THE ICE DESERT

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A Sequel

TO

"THE ENGLISH AT THE NORTH POLE"

BY

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CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTOR'S INVENTORY.

CAPTAIN HATTERAS'S design was a bold one; he had meant that England should have the glory of the discovery of the world's boreal Pole. He had done all that human power could do. After having struggled for nine months with currents and tempests; after breaking up icebergs and getting through ice-banks in the most terrible winter ever experienced in these hyperborean latitudes; after having confirmed the discoveries of his predecessors, and taken his brig, the Forward, on beyond the known seas—in short, after having accomplished half his task, he saw his great scheme crushed! The treason, or rather the discouragement, of his crew, worn by their trials and the criminal folly of their leaders, left him in a frightful position; out of eighteen men only four remained, and these four were abandoned without supplies, without a ship, at more than 2,500 miles from their country! The explosion of the Forward, which had just taken place before their eyes, took away their last means of existence.

However, the courage of Hatteras did not give way

in presence of this terrible catastrophe. The companions that remained with him were the best of the crew; heroes. He appealed to the energy and science of Dr. Clawbonny, to the devotedness of Johnson and Bell, to his own faith in his scheme; he dared to speak of hope in that desperate situation; his brave comrades heard him, and the past of such men answered for their future courage.

After the captain's energetic words the doctor wished to examine the situation, and leaving his companions at five hundred steps from the brig, he directed his steps towards the scene of the catastrophe. There remained nothing of the brig Forward, constructed with so much care. Ice torn up, black and calcined ruins, pieces of cable still burning like firebrands, twisted bars of iron, and, in the distance, a few columns of smoke, crawling about the ice-field, showed the violence of the explosion. The cannon, thrown several cables off, rested upon an ice-block as if it were on its carriage. The soil was covered with fragments of every sort for hundreds of yards round; the brig's keel lay on a heap of ice; the icebergs, partly melted by the heat of the conflagration, had already recovered their granite hardness. The doctor then began to think of his devastated cabin, of his lost collections, his precious instruments broken to pieces, and his burnt book. So much wealth destroyed! He stood with a tear in his eye, not thinking of the future, but of the irreparable misfortune which touched him so directly. He was soon rejoined by Johnson, whose face bore traces of the sufferings he had undergone in struggling with his revolted companions. The doctor held out his hand, which the boatswain pressed sadly.

"What is to become of us, my friend?" said the doctor.

"Who can say?" answered Johnson.

"Above all, don't let us give ourselves up to despair; we must be men," said the doctor.

"Yes, doctor, we are in an awkward situation, and the best thing we can do is to think how to get out of it as soon as possible."

"Poor ship!" said the doctor, sighing; "I had become quite fond of it, and I feel as though they had burnt down my paternal home. But where's the long-boat," continued the doctor, looking round. "Is that destroyed, too?"

"No; Shandon took it with him."

"And the pirogue?"

"Broken into a thousand pieces! See, these few tin plates are all that remain of it."

"Then there's only the halkett-boat left?"

"Yes, and it's a good thing you took it with you."

"It is not much," said the doctor.

"I hope Heaven will punish those wretched scoundrels as they deserve!" cried Johnson.

"Johnson," answered the doctor, gently, "we must not forget how much they suffered! Very few of us know how to remain wise in misfortune. We must pity and not curse them."

After these words the doctor remained silent, looking uneasily around him.

"What's become of the sledge?" asked Johnson.

"It is about a mile away."

"In Simpson's charge, I suppose?"

"No, my friend, poor Simpson has perished from fatigue."

"Dead?" cried the boatswain.

"Yes," answered the doctor.

"Poor fellow!" said Johnson, "but who knows if we ought not to envy his lot!"

"Yes, we left a dead man, and we bring back a dying man."

"A dying man?"

"Yes! Captain Altamont." The doctor told the boatswain in a few words about their adventure.

"An American!" said Johnson, pensively.

"Yes, everything makes us think so. But what was the shipwrecked Porpoise doing in these seas?"

"It came to perish," answered Johnson; "it took its crew to destruction, as all others have done in such a climate. But at least, Mr. Clawbonny, you've got what you went for?"

The doctor shook his head sadly.

"Nothing?" asked the old sailor.

"Nothing! Our provisions failed us, and we were worn out with fatigue! We did not even reach the coast signalled by Sir Edward Belcher!"

"Then we've no fuel?"

"No!"

"And no provisions?"

"No!"

"And no ship to take us back to England?"

The doctor and Johnson remained silent. It required superhuman courage to look the terrible situation in the face.

"Well," said Johnson at last, "we know the worst. Now we must set to work to build a snow-house."

"Yes," answered the doctor; "with Bell's help that will be easy; then we must go and fetch the sledge,

bring back the American, and hold a council with Hatteras."

"Poor captain!" said Johnson, who found means to forget himself, "how he must suffer!"

The doctor and the boatswain returned to their companions. Hatteras was standing unmoved, his arms crossed as usual, mute and looking forward into vacancy. His habitual firmness had returned to his face. What was the extraordinary man thinking of? Was he pre-occupied with his desperate situation or his crushed schemes? Did he think of going back, as both men and elements conspired against him? No one could guess his thoughts. His faithful Dick remained near him, braving, at his side, a temperature fallen to 32° below zero. Bell lay on the ice, and seemed to have lost all consciousness; his insensibility might cost him his life; he ran the risk of being frozen in a lump. Johnson shook him vigorously, rubbed him with snow, and at last succeeded in arousing him from his lethargy.

"Come, Bell, don't give way like that, man; get up; we want to talk to you about what is to be done, and we must have a shelter. Come, you haven't forgotten how to make a snow-house! Come and help me to find a good block!"

Bell allowed his friend to drag him along.

"While we are making it, Mr. Clawbonny will take the trouble to go as far as the sledge, and will bring it here with the dogs."

"I'm ready to start," said the doctor, "and in less than an hour I shall be back again."

"Shall you go with him, captain?" said Johnson, going towards Hatteras, who, though seemingly in deep thought, had heard his boatswain's remark.

"No, my friend; if the doctor will be kind enough. Some resolution must be taken before the day is over, and I want to be alone to reflect. Go and do what you think best for the present. I will decide for the future."

Johnson came back to the doctor.

"It is singular," he said to him, "the captain seems to have forgotten all about his anger; his voice has never seemed to me so kind."

"I believe that man capable of saving us yet!" said the doctor, as he fastened on his hood, and, with his iron stock in hand, set out for the sledge in the midst of the mist that the moon made almost luminous.

