable, at even a less distance, from foxes or wolves; but the fact that he had seen no foxes in the circumpolar land which he had quitted rendered it probable that the animal was a survivor of the team which Svendson had driven over the frozen sea.

Several times afterwards he saw it pursuing a devious course among the hummocks, and as it was nearer to him than before on each occasion, he had no doubt that his conjecture was well founded, and that the animal was following him. When he at length halted for dinner, it came near enough for him to recognize it as the dog which he had spared from the massacre of its companions.

His first impulse was to seize his rifle, but, observing that the dog evinced no aggressiveness, and slunk behind a hummock, he put down the weapon, and commenced his culinary preparations. While thus engaged, and during his repast, the dog gradually drew nearer to his halting-place, and at length came so near as to catch in its mouth a morsel of preserved meat which Charlie, partly in compassion for the starving beast, and partly in the hope of attracting it to him, threw towards it.

The morsel was swallowed in a moment, and the dog ventured a little nearer, feebly wagging its tail, and uttering a cry that can only be described as a howl subdued to a whine. Charlie then spoke to it, and the animal slowly approached him, with head lowered, eyes upturned with an expression of deprecation, and bushy tail depressed, but oscillating with a slow movement, as if the animal was waying a signal of distress.

A few words which Charlie had heard Hans and Christian address to the dogs, and which seemed to be the Esquimaux equivalent for "Poor dog!" and "Good dog!" brought the animal to his side, and he gave it another morsel of meat; but the thought of the tragedy in which it had probably been an actor, and of the attack upon himself, withheld him from touching it. The dog sat down, however, and watched him during his meal, after which Charlie again assumed his harness, and resumed his weary tramp.

Until the sun had sunk below the horizon, and the slushy surface of the ice had put on the general greyness of the lengthening shadows of the hummocks, he tramped on, with the dog forming the rear-guard. Then he halted once more amidst the dreary waste, and prepared his bivouac. The dog watched him eagerly, devouring with famine-sharpened jaws the scraps thrown to him, and, when the tin case of preserved meat was replaced on the sledge, it scraped a lair for itself in a snow-drift, and curled itself up for the night.



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BREAKING UP OF THE ICE.

HARLIE was awakened by the hoarse barking of the dog, and immediately became aware of some animal sniffing at the sledge, and endeavouring to tear

off the awning. Rolling out upon the ice with a quick movement, he scrambled to his feet, and found himself confronted with a bear.

The prowling disturber of his repose sat upon its haunches, and glared at the unexpected apparition of a human being, which the beast had probably never seen before, without at first evincing any ferocity. It was fortunate, however, that the sledge was between them, for Charlie, who had sprung away from it at the first alarm, no sooner stretched forward to grasp his rifle than the bear, which was thrusting its nose among the provisions, growled forth such notes of hostility as are sounded by a

dog when any other animal approaches it while feeding, at the same time disclosing its long white teeth

The dog continued to bark, but did not venture to approach the bear, which would probably have contented itself with overhauling the stores, and, in default of success in its attempts to plunder them,



THE BEAR OVERHAULING THE SLEDGE.

have made a victim of its canine enemy, if Charlie had not discharged the rifle, and lodged a bullet in its left shoulder. The wounded brute uttered a cry between a roar and a grunt, and, after a quick glance at its bleeding limb, shambled over the sledge with distended jaws and eyes gleaming with rage.

Charlie sprang backward, shifting his hold of the rifle from the stock to the barrel, but with little hope of successfully defending himself against the bear's attack. The dog came to his aid in a gallant manner, however, rushing at the bear as the furious brute charged our hero open-mouthed, and fixing its teeth in its wounded shoulder, where a crimson stream trickled over the shaggy white fur.

The bear easily shook the dog off, but at the same moment the stock of the rifle, swung for an instant over Charlie's head, descended heavily upon its snout, and caused it to pause in its onset, shaking its head, and rubbing the seat of pain with its paws. Charlie availed of the opportunity to shift his ground, and again place the sledge between his ursine assailant and himself; and the dog availed of the check which the bear had received to repeat its attack.

Dropping the discharged rifle against the sledge, our hero caught up the weapon that had been Svendson's, and watched eagerly and anxiously for an opportunity for a good shot at the bear, whose savage growling formed a deep bass accompaniment to the sharp barking of the dog. Again shaking off the dog, but not without having felt its teeth, while the dog narrowly escaped a stroke of one of its formidable paws, the bear again confronted Charlie, who was prepared to receive its onset.

Aiming at the animal's forehead, he pulled the trigger, when there was little more than a yard between them, and the bear immediately dropped, and rolled over on the ice. As the cloud of white sulphurous smoke rose into the air, Charlie stood still a moment to be assured that the shaggy beast was dead, but the famished dog rushed towards the carcase, and eagerly licked up the warm blood that gushed from its wounds.

"I will have his skin, and the dog shall have his flesh, or as much of it as he can eat now and we can drag away on the sledge," said Charlie, as he surveyed the shaggy brute's prostrate carcase, and proceeded to reload the rifles.

Then he unclasped his knife, and stepped up to the bear, which proved to be quite dead. The skinning of the beast occupied some time, but he was loth to lose the skin, which, if he was spared to carry the news of his discovery to Dundee, would form another trophy of his enterprise.

His canine companion made a meal of the bear's flesh, such as had not gladdened his hungry jaws for many days. Indeed, he gorged himself to such an extent that, before the skin was off, he laid down upon the ice, from which he showed no inclination to rise when Charlie resumed his journey.

Before he halted for his meridian meal and rest, however, Charlie heard the pattering of the animal's feet behind him, and it came up with him, carrying its tail much more erect than before, and evincing other equally unequivocal signs of the improvement of its condition.

The sun was warmer this day than Charlie had yet felt it during his sojourn in the Arctic regions, and the pools of water which were formed between the hummocks by the melting of the snow and ice widened considerably as he proceeded. The increased weight of the sledge suggested the transfer of the harness from himself to the dog, and when this had been effected he aided the animal's exertions by attaching a line to the sledge, and casting it over his shoulder. The dog was rewarded at supper-time with a pound of cold bear, and then the weary travellers again made their bivouac on the ice.