Johnson and Bell set to work at once; the old sailor tried to cheer up Bell, who worked away in silence; they had not to build but to hollow out a large block; the ice was very hard, and made the work hard, but its hardness was a guarantee of the solidity of the habitation; Johnson and Bell could soon work under cover, throwing the ice they cut away outside. Hatteras walked about from time to time, but when he reached a certain distance he stopped short; it was evident that he would not go to the place where his brig had been. As he had promised, the doctor was soon back; he brought Altamont wrapped in the tent, and lying on the sledge; the poor hungry Greenland dogs could scarcely draw, and were gnawing at their leather thongs; both animals and men wanted food and rest.

Whilst the house was being finished, the doctor had ferreted out a little stove which the explosion had almost respected; its bent tubes could soon be straightened; he carried it with an air of triumph. In about

three hours the house was ready, and the stove was placed inside; they stuffed it with splinters of wood, and it soon roared, spreading a beneficent heat around. The American was carried in and placed on some blankets at the back; the four Englishmen took their places round the stove. The last provisions from the sledge, a little biscuit and boiling tea, comforted them a little. Hatteras did not speak, and they all respected his silence. When the meal was over, the doctor signed to Johnson to follow him outside.

"Now," said he, "we must make an inventory of what we have left. Our riches are scattered about; we must collect them together, for snow may fall at any minute, and then we should not be able to find the least splinter of the ship."

"Don't let us lose any time, then," answered Johnson; "we must have wood and provisions."

"Very well! We must each search one side, so as to go over the whole radius of the explosion; we will begin in the centre, and work towards the circumference."

The two companions went at once to the ice-bed once occupied by the Forward; they both searched carefully by the doubtful light of the moon. The doctor grew quite excited when he found a case nearly intact; but most of them were empty, and their remains were scattered about the ice-field. The violence of the explosion had been considerable. Most things were nothing but dust and ashes. The larger pieces of the machine were lying bent here and there; the paddles were a hundred yards from the ship; the chimney was broken in from top to bottom, and half crushed under an enormous iceberg; all the pieces of iron that

help to build up a ship lay scattered about. But the iron, which would have made the fortune of a tribe of Esquimaux, was of no use to them. Provisions were what it was most important to find, and the doctor found very few.

"This is a bad look-out," he said to himself; "it is evident that the steward's room, situated near the powder-magazines, was entirely blown to pieces in the explosion; what is not burnt must be reduced to atoms. If Johnson doesn't have a better find than I have, I don't know what is to become of us."

However, as he widened the circle of his search, the doctor came upon about fifteen pounds of pemmican and four stone bottles, which, having been thrown on to the soft snow, were not broken, and contained five or six pints of brandy. In about two hours, Johnson and the doctor met and told each other what they had discovered. There were, unfortunately, few provisions—a few pieces of salted meat, about fifty pounds of pemmican, three bags of biscuit, a slight store of chocolate, some brandy, and about two pounds of coffee, picked up grain by grain on the ice. The doctor had found two packets of cochlearia, which can be used instead of limejuice as a preservative against the scurvy. They found neither blankets, hammocks, nor clothes; the fire had evidently devoured them all.

In all, they had found about enough provisions for three weeks on short commons; it was not enough to repair their exhausted strength. Hatteras, by a series of disastrous circumstances, was on the eve of wanting food as he had already wanted coal. The fuel furnished by the splinters from the ship might last about three weeks. But the doctor, before using it to warm their

snow-house, asked Johnson if they could not build a long-boat with it.

"No, Mr. Clawbonny," answered the boatswain; "it wouldn't do at any price; there isn't a piece of wood that could be used; it will do to warm us for a few days, and then——"

"Then——" said the doctor.

"As God pleases!" answered the brave sailor.

The inventory terminated, the doctor and Johnson went back for the sledge; they harnessed the poor, tired dogs to it, much against their will, returned to the scene of the explosion, placed their precious cargo upon it, and brought it back to their snow-house; then, half-frozen, they took their places beside their companions in misfortune.

CHAPTER II.

ALTAMONT SPEAKS.

TOWARDS eight o'clock in the evening the sky cleared a little, and the constellations shone out with sparkling brilliancy in a still colder atmosphere. Hatteras profited by the change to take the height of a few stars. He went out without speaking, carrying his instruments. He wished to see if the ice-field had drifted any further. In half-an-hour's time he came back, lay down in a corner of the hut, and gave himself up to profound meditation.

The next day the snow began to fall again in great abundance; the doctor was glad he had made his search the evening before, for a vast white curtain soon covered the ice-field, and all trace of the explosion vanished under a shroud three feet thick. During that day it was impossible to move out; happily, the habitation was comfortable, or, at all events, seemed so to our tired travellers. The little stove burnt well, except that now and then a violent gust drove the smoke inside; by means of its heat they were able to make boiling tea or coffee, the influence of which is so marvellous in these low temperatures.

The poor shipwrecked fellows, for so we may really

call them, were more comfortable than they had been for a long time; they only thought of the present, forgetting and defying the future, which threatened them with approaching death. The American suffered less, and came to himself little by little; he opened his eyes, but he could not yet speak; his lips bore traces of the scurvy, and could not form a sound; however, he heard, and was told how they were situated. He moved his head in sign of thanks; he had just been saved from being buried alive, and the doctor was too wise to tell him how near he was to a more certain death, for in a fortnight, or, at the most, three weeks, provisions would fail them absolutely. Towards noon Hatteras roused himself.

"My friends," he said to them, "we must now decide what to do. First of all, I want Johnson to tell me the circumstances about the act of treason which has placed us in this position."

"What is the use of knowing that?" said the doctor; "it's done, and no amount of thinking about it will do any good."

"I do think about it," answered Hatteras; "but when Johnson has told the details I shall think about it no longer."

"Very well, sir," answered the boatswain; "I did all I could to stop them——"

"That I am sure of, Johnson, and I may add that the leaders had been meditating their plot for a long time."

"I think so too," said the doctor.

"So do I," added Johnson; "for immediately after your departure Shandon took the command; he was jealous of you, sir, and the others supported him; I

tried to resist him, but it was of no use. From that time every one did pretty much as he liked; Shandon let them; he wanted to show the crew that the time of fatigue and privations was over. All economy was at an end; the stove was stuffed to repletion; they burnt the brig piecemeal. The provisions were left to the men's discretion, and the drink too, and for fellows who hadn't had a drop for so long, I leave you to guess how it disappeared! It went on like that from the 7th to the 17th of January."

"So it was Shandon who urged the men to revolt?" said Hatteras, in a grave tone.

"Yes, captain."

"Never let me hear his name again! Go on, Johnson."