The night was calm and still, and myriads of stars shone brightly in the heavens; but our hero, though much fatigued, found himself unable to sleep. A vague apprehension of coming danger, for which he could not account, rendered him anxious and restless; and after several vain endeavours to sleep, he rolled from under his bear's skin, and paced the ice in the faint light of the twinkling stars.

"There must be a bear prowling near!" he muttered, as he threw around him a wary and

anxious glance; but no living object was in sight, and not the slightest sound disturbed the profound silence of the icy solitude.

About midnight, however, he was startled by a sound like the low rumbling of distant thunder on the southern horizon. Yet the sky remained as clear in that direction as in other quarters, and Charlie, unable to account for it, listened anxiously, but for some time in vain, for a repetition of the sound. After an interval of more than an hour, the same rumbling sound was borne to his ears from the eastward, but from as great a distance as before.

"It is too heavy for rifle-firing," thought Charlie, as he strained his eyes into the darkness in the direction whence the mysterious sound had last proceeded, "and the whaler's crew would not fire big guns where no help could come, in whatever extremity they might be placed."

All was still again, and the solemn silence was not again broken during the hours of darkness. Charlie was taking an early breakfast, while a few pale stars yet glimmered in the grey sky, and the light on the horizon that heralded the coming day was faint and colourless, when a crack and a roar like thunder burst so suddenly upon his ears that he started to his feet, and looked eagerly and apprehensively around him. Towards the south, from which direction the ominous sound came, a

cloud of bluish vapour was rising from the ice; and the same phenomenon was observable eastward, but at a greater distance.

Then the awful truth burst at once upon his mind. The ice was breaking up for the season, and the vapour which he saw was the compressed air escaping from below through the fissures, as described in the interesting narrative of the Russian explorer, Wrangell.

For a few moments he stood motionless, stupefied by the suddenness and immensity of the catastrophe with which he was threatened. But his intelligence was equal to his courage, and helped to restore him quickly to his wonted presence of mind. He remembered that the floes into which the ice of the Arctic seas separates are of large dimensions, often several miles in circuit, and that the current would carry them to the south-west; so that he would have a chance of falling in with a whaler, or with the ships of the Government Exploring Expedition, even if he should be unable to reach the coast, and join his own vessel before she left the cove in which she had been moored for the winter.

The prospect was, however, a terrible one, even in its least appalling aspect. If the disruption of the ice became complete before he reached the ship, he might drift upon a floe until his provisions were exhausted, and perish by starvation, before a vessel was encountered. It was not without reason, therefore, that he looked exceedingly grave while finishing his breakfast, and listened anxiously for the sounds that would indicate further progress in the breaking up of the ice.

As the first gleam of sunlight shot across the frozen sea, he resumed his journey, with the satisfaction of knowing that the ice was still intact to the north and west. He had not proceeded many miles, however, before the portentous sound was again heard, and the bluish vapour rose from the new fissure which had opened in the ice. These phenomena were now repeated at frequent intervals, and when he halted at noon to rest and refresh himself, the ominous clouds were rising from the ice in every direction.

The little island was still visible on the horizon, towards the north-east, and Charlie knew from his position with regard to it, and also from that of the sun, that he was in the right course for the cove in which he had left the ship. He endeavoured, by fixing his eyes on the distant island, to ascertain whether the disruption of the ice was complete; but he could detect no motion of the ice, and concluded from its seeming immobility that it was either still connected with the coast which he had left, or was held motionless through the influence of the current being checked by a light breeze from the west.



CHAPTER XXX.

ADRIFT ON A FLOE.

ONTINUING his journey at the greatest speed consistent with its endurance for some days more, our hero, late in the afternoon, saw the sea before him,

rolling along a channel which had opened in his route. The little island off the ice-bound coast of the circumpolar land was now a dark speck on the horizon, and to the east and west there was still visible only the dreary waste of ice, with pools of water in the hollows, and rills pursuing devious courses among the hummocks.

The fissure in the ice being to the southward, he held a westerly course until nightfall, when he halted on the lee side of a large hummock, and made a fire upon the ice. He now felt more disposed to sleep than he had done the preceding night, and, though the reflection that a famished

bear might prowl over the ice, in the hope of catching an unwary seal asleep upon it, kept him awake for some time, with his loaded rifle ready to his hand, he at length fell into a profound slumber.

He awoke, however, before the dawn of another day, and heard the rumbling sounds, now near, now more remote, which had disturbed and bewildered him on the preceding night. It was probably these sounds which had awakened him. It was evident that the ice was breaking up in every direction, and the continuance of his journey seemed extremely doubtful.

The roarings and rumblings which accompanied the breaking-up of the vast field of ice had an awe-inspiring sound in the darkness of the night, and in the midst of a solemn silence which those sounds alone disturbed; and our young hero started more than once, when the disruptions which occasioned them were near (though not so near as the sounds seemed to indicate), and peered into the obscurity, dreading to see a wide fissure open within a few yards of the sledge. As the dawn approached, he looked several times towards the north-east, but without seeing the lonely island, which had been just visible on the horizon when the darkness closed around him the preceding evening.

"Do the vapours hide it from my sight, or is the

ice in motion?" he asked himself, as he strained his eyes into the obscurity.

As the rising sun flushed the ice with rosy light, he saw channels of greenish-grey water in every direction; but the lonely island had sunk below the horizon. It was evident, therefore, that the ice had drifted westward during the night. Another solitary breakfast, and then the young explorer once more resumed his journey, though with the expectation that it would soon terminate on the western extremity of the floe.

After pursuing a devious and unpleasant course for about an hour, with his feet constantly in water or half-melted snow, he saw the sea rolling before him, and breaking against the perpendicular sides of a floe, the limits of which were indiscernible. Fatigued as he was, he sighed as he rested from his labours, and looked anxiously towards the south; for he had now very little hope of reaching the coast of Greenland, and his rescue from his perilous position depended upon his encountering a vessel before he perished of starvation, or by the breaking up of the floe in one of the terrible storms by which those icy waters are not unfrequently visited.