"It was about the 24th or 25th of January that they began to think about leaving the ship. They resolved to make for the west side of Baffin's Sea; from there they meant to take to the long-boat and run after a whaler, or get to the Greenland colonies of the east coast. They took plenty of provisions; the invalids, excited by the hope of getting back, were better. They began their preparations for departure at once; a sledge was built for the provisions, the fuel, and the long-boat; the men were going to draw it. All that took till the 15th of January. I hoped every day you would come, captain, and yet I feared your presence; you would have done no good, for the crew would have massacred you rather than have remained on board. They seemed to be mad to get away. I spoke to them one at a time; I talked to them about the dangers to which they exposed themselves, and their cowardice in leaving you. I could do nothing even with the best of them.

Their departure was fixed for February 22nd. Shandon was impatient to start. They filled the sledge and the long-boat with all the provisions and drink they could hold, and as much wood as possible; they had demolished the starboard side down to the waterline. They were all drunk the last day, and it was then that Pen and two or three others set fire to the ship. I fought against them as well as I could, but they were too many for me then. They started with Shandon at their head, and disappeared out of my sight. I had not a drop of water to pour on the fire, for the hole we had made was blocked up with ice. I saw the Forward burn for two days, and you know the rest."

When Johnson's tale was over, a long silence reigned in the snow-house; the miserable end of the precious brig made a profound impression on his hearers; they dared not look at one another for fear of reading their own despair on the faces of their companions. The painful breathing of the American was the only sound heard. At last Hatteras spoke.

"Johnson," he said, "I thank you; you did all you could to save my ship, but alone you were powerless. Now let us think of something else. We are four men here, and we care as much for each other's lives as for our own. Let each give his opinion about what had best be done."

"Question us, Hatteras," answered the doctor; "we are all ready for anything. Tell us first what your opinion is."

"I can't," said Hatteras, sadly. "I should seem too selfish. I want to hear what you think."

"Captain," said Johnson, "before deciding on so important a subject, I want to know if you found

yesterday that the brig had drifted, or if we are still in the same place?"

"She has not moved," answered Hatteras. "I found we were in latitude 87° 35′ and longitude 87° 35′, the same as before our departure."

"How far are we from the nearest sea on the west?"

"About six hundred miles," answered Hatteras.

"What sea is it?"

"Smith's Strait."

"The one we could not clear last April?"

"Yes."

"Well, now we know how we are situated, we can give an opinion."

"What is it?" said Hatteras, who had let his head fall on to his two hands. He could thus listen to his companions without looking at them.

"Come, Bell," said the doctor, "what do you think we had better do?"

"There's no question about it," answered the carpenter; "we must get back, and not lose a day nor an hour; we must go down either south or west to gain the nearest coast, even if we are two months on the road."

"We have only three weeks' provisions," said Hatteras, without raising his head.

"Well," said Johnson, "we must manage to do it in three weeks, even if we have to go on all fours."

"Nothing is known of that part of the northern continent," said Hatteras. "We may meet with obstacles, mountains, and icebergs, which may barricade our passage."

"That is no reason why we should not attempt the journey," said the doctor; "we shall suffer a good deal,

and a long time, that's certain; we must only eat what is really necessary, unless we can shoot something."

"There's only half a pound of powder left," answered Hatteras.

"Come, Hatteras," answered the doctor, "I believe I know what you are thinking of. Have you any practical scheme?"

"No," answered the captain, after a moment's hesitation.

"You cannot put our courage in question," continued the doctor; "you know that we would follow you to the end; but don't you think it is time you gave up all hope of taking us to the Pole? Treason has broken your plans; you overcame the obstacles of nature, but not the perfidy and weakness of man. You have done all that it was humanly possible to do, and you would have succeeded, I'm certain; but as things are now, don't you feel obliged to put off your scheme and try to get back to England, even if you try again?"

"Well, captain?" said Johnson, as Hatteras remained some time without answering. At last he raised his head and said in a constrained tone—

"Do you think it possible to reach the coast of the strait, tired as you are, and almost without food?"

"No," answered the doctor, "but it is certain that the coast won't come to us. Perhaps we shall meet with some Esquimaux tribes further south that we can easily enter into relation with."

"Besides," continued Johnson, "we may meet with some vessel wintering down there."

"And," added the doctor, "if the strait is blocked up we can get across it and reach the west coast of Greenland, and from there, either by Prudhoe Land or

Cape York, reach some Danish settlement. In short, Hatteras, there is nothing to be done in this ice-field. The road to England is down south and not further north."

"Yes," said Bell, "Mr. Clawbonny is right; we must start at once. We have forgotten our country and our dear ones too long, as it is."

"Is that your opinion, Johnson?"

"Yes, captain."

"And yours, doctor?"

"Yes, Hatteras."

Hatteras still remained silent; and in spite of himself his face betrayed his agitation. The lives of four men depended upon his decision, and yet, if he retraced his steps, his bold schemes were crushed for ever; he could never hope to begin a fourth attempt of the same kind. The doctor, seeing that the captain was silent, spoke again.

"Hatteras, we have not an instant to lose; we must charge the sledge with our provisions, and as much wood as possible. Six hundred miles under such conditions is a long distance, but not impossible; we ought to make twenty miles a day, which will allow us to reach the coast about the 26th of March——"

"But," said Hatteras, "can't we wait a few days?"

"What for?" said Johnson.

"I scarcely know. Who can tell what may happen? A few days will be scarcely enough to repair our shattered strength! You won't have reached your second halting-place before you will sink from fatigue, without even a snow-house to shelter you."

"But a horrible death awaits us here!" cried Bell.

"My friends," said Hatteras, in an almost supplicat-

ing voice, "you despair before you need. If I proposed to you to go and seek salvation to the north, you would refuse to follow me, yet there are Esquimaux tribes towards the Pole as well as Smith's Strait. The open sea, the existence of which is certain, must wash continents. Nature is logical in all she does. Well, of course, where cold ceases vegetation reigns again. Is it not a promised land that awaits us up there, and that you wish to fly from?"

Hatteras grew excited as he spoke.

"Another day! another hour!" he cried.

Dr. Clawbonny, with his adventurous character and ardent imagination, would have yielded to the captain's glowing words; but Johnson, calmer and wiser, recalled him to reason and duty.

"Come, Bell," said he, "we must prepare the sledge!"

"Yes, come," answered Bell.

The two sailors directed their steps to the open snow-house.

"Oh, Johnson! you! you!" cried Hatteras. "Well, go, I shall stay, I shall stay!"

"Captain!" said Johnson, stopping, in spite of himself.

"I shall stay, I tell you! Go! Leave me like the others! Go! Come, Dick, we will stay together."

The brave dog came barking to his master's side. Johnson looked at the doctor, who did not know what to do; the best thing, perhaps, would be to sacrifice one day to Hatteras. The doctor was going to decide when he felt his arm touched. He turned round. The American had thrown off his blankets and was crawling on the ground; he had raised himself on his knees, and from his diseased lips issued inarticulate sounds. The

doctor, astonished, and almost frightened, looked at him in silence. Hatteras approached the American and looked at him attentively. He tried to find out what words the poor fellow wished to pronounce. After five minutes' efforts he said the word—Porpoise.

"The Porpoise!" cried the captain.

The American nodded.

"In these seas?" asked Hatteras, with a beating heart. Same sign from the sick man.

"To the north?"

"Yes."

"And you know her position?"

"Yes."

"Exactly?"

"Yes," said Altamont once more.

There was a moment's silence. The spectators of this unforeseen scene were all anxiety.

"Listen attentively," said Hatteras, at last. "You must tell us the situation of the ship. I will count the degrees out loud, you must stop me by a sign."

The American moved his head in sign of acquiescence.

"First of all, let's have the longitude. A hundred and five? No. Hundred and six? No. Seven? No. Eight? You mean west, don't you?"

"Yes," signed the American.

"I go on; a hundred and nine? ten? twelve? fourteen? sixteen? eighteen? a hundred and nineteen? twenty?"

"Yes," answered Altamont.

"Longitude 120°," said Hatteras; "and now for the minutes."

He began at number one. Altamont stopped him at fifteen.

"Very well," said Hatteras; "now for the latitude. Do you hear? Eighty? eighty-one? eighty-two? eighty-three?"

The American stopped him with a gesture.

"And the minutes? Five? ten? fifteen? twenty? twenty-five? thirty? thirty-five?"

Another sign from Altamont, who smiled feebly.

"Then," continued Hatteras, in a grave voice, "the Porpoise is in longitude 120° 15′, and latitude 83° 35′?"

"Yes," said Altamont, for the last time, as he fell fainting into the doctor's arms.

"You see, my friends," cried Hatteras, "salvation lies to the north, still to the north! we shall be saved!"

But, after these first joyful words, Hatteras seemed suddenly struck with a terrible idea. His face changed, and he felt himself bitten by the serpent of jealousy—an American had gone three degrees beyond him on the route to the Pole. Why? and wherefore?

CHAPTER III.

EIGHTEEN DAYS' MARCH.

THIS new incident, these first signs of life from Altamont, had completely changed the situation of the shipwrecked men; before that, they were without succour, without hope of gaining Baffin's Sea, threatened with loss of provisions during a course too long for their worn-out bodies, and now, at less than 400 miles from their snow-house, a ship existed which offered them every help, and perhaps the means of continuing their audacious march towards the Pole. Hatteras, the doctor, Johnson, and Bell were filled with hope again, after being so near despair. But Altamont's directions were still incomplete, and after a few minutes' rest, the doctor began the precious conversation again; he asked him questions in such a way that he had only to nod his head simply in reply or make a movement of his eyes. He soon learnt that the Porpoise was an American three-master, from New York, shipwrecked in the midst of the ice, with provisions and fuel in abundance; although turned over on her side, she must have been preserved, and it would be possible to save her cargo.

Altamont and his crew had abandoned her two

months before, taking the long-boat on a sledge; they hoped to gain Smith's Strait, come up with some whaler, and get taken back to America; but fatigue and disease struck down the unfortunate men, one by one, and they fell along the way. At last the captain and two men were all that remained out of a crew of thirty men, and if he, Altamont, was still living, it was by a veritable miracle of Providence. Hatteras wished to know from the American why the Porpoise had gone up so far north. Altamont made them understand that he had drifted with the ice without being able to withstand it. Hatteras asked him questions about the purpose of his voyage, and Altamont alleged that it had been undertaken to get across the North-West Passage. Hatteras did not press him further, and dared not ask him any more questions on that subject.

"Now," said the doctor, "we must do all we can to find the Porpoise; our route is shorter by a third than the one we must have taken to reach Baffin's Sea. We shall find everything necessary for wintering there."

"It is the best thing we can do now," answered Bell.

"And we mustn't lose a minute," said the boatswain; "for we must calculate how long our journey will take by how long our provisions will last, contrary to the usual practice, and we must start as soon as we can."

"You are right, Johnson," answered the doctor; "if we start to-morrow, which is Tuesday, February 26th, we must reach the Porpoise on the 15th of March or perish. What do you think, Hatteras?"

"That we had better get ready at once. Perhaps the way won't be so long as we think."

"How can that be?" answered the doctor. "Altamont seems certain about the position of his ship."

"But suppose the Porpoise has drifted on her ice-field like the Forward did?"

"It is possible," said the doctor.

Johnson and Bell said nothing about the possibility of a circumstance of which they had been the victims. But Altamont, who had been listening to this conversation, made signs that he wished to speak. The doctor went to him, and after a quarter of an hour's circumlocution and hesitation, he acquired the certainty that the Porpoise, stranded on a coast, would not have left her rocky bed. This intelligence made the four Englishmen easy, though it cut off all hope of getting back to Europe, unless Bell could succeed in building a little vessel out of the wood of the Porpoise. But the first thing to be done was to get to it. The doctor asked the American one more question—had he met with an open sea under the 83° of latitude?

"No," answered Altamont.

The conversation ended thereupon, and the preparations for departure were begun immediately; Bell and Johnson mended the sledge, which wanted it badly; they had plenty of wood for the purpose, and profited by the experience acquired during the excursion down south; they knew the weaknesses of this manner of transport, and as they must expect abundant and thick snow, they raised the sides on which it ran. Bell made a sort of bed in the centre, and covered it with the tent cloth, for the American; there were so few provisions that they added little to the weight of the sledge, but they made it up by an extra quantity of wood. The doctor made a scrupulous inventory of the provisions, and found that they must content themselves with three-quarter rations for a journey of three weeks.

Full rations were reserved for the Greenland dogs, and if Dick pulled with them, he was to have his full ration too. These preparations were interrupted by the need of sleep and rest, which began to be felt at seven in the evening; but before going to bed the shipwrecked men met round the stove, in which they did not spare the fuel; the poor fellows gave themselves a treat in its heat to which they had not been accustomed for a long time; some pemmican, a few biscuits, and seven cups of coffee soon put them in a comfortable frame of mind, and they went to sleep cradled in the hope which had come to them so soon, and from so far.

At seven in the morning the work was begun again, and finished by three in the afternoon; it was already dark; the sun had reappeared above the horizon since the 31st of January, but it only gave a feeble and short light; happily the moon rose at half-past six, and in a clear atmosphere her rays are sufficiently light. The temperature, which had been lowering for some days, at last attained 35° below zero. The moment for departure had come. Altamont was delighted, though the shaking would increase his sufferings; he had made the doctor understand that all the medicines necessary to cure the scurvy would be found on board the Porpoise. They placed him on the sledge; he was arranged as comfortably as possible; the dogs, Dick amongst them, were harnessed; the travellers threw a last look at the ice-field where the Forward had been. Hatteras' face for an instant bore the trace of violent anger, but it soon returned to its natural immobility, and the little troop set out towards the N.N.W.