As far as the range of his vision extended, only ice and water met his anxious gaze beneath the pale blue sky, across which masses of white clouds were slowly sailing. The ice still predominated,

the floes being of immense extent; but there was a broad channel on his left, and a considerable breadth of water before him, while here and there, in the distance, strips of greyish-green were discernible in different directions, marking the "lanes," as the whalers term them, which divided one floe from another.

Charlie looked anxiously at his scanty stores upon the sledge; and he sighed again as he reflected upon the probability that the floe upon which he stood would drift past the cove in which Captain Webb's vessel was moored before her commander deemed it prudent to put to sea, if he could liberate her from the ice, and mentally canvassed the chances of any other vessel being in those icy waters so early.

He sat down upon the sledge, and tears gathered slowly in his blue eyes, and hung on their fair lashes; but he brushed them away, and walked quickly to the southern verge of the floe, where he clambered upon the largest of the hummocks, and strained his eyes in the direction of the Greenland coast, hoping to discern the loftiest peaks of that mountainous region; but southward also, only a vast field of ice, intersected by narrow channels of greyish-green water, met his anxious gaze.

Fatiguing as he had found it to drag the loaded sledge over the ice, and unpleasant the tramping through water and half-melted snow, he now felt that he would have preferred it to the weary monotony of watching from a floe for mountain peak or distant sail that he might never see. He tramped to and fro upon the ice, to maintain the circulation of his blood, and often clambered to the summit of a hummock to obtain a more extensive view over the dreary waste of ice-encumbered sea; but a feeling of dejection stole over him, in spite of all his efforts to keep up his spirits and retain a hopeful view of the situation, and his appetite failed him at the mid-day meal for the first time in his life.

Wearily passed the day, and when the shades of night descended upon the ocean, the horror of the situation impressed him yet more forcibly. The melancholy wash of the sea against the side of the floe augmented, rather than relieved, the sense of loneliness which was inspired by the profound silence, which only that monotonous sound disturbed, and the awful solitude of the drifting floe.

He rolled himself in his rug, and laid down in the sledge, covering himself with the bear's skin; but he could not sleep, for every splash of the sea against the floe sounded like the footfall of a bear, and he often sat up in the sledge, grasping his rifle, and peering into the gloom, fancying some ferocious prowler was stealing towards him.



CHAPTER XXXI.

RESCUE.



E must now return to the ship, which we left ice-bound on the dreary coast of North Greenland.

The disappearance of Peter Svendson and our young hero was a source of much anxiety and wonder to all on board, and equally so to Captain Webb, who was at no loss, when informed of it, to account for the strange incidents recorded in the ninth and tenth chapters. Knowing the adventurous disposition of our hero, Captain Webb had no doubt that he and the Swede had started upon some exploring expedition; but the fact of their having gone northward, with such comparatively small provision for a journey to the Pole, and no adequate protection from the inclemency of the season, inspired much anxiety on their account, which was increased by the communications made

to him by Willie concerning Peter Svendson and our hero's previous acquaintance with that mysterious individual at Dundee.

Thinking it almost impossible that the adventurous runaways should succeed in reaching land, he continued his journey to the eastward, anticipating that Charlie and the Swede would return in a day or two; and great was his surprise, and profound his anxiety, when, after exploring the coast to its north-eastern extremity, and ascertaining that it there trended southward, he returned to the ship, and found that they were still absent. Parties were immediately sent out in search of them, conducting the operation so as to explore the ice in every direction within a day's journey of the ship; but they returned without having made any discovery.

The anxiety which he felt on account of Charlie was to Captain Webb an additional reason for hailing with satisfaction the breaking up of the ice at an early period of the season. Preparations were immediately made for resuming the exploration; but several days elapsed before the detached masses of ice were sufficiently clear of each other to afford a passage between them. The interval was employed in blasting and sawing the ice about the ship, which the crew were by that means enabled to warp into open water at a much earlier period

than would otherwise have been possible. Before she left the cove, however, a deposit of provisions was made beneath a rock upon which a red cross was painted, to attract the attention of the wanderers, in the event of their returning; and a note from Captain Webb was enclosed in a tin case, and deposited in the same place.

The progress of the vessel was rendered slow by the obstructiveness of the ice, which sometimes bore her to the westward, when a large floe drifted against her starboard side, and at others obliged the crew to lay her to, by interposing in her course; while at the best she could be worked to the northward only by steering through narrow and tortuous channels. Towards night, however, a change was observed in the direction of the wind, which now blew from the north-east, increasing in force at the same time, until it rose to a strong breeze.

The effect of this change was to widen the channels between the floes; but it also drove the great masses of ice more rapidly through the water, and obliged the crew to keep constantly on the alert, in order to prevent the vessel from being caught between two floes, and drifting with them towards Smith Sound. The wind rose during the night to a gale, and the ship, which had been relieved of her canvas as it increased, at length became hemmed in on every side by the ice.

Masses of dark clouds obscured every star, and added to the horror inspired by the crashing and grinding of the floes as the combined forces of the wind and the waves drove them against each other, lifting up the smaller masses, and casting them violently upon the larger, sometimes breaking them into fragments, with a frightful turmoil. Sometimes a floe was tilted up by pressure between two other masses, and rose edge-wise from the waves, the dash and roar of which enhanced the tumult of the elemental strife.

Captain Webb remained on deck all night, and the dawn was watched for most anxiously by every one on board. The vessel drifted to the south-west during the hours of darkness, and the stupendous cliffs of North Greenland were still visible when daylight came; while the gale still blew with unabated force, and waves and ice seemed to be contending for pre-eminence in noise.

"If this lasts, we shall be driven back to Smith Sound," observed Captain Webb, as he glanced anxiously over the masses of ice by which the vessel was surrounded.