Each took his accustomed place, Bell in advance, pointing out the way, the doctor and Johnson behind

the sledge guiding it, and pushing when necessary, Hatteras in the rear, rectifying the route, and keeping the caravan in Bell's track. The march was rapid in the low temperature, as the ice was hard and polished, and favourable for the sledge; the five dogs easily drew their weight of 900 pounds. However, men and dogs soon got out of breath, and were often obliged to stop and get it again. Towards seven o'clock the moon's red disc shone through the mists of the horizon. Her calm rays shone on the ice, and showed towards the north-west an immense white plain, perfectly level. Not a patch or a hummock was to be seen. This part of the sea seemed to have frozen as tranquilly as a peaceful lake. It was an immense desert, flat and monotonous. Such was the impression it gave the doctor, and he communicated it to his companion.

"You are right, Mr. Clawbonny; it is a desert, but there's no fear of our dying of thirst."

"That's one advantage," answered the doctor; "but it proves that we must be very far from land; in general the approach to a coast is signalled by a multitude of icebergs, and there isn't one to be seen here."

"We can't see far because of the mist," answered Johnson.

"That's certain, but we have met with the same flatness ever since we started, and it doesn't look to be ending."

"Do you know, Mr. Clawbonny, that it is very dangerous walking here? We get accustomed and don't think about it; but this frozen surface covers bottomless depths."

"You are right, my friend; but we need not fear being swallowed up. The resistance of this ice in a

temperature of 33° below zero is respectable; and it gets harder and harder, for under these latitudes snow falls nine days out of ten, even in April, May, and June, and I believe that its greatest thickness measures thirty or forty feet."

"That's reassuring," answered Johnson.

"Yes, we are not like the skaters of the Serpentine, who fear to be let through at every minute."

"Is the force of resistance of ice known, doctor?" said the old sailor, always anxious to learn.

"Perfectly known," answered the doctor. "What cannot be measured in this world, except human ambition — the ambition that is dragging us to the boreal Pole? But to return to your question. When the ice is two inches thick, it will bear a man; at three inches and a half, a horse and rider; at five inches, a company of eight; at eight inches, a company of artillery; and at ten inches, a whole army. Where we are now, they could build a Liverpool custom-house, or the Parliament Houses of London."

"It is difficult to realise it," said Johnson; "but just now you were talking of snow, which falls nine days out of ten in these countries; it's an evident fact, but where does it come from? As the sea is frozen, it can't give the necessary quantity of vapour which forms the clouds."

"Your observation is just, Johnson. I think that the greater part of the rain and snow that falls in these regions is made from the sea-water of the temperate zones; perhaps the snow we see rose from an Egyptian river, and the water we drink may have come from the rivers of our own country."

At this moment the voice of Hatteras was heard rectifying the errors of the route, and it interrupted the conversation. The mist got thicker and made it difficult to keep in a straight line. At last the little troop stopped at eight o'clock in the evening, after having cleared fifteen miles. The weather was still dry; the tent was erected, the stove lighted, and they slept in peace. Hatteras and his companions were really favoured by the weather. During the following days their journey was uninterrupted, although the cold became intense, and the mercury remained frozen in the thermometer. If there had been any wind, not one of the travellers could have supported such a temperature. The doctor, during this expedition, verified Parry's observations during his excursion on Melville Island. This celebrated sailor said that every man, properly clothed, could walk in the open air with impunity if the atmosphere is calm; but if there is the slightest wind, it causes a burning pain to the face, and an extremely violent headache, which is soon followed by death. The doctor was uneasy at the thought that a simple gust would have frozen them to the marrow of their bones.

On the 8th of March he was witness to a phenomenon confined to this latitude; the sky was perfectly clear and brilliant with stars, a thick snow fell without the slightest appearance of a cloud; the constellations shone through the flakes, which fell on the ice-field in graceful regularity. The snow lasted about two hours, and it was over before the doctor found a sufficient explanation of its fall.

The moon's last quarter had disappeared; darkness reigned during seventeen hours of the twenty-four;

the travellers tied themselves together with a long cord so as not to lose one another; it became almost impossible to keep in a straight line. However, these courageous men, though kept up by an iron will, began to get tired; the halts became more frequent, and yet every hour was of consequence, for the provisions diminished sensibly. Hatteras often set his position by means of lunar and stellar observations. As each day went by, and the Porpoise seemed to be no nearer, he asked himself if she really existed, and if the American, made mad by suffering or from hatred to the English, had not resolved to drag them to a certain death. He communicated his suppositions to the doctor, who would not entertain them for a moment, but they made him perceive the unfortunate rivalry which might exist between the English and American captains.

"It will be difficult to keep those men from quarrelling," he said to himself.

On the 14th of March, after a march of sixteen days, the travellers had only reached the 82° of latitude; their strength was exhausted, and they were still a hundred miles from the ship; to add to their sufferings, the men had been obliged to reduce themselves to quarter rations to keep their dogs on full ones. Unfortunately, they could not reckon upon killing anything, for they had only six bullets left; they had fired at several white foxes and hares, but not one had been killed. However, on Friday, the 15th, the doctor was fortunate enough to surprise a seal lying on the ice; he wounded it with several bullets, and the animal's hole being blocked up, it could not escape; it was a big one; Johnson cut it up skilfully; but the extreme leanness of this amphibian prevents it from being of great

use to Europeans, who cannot drink its oil as the Esquimaux do. However, the doctor tried courageously to drink the slimy stuff, but he could not succeed. He kept its skin, and placed it on the sledge. The next day, the 16th, some icebergs were discerned on the horizon. It was difficult to know whether they announced a coast near, or simply a convulsion of the ice.

Arrived at one of the hummocks, they profited by it to dig out a more comfortable habitation than the tent, and after three hours' hard work they could stretch themselves round the lighted stove.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST BULLET.

JOHNSON had allowed the poor, tired dogs to share the snow-house; when the snow falls abundantly, it makes a sort of blanket for the poor dogs, and keeps up their natural heat. But the poor animals would have been frozen in a temperature lowered to 40° below zero. Johnson made an excellent dog-driver; he tried to feed his dogs with the black seal-flesh, which the travellers could not swallow; to his great astonishment they ate it with relish; the old sailor went joyfully to the doctor and told him about it. He was not surprised, for he knew that in the north of America fish forms the principal food for the horses, and what herbivorous horses could eat, omnivorous dogs ought to be glad of. Before going to sleep, although sleep became an imperious necessity to men who had marched fifteen miles across the ice, the doctor wished to talk to his companions about their actual position.

"We have not yet reached the 82nd parallel," he said, "and our provisions are already beginning to fail us."

"Every reason for not losing an instant," answered Hatteras. "We must march on, and the strong must draw the weak."

"Do you think we shall find the ship, after all?" asked Bell, whose courage was ebbing with the fatigues of the way.

"There is no reason to doubt it," answered Johnson; "the American's safety answers for ours."

The doctor asked Altamont again about his ship. The captain could speak a little now, though in a very weak voice; he confirmed all the details he had already given, and repeated that the ship, stranded on granite rocks, could not have moved, and that she lay in longitude 120° 15′ and latitude 83° 35′.

"We can't doubt what he says," continued the doctor; "the difficulty is not to find the Porpoise, but to get to her."

"What food is there left?" asked Hatteras.

"Enough for three days at most," answered the doctor.

"Very well, we must get there in three days!" said the captain, energetically.

"Indeed we must," continued the doctor; "and if we succeed we shall not have much to complain of, for we have had exceptionally good weather. We've had no snow for a fortnight, and the sledge has rolled along easily. If there were only 200 pounds of provisions on it, our good dogs would easily manage to draw them Well, it is of no use wishing."

"Don't you think we might manage to kill something with the little powder we have left? If we could only get hold of a bear, we should have enough food for the rest of the journey."

"But bears are rare and timid, and besides, when we know how much depends on a shot, it's enough to make the surest hand tremble."

"But you are a splendid shot," said Bell.

"Yes, when the lives of four men do not depend on my skill; still I'll do my best. To-night we must content ourselves with a few crumbs of pemmican, and try to sleep so as to get up early to continue our march."

A few minutes after they all fell asleep from sheer fatigue. Early on Saturday morning Johnson awoke his companions; the dogs were already harnessed, and they continued their march northward. The sky was magnificent, the atmosphere extremely clear, and the temperature very low; when the sun appeared above the horizon it was in the shape of a long ellipsis; its horizontal diameter, on account of the refraction, seemed to be as large again as its vertical diameter; its cold clear rays fell on the immense frozen plain. The return of light, although without heat, was pleasant. The doctor, his gun in hand, went a mile or two away from the others; before starting he had carefully measured his ammunition; he had only four charges of powder and three bullets. It was very little to kill a bear, that often took ten or twelve shots to finish him. The doctor's ambition did not extend to such terrible game; a few hares or two or three foxes would have been sufficient. But, during the day, if he perceived one of these animals, either he could not approach it, or, deceived by the refraction, he missed his shot. That day lost him one charge of powder and one bullet to no purpose. His companions, who had started with hope at the noise, saw him return empty-handed. They said nothing, and in the evening went to sleep as usual, after putting aside the two quarter rations destined for the two following days.

The next day the way seemed to be more difficult.

They could not walk; they dragged along; the dogs had devoured even the entrails of the seal, and began to gnaw their thongs. Some foxes passed within sight of the sledge, and the doctor, having lost a second shot by pursuing them, dared not risk his last bullet. In the evening they halted earlier than usual; the travellers could not go a step further, though their way was lighted by a magnificent aurora borealis; they were obliged to stop. The last meal, taken on the Sunday evening under the frozen tent, was very melancholy. If Heaven did not come to the help of the poor fellows, they were lost. Hatteras did not speak, Bell no longer even thought, Johnson reflected without speaking, but the doctor did not yet despair.

Johnson dug a few fox-traps during the night, but as he had no bait, he counted little on their success, and he was right, for though he saw traces of foxes the next morning, not one had been caught. He was coming back bitterly disappointed, when he perceived a colossal bear smelling the sledge fifty fathoms off. The old sailor thought that Providence had sent him this unexpected animal to kill; without waking his companions he snatched up the doctor's gun and ran towards the bear. Arrived at a good distance he took aim; but as he was going to pull the trigger he felt his arm tremble; his thick leather gloves incommoded him. He took them off rapidly and seized his gun with a sure hand. Suddenly a cry of pain escaped him. The skin of his fingers, burnt by the cold of the barrel, remained sticking to it, whilst the gun fell to the ground, and went off with the shock, throwing the last bullet into space.

The doctor ran out at the noise of the detonation; he

saw how it was, the animal running quietly away, and Johnson desperate, but forgetting his suffering.

"I am a regular woman!" he cried; "a child that doesn't know how to bear pain. I at my age!"

"Come, Johnson, come in," said the doctor, "you'll be frozen. See, your hands are white already; come along."

"I don't deserve your attention, Mr. Clawbonny. Let me be!"

"Come along, you obstinate fellow. If you don't be quick, it will soon be too late."

The doctor dragged the old sailor into the tent and made him put his hands in a pail of water, which the heat of the stove had kept liquid but cold; but scarcely had Johnson plunged in his hands than the water froze at their contact.

"You see," said the doctor, "it was time you came in, or I should have been obliged to amputate them."

Thanks to his care, all danger had disappeared at the end of an hour, but not without trouble, for constant friction was necessary to bring back circulation into the fingers of the old sailor. The doctor recommended him especially not to approach the stove, as heat would have been very injurious.

That morning they were obliged to go without breakfast; there was no pemmican or salt meat left, nor a crumb of biscuit; they had not quite half a pound of coffee, and they were forced to be content with the boiling liquid.

"It's all up now!" said Bell to Johnson, with a pitiful accent of despair.

"Let us still hope in God!" said the old sailor. "He alone can save us!"

"The captain got back from his first expeditions, the mad man! but he'll never get back from this, nor we either. We shall never see England again!"

"Come, Bell, don't give way like that, man! The captain adventures too much, I know, but we've got a clever man with us."

"You mean Dr. Clawbonny?"

"Yes," answered Johnson.

"What can he do?" asked Bell, shrugging his shoulders. "Can he change blocks of ice into pieces of meat? He can't do miracles any more than we can."

"Who knows?" answered the boatswain; "I have every confidence in him."

They scarcely went three miles that day, and in the evening they had nothing to eat. The dogs were nearly eating one another, and the men were painfully hungry. There was not an animal to be seen, and if there had been, they could not have killed it. Johnson thought he saw a bear following to the windward of the unfortunate troop.

"He is waiting for his meal," thought he.

But he said nothing to his companions; in the evening they made their accustomed halt, and their supper consisted of a little coffee; they could not sleep for hunger. When Tuesday morning arrived the poor fellows had not eaten, under a latitude that exacts much food, for thirty-six hours. However, animated by a superhuman will and courage, they continued their route, pushing the sledge which the dogs could not draw. In about two hours they fell exhausted. Hatteras wished to keep on. He employed prayers and supplications to make his companions get up, but he wanted the impossible. Then, helped by Johnson,

he cut a cave out of an iceberg. They seemed to be digging their grave.