- "Unless the floes around us become compacted, and hold by the shore-ice," rejoined Morton.
- "Something on the ice to wind'ard!" shouted the look-out man.
 - "What is it like?" inquired Captain Webb, as he

sprang into the shrouds, and looked eagerly in the direction indicated, where, however, he could see only masses of ice heaved about by the wind and the waves.

"Can't make it out, sir," replied the man; "it is something dark on a hummocky floe about half a mile to wind'ard."

"Can't you see whether it is a man or a walrus?" cried the captain.

"Well, it is neither of them, sir," replied the man aloft. "By this light it looks more like a boat or a sledge."

"A sledge!" exclaimed Captain Webb, in an excited tone, as he leaped on the deck. "Here, Mr. Markham!"

"Yes, sir," responded the second officer, who had just come on deck.

"Jump on the ice, and see what this strange object is," said the captain. "Donaldson thinks it is a sledge or a boat, half a mile to windward. Take a couple of men with you, and search till you find it."

The order was immediately obeyed, and Markham and the two seamen were soon wending across the ice, bowing their cowled heads to the sweeping gale, and peering eagerly among the hummocks for the object which had attracted Donaldson's attention in the dim light of early morning.

About half a mile from the ship they found a sledge, covered with a bear's skin, on removing which the pale face of Charlie Wilson was recognized, half concealed by the rug which enveloped his apparently lifeless form. Close beside him lay the dog, which whined and wagged its tail.

"This then is the end of his mad adventure!" said Markham. "But what can have become of the Swede and the dogs? Trundle him, sledge and all, to the ship, while I search farther among these hummocks."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the seamen, drawing the traces over their shoulders, and in another minute they were pulling vigorously towards the ship, followed by the dog.

"It is young Wilson, sir," said one of them, as Captain Webb, who had anxiously watched for their return, looked over the rail, and gave orders for getting the sledge on board.

"Alive or dead?" cried the captain eagerly.

"Dead, I am afraid, sir," was the reply, as the men prepared to send up the sledge.

"Poor young fellow!" murmured Captain Webb, sorrowfully. But when the sledge was hoisted upon deck, and he threw off the bear's skin covering, and placed his hand upon the breast of the apparently lifeless lad, he fancied that the heart still fluttered feebly, and directed that Charlie

should be carried at once to the cabin, and placed in a warm blanket, while a hot bath was prepared.

"Where is the doctor?" he exclaimed, with renewed animation. "Call Mr. Grey, some of you; and tell the steward to make some cocoa, and bring brandy."

The unconscious lad was before the fire, wrapped in a warm blanket, and some cocoa, into which a little brandy had been infused, was carefully administered with a tea-spoon, while Mr. Grey chafed his hand, and Willie Webb his feet.

"The heart beats, but very languidly," observed the doctor. "The life in him is but like the feeble glimmer which a breath will extinguish."

Immersion in hot water quickened the action of the heart and lungs, and the half-dead youth sighed, but was as yet too feeble to give any other sign of life. From the bath he was removed to his berth, where Willie Webb attended him with friendly assiduity, administering nourishment at frequent intervals, but in very small quantities.



CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WRECK OF THE WHALER.

the situation of the vessel remained unchanged, except that she drifted westward with the ice. But about

noon, when the wind and current had driven the floes against the fixed ice of the Greenland coast, she became stationary, and presently was so violently pressed upon by the windward floes that she was heaved up about a dozen feet, and thrown upon her beam ends.

Confusion immediately arose on board, but the calm and yet commanding tone and manner of Captain Webb quickly restored order, and the boats were placed upon the ice, as a precaution against the possible results of the accident. Some casks and cases of provisions were also got out of the ship, and placed beside the boats; but while

the crew were working hard at this duty the floe split with a thunder-like cracking and rumbling, and, as the portion upon which the vessel had been heaved by the pressure of the ice tilted up, she slid into the water again with a fearful plunge.

At the moment when the ill-fated vessel plunged into the foaming waves, which were violently agitated by the movement of the ice, Markham and some of the seamen were on the floe, and the remainder of the crew on the deck, or below, the surgeon being in the cabin with his patient. All were thrown off their feet, and three unfortunate men were precipitated into the seething pool, and never seen again. The ice closed over them, and dashed so heavily against the vessel's side that the water poured into her in numerous streams. men who were in the hold or between decks scrambled to their feet, bruised and shaken, one or two with broken ribs, and rushed to the deck, expecting the ship to go to pieces immediately.

Captain Webb, seeing the starboard shrouds broken and the bulwarks damaged, and hearing the creaking and groaning of the strained timbers and yielding masts, and the rushing and gurgling of water below, hurried to the cabin, and snatching the scarcely conscious Charlie from his berth, bore him to the deck, bidding Mr. Grey follow for his

"It is young Wilson, Sir."

life. While he was giving directions for the lowering of the hapless youth to the floe, Morton ran down, and secured a compass and a chart of Smith Sound.

"She is filling fast, sir," said he, on regaining the deck.

"Our only resource is the boats," rejoined Captain Webb. "We must thank God that we are so well prepared as the emergency has found us."

The sledges were got upon the floe, and in one of them Charlie Wilson was laid, swathed in blankets and rugs, and carefully watched and tended by the surgeon. The men on the floe were joined by the rest of their officers and shipmates, their commander being the last to leave the deck of the doomed ship, which was rapidly filling with water, and only prevented from settling down by the pressure of the ice.

Comparatively safe as the shipwrecked mariners were in their present position, the situation was a most precarious one. They were exposed to the inclemency of the weather in a higher latitude than had ever been reached by other human beings than themselves, on a floe the diameter of which did not exceed half a mile, and which might be broken up at any moment by collision with one of the masses of ice around them. By such a

disaster their boats might be destroyed, and their last chance of life taken from them.

"I think it would be possible to reach the shore, sir," observed Markham, as he gazed southward across the ice, which lay motionless and compact in that direction, while towards the north it heaved and rolled, and had a perceptible motion westward.

"We must try, if the floe remains fast, Mr. Markham," rejoined Captain Webb, with a sigh, as he withdrew his eyes from the peaks and glaciers of North Greenland, and turned them seaward; "but I am hopeful that the ice will soon be in motion again, and then our best chance will consist in drifting into Smith Sound."