"I don't mind dying of hunger," said Hatteras, "but I won't die of cold."

When the house was ready, the five men lay down in it, and so the day passed. In the evening, whilst his companions remained motionless, Johnson had a sort of hallucination; he dreamt about a gigantic bear, and repeated "bear" aloud several times. This drew the doctor from his lethargy, and he asked Johnson what bear he meant.

"The one that has followed us for the last two days," answered Johnson.

"Have you seen one, then?"

"Yes; he's about a mile off to the windward."

"Why didn't you tell me, Johnson?"

"What was the use? We have no bullet, and nothing to make one of."

The doctor was silent for a minute, and then said—

"You are certain that the animal is following us?"

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny; he thinks he shall soon make a good meal of human flesh, and he is not mistaken."

Poor Johnson grew delirious, and uttered many wild things about letting the bear eat them and have done with them. The doctor did all he could to calm him, and if he succeeded it was because of the accent of profound conviction with which he said—

"I'll kill that bear to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" repeated Johnson, who seemed to wake from a bad dream. "How can you kill him without a bullet?"

"I will make one."

"But you have no lead!"

"No, but I have some mercury," saying which the doctor took the thermometer; it marked 50° above zero in the hut. The doctor went out, placed the instrument on a block of ice, and came back soon. The temperature outside was 50° below zero.

"Now go to sleep and wait till the sun rises," he said to the old sailor. The night passed in all the sufferings of hunger. The doctor and the boatswain were the only ones who had the slightest hope.

The next day, at sunrise, the doctor, followed by Johnson, rushed out and ran to the thermometer. All the mercury was frozen into a compact cylinder. The doctor broke the instrument, and with his gloved hand drew out a large piece of very hard metal.

"That's marvellous, doctor! You are a wonderful man!"

"No, my friend, I am only a man who has read much, and who has a good memory."

"What do you mean?"

"I remembered that Captain Ross relates in his travels that he pierced through a plank an inch thick with a bullet of frozen mercury; if I had had any oil it would have done as well, for he relates that a bullet of oil of sweet almonds, fired against a stake, cut it in two, and fell to the ground without being broken."

"It is scarcely credible."

"But it is true, Johnson. Here's a piece of metal that will save our lives; let us leave it in the air and see if the bear is still there!"

Just then Hatteras came out of the hut; the doctor showed him the bar of metal, and told him what they were going to do; the captain pressed his hand, and

they all three began to observe the horizon. The weather was very clear, and Hatteras, who had got before his companions, discovered the bear at six hundred yards' distance. It was seated on its haunches, balancing its head tranquilly, and scenting the emanations from the hut.

"There he is!" cried the captain.

"Silence," said the doctor.

But when the enormous quadruped saw the sportsmen he did not move, and looked at them without fear or anger. However, it was evidently difficult to get at him.

"There's no question of pleasure here," said Hatteras. "We must be prudent."

"Yes, for we've only one charge of powder, and he runs as quick as a hare."

"Well, we must go straight at him. We shall risk our lives, but what does that matter? I'll risk mine."

"No, I shall!" cried the doctor.

"Leave him to me!" said the captain, simply.

"But your safety is more precious to all than that of an old man like me."

"I won't risk my life more than is necessary, and you can come to my help if you see fit."

"But how do you mean to approach the animal?" asked the doctor.

"You have still the skin of the seal you killed the other day?"

"Yes, it is on the sledge."

"Very well, come back to the snow-house, while Johnson stops and watches."

The boatswain glided behind a hummock, which hid him completely from the bear, who continued in the same place, still sniffing the air.

CHAPTER V.

THE SEAL AND THE BEAR.

"You know," said Hatteras to the doctor, when they had reached the hut, "you know that the Polar bears feed on seals. They watch for them on the brink of their holes for entire days, and when a seal comes up to the surface, the bear crushes it with his paws. A bear won't be frightened at a seal."

"I see what you mean to do," answered the doctor; "but it is dangerous."

"It may succeed though, and so it must be tried. I am going to put on the sealskin, and glide along the ice-field. Load your gun and give it me."

The doctor had nothing to answer; he would have done the same himself; he left the snow-house carrying two axes, one for Johnson and the other for himself; then, accompanied by Hatteras, he went towards the sledge. Hatteras put on the sealskin, which covered him almost entirely. While he was doing it the doctor loaded his gun with the last charge of powder and the mercury bullet, which was as hard as iron and heavy as lead. He gave it to Hatteras, who hid it under his sealskin.

"Go to Johnson now," said he to the doctor; "I shall wait a few minutes to mislead my adversary."

"Courage, Hatteras!" said the doctor.

"Make your mind easy, and, above all, don't show yourself till you hear the report."

The doctor rapidly gained the hummock, behind which Johnson was hidden.

"Well?" said Johnson.

"We must wait. Hatteras is risking his life to save us."

The doctor was agitated; he looked at the bear, who seemed to feel that something was threatening him. In about a quarter of an hour the seal was crawling on the ice; he had gone round several large blocks in order better to deceive the bear; he was about fifty paces off when the bear perceived him. Hatteras skilfully imitated the movements of a seal, and if the doctor had not known beforehand, he would have been deceived too.

"That's just it!" he whispered to Johnson.

The seal, although approaching the bear, did not seem to perceive him; he seemed to be looking for some hole whereby to escape. The bear, on his side, advanced towards his prey with extreme caution; his inflamed eyes showed his eagerness; perhaps he had not eaten for two months, and chance had sent him a certain prey. The seal was soon about ten paces from his enemy. All at once he made a gigantic bound and stopped three paces from Hatteras, who, throwing off his sealskin, knelt on one knee and aimed at the heart. The shot was fired, and the animal rolled on the ice.

The doctor and Johnson rushed to the spot. The enormous beast had got up, striking the air with his paw, whilst with the other he snatched up a handful of snow and put it on his wound. Hatteras had not stirred; he was waiting, knife in hand. But he had

taken good aim, and fired with a hand that did not tremble; before his companions got up to him he had plunged his knife up to the hilt in the animal's throat, who fell to rise no more.

"Hurrah!" cried the doctor.

"Victory!" called out Johnson.

Hatteras, undisturbed, looked at the gigantic bear and folded his arms.

"Now for my time," said Johnson; "he's been splendidly killed, but we mustn't wait till his flesh is frozen to stone; neither our teeth nor knives would be any good then."

Johnson began by skinning the animal, who was almost as big as an ox. He measured nine feet long and six feet round; two enormous tusks were fixed in his jaws. Johnson opened him and found nothing but water in his stomach, and it was evident that he had not eaten for a long time; nevertheless, he was very fat, and weighed more than 1,500 pounds; they divided him into quarters, each of which gave 200 pounds of flesh, and the hunters dragged the flesh to the snow-house, not forgetting the heart, which, three hours after, still beat strongly.