As he uttered the last word the starboard shrouds of the wrecked vessel parted with a loud crack, and the masts toppled to leeward, and fell with a fearful crash upon the ice, smashing the bulwarks on the port side, and causing a tremulous motion of the floe upon which they were standing.

"When the floes separate she will founder," observed Markham.

Captain Webb sighed, but made no remark upon the loss he would sustain by the sinking of the vessel, all such minor considerations being merged in the anxiety inspired by the precarious situation of the unfortunates around him. He glanced at the position of the masts upon the ice,

and then approached the spot where his son was on his knees by the side of our young hero.

"Charlie can speak now, father," said Willie, whose countenance expressed a feeling which the awful situation of himself and shipmates could not abate or alloy.

His father's weather-beaten features expressed the pleasure which the announcement gave him, and he said, as he took Charlie's swollen hand in his own, "I hope you feel better, my boy."

"Thank you, Captain Webb," returned our hero, in a faint and somewhat hoarse tone. "I hope you will forgive me. I know I did wrong in leaving the ship, but I thought Svendson only intended a drive along the coast."

"It is forgiven, Charlie," returned the captain.
"This is not a time for remembrance of transgressions, even if you had not been sufficiently punished already. But what has become of Svendson?"

"He was killed and eaten by the starving dogs!" replied our hero, with a shudder at the recollection of that terrible tragedy.

Willie's countenance expressed the horror which he felt on learning the Swede's dreadful end, and Captain Webb sighed as he rejoined, "It is a mercy that they did not devour you also; you must have suffered terribly, my poor lad."

"While adrift on the floe I did," said Charlie, with another shudder. "Oh, the cold and hunger, and the horrors of the long nights, the awful silence and solitude! But, Captain Webb," he continued, his countenance suddenly becoming animated with an expression of triumph, "I have discovered the North Pole!"

Captain Webb made no response to this surprising communication, but regarded our hero intently and anxiously, fearing that his sufferings might have induced delirium.

"Is it land or ice there, Charlie?" Willie inquired, with a dubious air.

"It is a lofty cone, in the midst of mountains and glaciers," replied Charlie. "I have lost all count of time, and cannot tell you how long we were on the ice before we reached it; but Svendson drove due north until we came to a little rocky island, and we saw a barrier of icebergs half a day's journey ahead. Beyond the barrier of ice we found the land, and after two attempts reached the Pole; but Svendson was then dead, and I alone stood on a ledge of the central point of the northern hemisphere, and saw the frozen ocean all around the limits of the circumpolar region."

"You had better not talk any more now, my boy," said Captain Webb. "You must keep quiet, and try to sleep."

He then walked away, and, after communicating to Mr. Grey his fears concerning Charlie, proceeded to observe the weather and the position of the floe. The gale was now abating, but the ship's timbers still creaked and groaned, and the ice around continued to grind and crack as the wind and waves pressed the floes together.

"Willie," said Captain Webb, calling his son to his side, "you must not talk to Charlie until he gets stronger. I am afraid he is light in the head."

"He has been telling me of a wonderful grotto of ice, and a mysterious ship fast among the bergs," observed Willie gravely.

"Poor lad!" ejaculated his father, with a sigh.

"We shall soon have a change, sir," observed Morton. "The wind is sinking fast, and, by the direction in which yonder stray line is blown, seems to be chopping round to the south-east."

He pointed as he spoke to some loose cordage of the vessel, which the wind extended occasionally to seaward.

The grinding and cracking of the ice gradually ceased, and the floes began to drift slowly westward. The masts of the doomed ship grated against the edge of the floe on which her crew were standing, with their boats and sledges,—there was a snapping and crashing of ropes and spars,—and

then, as the floes between which her water-logged hull had been held separated, she sank at once, and the easternmost floe drifted over the spot where she had disappeared.

Darkness was gathering over the ice-encumbered sea as the floe which yet interposed between the shipwrecked mariners and a watery grave drifted westward with the wind and the current. A tent was made with some canvas which some of them had cut from the top-masts while they rested on the floe, and a fire was kindled on the ice, which, besides serving for culinary purposes, tempered in some degree the frigidity of the atmosphere.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

A BOAT VOYAGE.

HE coast was still in sight when daylight returned, and floes of every size covered the sea, separated only by narrow channels of water. Thus the

shipwrecked voyagers drifted on for several days, suffering severely from exposure, and seeing the breadth of water between the floes daily increase.

As soon as he thought the time had arrived when their inactive life and slow progress upon the floes might be advantageously exchanged for the toil and quicker motion of rowing, Captain Webb had the boats launched, and pulled to the westward, where he hoped to fall in with the exploring expedition which had left Portsmouth the preceding summer. If disappointed in this hope he determined to proceed as far as he could, and, if unable to reach Upernavik before the following

winter set in, to land upon the coast, and in some sheltered nook build houses of snow, after the manner of the Esquimaux.

All day the boats pursued a devious course between the floes, with the distant mountains of Greenland gradually sinking into the ice-encumbered sea, and at night they were drawn upon a floe, and covered with awnings, beneath which the shipwrecked mariners reposed.

The horizon was anxiously scanned when day dawned, but no sail was in sight, no trail of smoke was drawn upon the pale blue sky. The morning meal was prepared and eaten, and then they launched the boats again, and pursued a westerly course through the day.

Several days thus passed, and still no ship was seen. Captain Webb then began to fear that the explorers whom he had hoped to anticipate must have passed to the northward, and he had the boats steered for Smith Sound.

The stupendous glaciers and towering snows of Greenland again came into view, and at length the lofty cliffs were seen, with a few sea-birds hovering about them, or skimming the ice-encumbered waters. The north-western point of the land was rounded, and then the current became more rapid, and the masses of ice pursued each other so rapidly, and the channels between them became so much

narrower that the voyagers had again to betake themselves to a floe, and draw up their boats.

For several days the weather continued fine, then a black cloud arose behind the mountains of Greenland, making their snows look whiter by the contrast, and overspread all the sky in that direction, while the wind, which had hitherto been a light breeze from the north, changed to the southeast, and rose to a gale. The masses of ice which had been drifting down the sound were arrested by the storm, and driven against each other with fearful violence, some of them being broken into fragments by the concussion, and others hurled one upon another, often toppling over, and standing up on edge for a moment, then plunging down in a cloud of foam and spray.

The floe upon which Captain Webb and his crew had taken refuge was several times lifted up by the waves at so sharp an angle that they were in imminent danger of being hurled into the sea; and both bergs and floes were dashed against it with a noise like thunder, and a force that broke off large fragments from both the masses in collision.

"We have left our ship in the ice, and we shall leave our bones here, I'm thinkin'," muttered one of the crew, after one of these violent assaults of the ice. "Don't say that, Donaldson," observed Willie Webb. "If you are frightened yourself, you needn't frighten everybody else."

"Oh, I aren't frightened, if it comes to that," returned Donaldson. "But I don't particularly want to leave my bones in the ice, to be found a hundred years hence, and preserved in some museum as relics of Captain Webb's Expedition in search of the Pole."

"I suppose none of us do," observed Charlie Wilson, who had overheard what had been said; "but the best way to avoid leaving them here is to hold a bold heart, do our very best, and trust in God for the results."

A heavy mass of ice was bearing down upon them as our hero spoke. All held their breath, and watched its rapid advance with staring eyes and wildly-beating hearts. The floe shivered as it received the shock, and for an instant it seemed uncertain whether it would split, or the mass in collision with it would be driven over it, and sweep all on it into the sea.

All at once, however, the threatening mass plunged downward with a fearful grating sound, and disappeared in a tremendous vortex, causing the floe to oscillate violently. The churned-up waters roared and foamed around as if they had suddenly been launched beneath a cataract.

"I thought we were gone then!" Willie Webb observed in a whisper to our hero.

Another shock, which threw several of the crew off their feet, prevented any rejoinder, being followed by a loud cry of "Man over!" There was a rush to the spot, and a man was seen in the water,



" MAN OVER!"

rising and falling with the waves, and making strenuous efforts to reach the edge of the floe. A rope was thrown to him, and in a few moments he was enabled to regain the floe, but so benumbed by the immersion in such icy-cold water that he could scarcely stand.

The ice was now so closely massed together to windward that the force of the shocks became greatly diminished. The gale moderated during the night too, and the spray of the waves was no longer carried over the ice. The men took off their heavy outer garments, and dried them by the fire that was made upon the floe to cook their supper, and then the watch was set, and all waited anxiously for the dawn.

Daylight showed them that they had been driven towards the coast of Grinnell Land, along which the ice laid closely as far as they could see to the northward. Beyond this icy border the Sound was open, and Captain Webb availed himself of this favourable change to have the boats dragged over the ice, and launched from the outer edge of the field.

They now descended the Sound much more rapidly than before, and saw, with the return of sunshine, the snow disappearing from the southward slopes of the mountains, as it had already done from the edges of the cliffs. Seals and walruses began to be seen basking on the rocks, and sea-birds of many species screamed along the cliffs or clustered in the crannies and on the ledges.

At length the broad expanse of Peabody Bay was reached, and then dark clouds swept over the sky, and the breeze again rose to a gale, veering at the same time to the south, and raising the sea into heavy waves as it met the current. Captain Webb gave orders, therefore, for the boats to be

steered towards the Greenland shore; but so sudden and furious was the rise of the storm, and so thick the darkness that came on, that one of the boats was driven on a sharp ridge of rock, and had a hole knocked in her bows, and another was lifted on the crest of a wave, and dashed upon the stony beach with so much force that every plank and timber was loosened, and the men who formed her crew were pitched headlong into the surf.

Charlie Wilson, who was in the boat to which the former disaster occurred, was thrown into the dark water that foamed and roared around the rock, to which, at the next moment, he found himself clinging. In the hurried glance which he threw around he saw Captain Webb, who was grasping a point of the rock with one hand, while with the other he was assisting Willie.

"Can you hold on, Charlie?" shouted the captain, raising his voice above the roar of the storm.

"All right, Captain Webb!" responded Charlie, who, by exerting all his strength, managed to scramble up the slippery rock, and attain a less precarious position.

Willie and his father were equally successful, but two of the boat's crew were swept past the rock, and, after a desperate struggle with the wild waves, sank beneath them, and were seen no more.

The boat was gone, and the unfortunates on

the rock were already shivering with cold. The darkness prevented them from seeing the coast distinctly, and, with the waves roaring and foaming around them, and casting their spray over the rock, their situation was neither safe nor pleasant.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Captain Webb, making a speaking trumpet of his hands.

There was no response.

"I hope they have not all perished," said he, as he vainly strained his eyes into the darkness.

"Not all!" exclaimed Charlie, who was gazing in the same direction. "Some of them have lighted a fire. See, Captain Webb, the red flashes yonder!"

The captain turned his eyes in the direction in which Charlie pointed, and saw a flickering flame, apparently at some distance.

"That is above the beach," he observed. "Surely they have not had time to reach the cliff top, and to make a fire!"

"Holloa!" was now heard across the waves, but in a direction different to that in which the light was seen, and apparently at a less distance.

"Are you all right?" cried Captain Webb.

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded a voice which they recognized as Morton's; "but our boat is smashed."

"The Lord help us!" groaned the captain, and then he looked at Willie and Charlie for a moment, and drooped his head upon his hands.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

AMONG THE ESQUIMAUX.

HE boat in which Morton and his companions had reached the shore filled with water as if it had been a sieve, and then was washed away by

the waves. The crew, struggling out of the water with difficulty, found themselves at the foot of the cliffs, amidst the broken masses of rock which had fallen from their lofty summits.

They looked anxiously for the other boat, but could discern only the white crests of the waves, and hear only their heavy dash against the rocks. The captain's hail did not reach their ears, and they began to fear that he and all who were with him were lost.

The wind fell as rapidly as it had risen, however, and Morton shouted across the waves until his voice was heard, and each drew a long breath, and uttered a fervent "Thank God!" as Captain Webb's question, "Are you all right?" reached the shore.

"They must be on a rock," observed Morton, as he strained his eyes into the darkness in the direction from which the captain's voice had been heard.

"I fancy I can see something moving," said Markham; "but whether it is them or the wreckage of a boat I can't say."

"We must wait for daylight," rejoined Morton, with a sigh. "But the Lord help them, if they have lost their boat!"

"Look yonder!" said Hans, eagerly, as he grasped Morton's arm, and directed his attention towards a distant part of the cliff. "There is a fire! It must be on the summit of the cliff. Let us go towards it, and see whether it has been made by some wandering party of my people, or some unfortunate countrymen of your own."

Morton immediately led the way, and the castaways proceeded along the beach in the direction of the red flashes on the summit of the cliff, keeping close to the almost perpendicular wall of granite, and searching eagerly for a gap. About a mile from the place where they had been cast ashore, a narrow opening was found, with a steep ascent between precipices to the summit of the cliff.

Scrambling up through the darkness they saw the fire at a little distance, and immediately hurried towards it, Morton and Hans shouting, the one in English, the other in Esquimaux, lest they should alarm the party around the fire. Several dark figures became visible in the flickering light as they advanced, and a little cluster of deer-skin tents was seen, with a herd of reindeer reclining on the moss.

"Stand there!" cried one of the fur-clad figures,



ROUND THE ESQUIMAUX CAMP-FIRE.

as Morton's party came near. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"We are friends," replied Hans. "I am Hans of Upernavik, and another of our people is on a rock yonder, with some whites who have lost their boat in a storm. We have lost ours too, and want assistance for our friends on the rock."

The Esquimaux turned the points of their spears

towards the ground on hearing this statement in their own language, and seeing the broad brown face and long black hair of their countryman. The man who had spoken beckoned Hans nearer, and questioned him farther, the others gathering round them, and listening eagerly to their conference. Hans then beckoned to his companions, and the whole party were soon gathered round the smoky and flickering fire of dry moss.

Morton now learned from Hans that the Esquimaux had a couple of light canoes made of whalebone and deer-hides, which they had brought with them in their northward migration for the purpose of crossing the river which intersects the peninsula formed by Peabody Bay on the north, and Melville Bay on the south. These were immediately carried down to the beach, and launched into the dark waters, which had now become comparatively calm.

"They have not deserted us!" exclaimed Captain Webb, as voices were again heard on the beach. "I hear voices, and, hark! the splash of oars! No, it is the dip of paddles in the water. They are Esquimaux who are coming to our aid."

"Thank God for His mercy!" murmured our young hero, whose teeth chattered as he spoke, and whose limbs were benumbed with cold. "I am almost frozen! This is worse than the floe"

The Esquimaux shouted as they discerned the unfortunates on the rock, towards which they swiftly impelled their light canoes. Captain Webb insisted upon the two lads being among the first to be taken off, the small size of the canoes rendering a second trip necessary. He was the last to step from the rock.

On reaching the spot where the Esquimaux were encamped, the castaways took off their drenched garments, and rolled themselves up in warm furs, provided by their rescuers. The genial glow soon induced sleep, after so much toil and hardship, and they all slept soundly until sunrise.

The sea was now calm, and the beach was strewn with the wreckage of the boats and portions of their contents. Some of the rifles were recovered, but most of the stores were lost. All that could be collected, however, was carried up to the tents of the Esquimaux, and placed upon the sledges, which, in consideration of Captain Webb's promise of liberal payment, were placed at his disposal.

The journey southward was commenced the following day, a couple of additional sledges being roughly but ingeniously constructed from the remains of the boats, and the deer being numerous enough to furnish adequate draught for the whole number. All that day the way taken by their guides and drivers was parallel to the coast, with

the rippled waters of Peabody Bay sparkling in the sunlight on their right, and the moss-clad hills rising, ridge upon ridge, on their left, with the snow still lying upon the northern slopes.

The sun was setting behind a bank of dark clouds, the edges of which gleamed redly in the luminary's fading light, when they descended a hill, and halted for the night by the side of a rill that made a pleasant murmur over its stony bed, as it meandered towards the sea. A few flowers—saxifrages, chickweed, and a species of wall-flower—grew amidst the moss and grass; but no tree or shrub was visible—not even the hardy juniper or the dwarf willow. Yet the wild scene was a pleasant one to the eyes of Charlie and his companions, so long weary of the dreary uniformity of ice and snow.

The scenery became more picturesque as they continued their journey into the interior. Their way lay for the most part through green valleys, watered by shallow streams, where herds of deer grazed on the moss and herbage; but sometimes the track was carried through narrow passes, strewn with fragments of rock, where the falcon had its nest, and the ermine ran for shelter at their approach. Then they saw lofty pinnacles of granite towering up from the snow that still lay upon the ledges, and glaciers that glittered in the

sunbeams like masses of emerald and sapphire mingled with heaps of frosted silver.

Sometimes they came upon broad lakes, over which flocks of ducks and geese wheeled in the air, or swam through meandering water-ways among patches of aquatic vegetation. But even such localities were treeless, and land-birds were seldom seen, and limited to two or three species. Sometimes, in places where the moss was luxuriant, a few of the grouse kind were seen, and a snow-bunting was occasionally heard to twitter from a rock.

At length they reached the river spoken of by the Esquimaux, and the broad estuary of which flows into Smith Sound, and had been seen by the explorers the day after they left behind them the ice of Baffin Bay. The passage of this river occupied some time, but the last trip was at length made, and the tents were pitched upon its left bank.

From the green valley watered by this river the track led through a steep pass, where bare rock alternated with snowdrifts, and snow fell without ceasing until they had descended into another valley, where, for the first time since the day they went ashore in Ellesmere Land, they saw a few juniper bushes. Charlie Wilson, whom rest and a milder climate had restored to health, was seeking, after the tents had been pitched, for the nest of a snow-bunting which he suspected to be in one of

these bushes, when heavy footfalls at a little distance caused him to look in the direction whence they were advancing, and he beheld a bear.

Being at a little distance from the encampment, and without his rifle, he judged the better part of valour in such a situation to be exemplified by flight, and he set off for the tents at full speed, without waiting to find the bunting's nest. The bear quickened its pace at the same moment, and went after him with long strides.

Finding that the animal was gaining upon him, Charlie shouted loudly to rouse the camp, and in a few minutes saw Europeans and Esquimaux running towards him, the former armed with their rifles, the latter with their rudely-fashioned spears. Their shouts caused the bear to pause, but they were farther from him than he was from Charlie, and, with a subdued growl, he renewed the chase.

It was unfortunate for the bear that he did not know the difference between the rifle and the spear. Captain Webb divined Bruin's calculation, and baffled it in a moment by discharging his rifle. The shot took effect; the bear, wounded in the shoulder, stumbled, growled, and shuffled on with slackened pace. Another shot, from the rifle of Christian, brought him down, and he was dragged into the encampment, the Esquimaux dancing around him, and chanting a song of victory.



CHAPTER XXXV

HOMEWARD BOUND.

HE explorers had still a long journey before them, but the fleet reindeer coursed rapidly through the valleys of the peninsula, and at length they

reached the crest of a hill, and saw Melville Bay spread out before them with a line of ice in the distance, bounding the prospect and dividing the sea from the sky.

No sail was in sight, and Captain Webb determined to continue the journey in a line parallel to the coast until Upernavik was reached, unless some homeward-bound whaler should be descried earlier.

They encamped that night in a gap of the cliff, and, while the Esquimaux pitched the tents and tethered the deer, Charlie Wilson and Willie Webb descended the gap for a ramble along the beach.

The sun was setting redly behind the distant ice-field, and white-winged birds were skimming the pale green waves, or screaming as they wheeled about their nesting-places in the tall cliff. Watching the flight of the gulls and auks, and scrambling over the rocks to discover their nests, the lads came upon an aperture in the face of the cliff, at a spot to which the pools of water and tangled masses of seaweed showed that the sea rose with the flood tide.

"It is a cave!" said Charlie, advancing a step or two into the cavity.

It was wide enough for two to enter abreast, and Willie was by his side in a moment.

"How dark it is!" said he. "I wish we had a torch."

They groped their way for a few yards, and found the passage widen, but the darkness grew more pitchy as they proceeded, and they paused.

"I have got a match," said Willie. "Let us go up the gap, and gather an armful of dry moss."

Charlie assented, with his usual eagerness for an adventurous enterprise, and they groped their way out of the cavity, and ascended the gap. A bundle of dry grass and moss was soon collected on the cliff, and then they hurried back to the scene of their intended exploration.

A sound like a half-suppressed growl was heard

as they entered the cave, and seemed to proceed from its remote extremity.

"What was that?" said Willie, as they paused, and strained their eyes into the darkness.

"It sounded like a low growl," returned Charlie. "Suppose there is a bear here!"

"More likely a seal," observed Willie, dropping his bundle upon the sandy floor of the cave.

Then he struck a match, by the fitful illumination of which some large animal was seen.

"Stand aside, Charlie!" he exclaimed, springing aside as he perceived the beast shuffling towards them. "It is a walrus!"

He dropped the match as he spoke, and the light flame which immediately shot up enabled Charlie to spring out of the way of the unwieldy animal which was thus revealed to the view of both.

Awkward as are the movements of the walrus on land, the progress of the animal was aided so much by the smooth sand and the decline towards the beach that it passed them in a moment, and the splash of its huge body into the sea was heard a moment afterwards.

The flickering light of the fire showed them that the cave which the walrus had selected for its lair was of small dimensions, and terminated in a smaller cavity, which they hastened to explore by the red and fitful glow of the fast-dying fire. "It leads up to the cliff," said Charlie, scrambling up a steep ascent, and catching a glimpse of the sky at the upper end of the passage. "I can see the sky."

Willie followed, and in another minute both were on the cliff.

Next morning, while they were breakfasting, excitement was spread through the little camp by the glad cry of "a ship in the offing!" which reached it from the summit of the cliff. Several of the crew bounded up the gap on hearing it, and saw a steamer puffing her way slowly down the bay, and leaving a long line of black smoke upon the mottled western sky.

"Make a fire to attract her attention," cried Captain Webb. "The distance is too great for my voice to be heard, even if I had not lost my trumpet."

A quantity of dry moss and grass was soon collected on the summit of the cliff, and presently a column of smoke rose high into the air, there being scarcely any perceptible breeze at the time.

"Can she be one of the Government exploring vessels, Mr. Morton?" said Captain Webb, after watching the distant steamer for some minutes in silence.

"No such luck for them, poor fellows, I am afraid, sir," replied Morton, shaking his head gravely. "I

take her to be a whaler that has come out of Lancaster Sound, and round the head of the middle ice."

"Quite as likely," rejoined the captain, with a sigh. "They don't appear to see our signal," he added, as he saw with anxiety that the steamer still held on her course southward, "and we have not a bit of bunting! If they see the smoke, they will perhaps think it is made by the Esquimaux."

"They see us, Captain Webb!" cried Charlie. "See! they are standing in for the coast."

"I believe you are right, Charlie," said the captain, after a moment's anxious scrutiny of the vessel's movements; and that the lad was right was soon evident to every one.

All hastened, with cries of joy, to make ready for their departure from a land which the Norsemen who discovered it, judging of the whole from what they saw of its southern extremity in summer, called Greenland, but which Davis more appropriately named Desolation. All was ready long before the steamer was near enough to the coast to send her boats to the gap, and before sunset she was again steaming down Baffin Bay, with the rescued crew on board.

Dundee was reached without any farther disasters, and Charlie Wilson told the strange story of his discovery of the North Pole, which his elders heard with incredulity, and in his absence shook their heads, or touched their foreheads with a significant smile. He maintains, however, the truth and accuracy of his remarkable narrative, as presented in the foregoing pages.

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