The doctor's companions would willingly have thrown themselves upon the raw meat, but he stopped them, and asked for time to grill some. When the doctor came back to the snow-house, he was astonished to find it so cold; he approached the stove, and found it completely out; the morning's occupation had quite made Johnson forget to feed it with fuel. The doctor tried to light it, but he did not find a single spark amongst the cinders, which were already cold.

"Come, have a little patience!" he said, and went to

the sledge for the tinder-box, and asked Johnson for his steel to strike it with.

"The fire is out," he said to him.

"That's my fault," answered Johnson; and he looked for his steel in the pocket where he usually kept it; he was surprised not to find it. He felt in his other pockets, but without success, went back to the snow-house, felt under the blankets where he had slept, and was not more fortunate.

"Well?" asked the doctor.

Johnson came back and looked at his companions.

"Haven't you got it, Mr. Clawbonny?" he asked.

"No, Johnson."

"Nor you, captain?'

"No," answered Hatteras.

"It has always been in your possession," said the doctor.

"Well, I can't find it," said Johnson, growing pale.

"Not got it?" cried the doctor, agitated. He saw what terrible consequences such a loss might bring.

"Look well, Johnson," said the doctor.

Johnson ran to the iceberg, behind which he had watched the bear, and then to the place where he had cut up the bear, but he found nothing. He ran back in despair. Hatteras did not utter one word of reproach.

"That is unfortunate," said the doctor.

"Yes," said Hatteras.

"We have no instrument, not even a telescope, from which we could take out the lens, for the sun's rays would have been strong enough to light the tinder."

"Well," answered Hatteras, "we must appease our hunger with this raw meat, and make all the haste we can to get to the ship."

"Yes," said the doctor, plunged in thought. "Why not? I might try—it is just possible——'

"What are you thinking of?" asked Hatteras.

"I've an idea."

"Then we're safe," cried Johnson.

"But I don't know if it will succeed," answered the doctor; "that's the question."

"What is it?" said Hatteras.

"We have no lens; we must make one."

"How?" asked Johnson.

"With a piece of ice."

"What? You think——"

"Why not? We want to concentrate the sun's rays on a small space, and ice may serve us as well as the best crystal. Only I must get a bit of fresh-water ice."

"There's a hummock of it," said Johnson, proceeding to a greenish-black block not a hundred steps off.

"You are right; come, my friends. Johnson, take your axe."

The three men went up to the block, which turned out to be fresh-water ice, and the doctor had a piece about a foot in diameter broken off, and he then began cutting it roughly with his axe; after that he made the surface more equal with his knife, and lastly polished it with his hand, and he soon obtained as transparent a lens as if it had been made with the finest crystal. Then he came back to the snow-house, took a piece of tinder, and began his experiment. The sun shone rather brightly; the doctor exposed his ice lens to its rays, which he concentrated on the tinder. It took fire in a few seconds.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Johnson, who could

scarcely contain his joy. He went backwards and forwards like a madman. The doctor re-entered the house, and a few minutes afterwards the fire was roaring in the stove, and soon a savoury smell of frying drew Bell from his torpor. It is easy to imagine what justice was done to the meal; however, the doctor advised his companions to moderate their appetite, and himself set the example. While they were eating, he said—

"It is a lucky day with us; for we have enough provisions for the rest of the journey. However, we must not go to sleep in the delights of Capua, and we had better set out again at once."

"We can't be more than forty-eight hours from the Porpoise," said Altamont, who could almost speak clearly again.

"I hope," said the doctor, laughing, "that we shall find something to make the fire with."

"Oh, there's plenty of everything," said Altamont.

"Because, although my lens is a good one, it's of no use when the sun does not shine, and that's often at four degrees from the Pole!"

"Yes," said Altamont, with a sigh; "at less than four degrees; my ship went there, where no other had ever been."

"Come, let us start," said Hatteras, curtly.

"Yes, we are ready," answered the doctor, looking uneasily at the two captains. The strength of our travellers had soon been recruited; the dogs had had a large part of the bear's remains, and they set out again rapidly towards the north. On the way the doctor wished to draw from Altamont the reasons that

had taken him so far, but the American answered evasively.

"We have two men to watch," he whispered to the old boatswain.

"Yes," answered Johnson.

"Hatteras never speaks to the American, and he doesn't seem inclined to be very grateful. Fortunately, I shall be there."

"I don't much care for that man's face since he got better," said Johnson.

"I think he guesses Hatteras's plans," answered the doctor.

"Do you think the American has the same?" asked Johnson.

"Who knows? The Americans are bold and daring; what an Englishman wanted to do an American might have attempted."

"You think that Altamont——"

"I don't think anything," answered the doctor; "but his vessel is very near the Pole."

"But he said he was drifted there in spite of himself."

"He says so, but I thought he smiled ironically at the same time."

"The devil! Mr. Clawbonny. A rivalry between two such men would be an unlucky thing."

"I hope I'm mistaken, for such a state of things would be very grave."

"I hope that Altamont won't forget that we saved his life."

"Is not he going to save ours, too? He wouldn't exist if it hadn't been for us; but without his ship and her contents what should we do?"

"Well, Mr. Clawbonny, you are there, and with your help I hope all will go right."

"I hope so too, Johnson."

The journey went on without further incident; they had plenty of bear's flesh, and made excellent meals; thanks to the doctor, a certain good humour reigned amongst the whole troop: this worthy man always found something worth telling about men or things. His health continued good; he had not got much thinner, notwithstanding his fatigues and privations; his Liverpool friends would easily have recognised him, especially by his good and equable temper. During the morning of Saturday the nature of the immense plain of ice was sensibly modified; disturbed ice, more frequent packs, piled-up hummocks, showed that the ice-fields had undergone great pressure; it was evident that some new island or continent, by narrowing the passages, had caused the confusion. More frequent blocks of soft-water ice indicated an approaching coast. There existed, then, a new land not far off, and the doctor burnt with the desire to enrich the maps of the boreal hemisphere. The pleasure of tracing out new coasts with a pencil and paper can scarcely be imagined; it was the doctor's dearest wish, as that of Hatteras was to tread the Pole itself; he thought beforehand of the pleasure he should have in baptising the seas, straits, bays, and windings of these new continents. In his nomenclature he did not forget his companions, nor his friends, nor Her Gracious Majesty, nor the Royal Family, and he thought of a certain Cape Clawbonny with legitimate satisfaction. These thoughts occupied him all day. The evening tent was raised as usual, and each took it in turn to watch while his companions slept.

The next day was Sunday, and after a good breakfast off the bear's paws, which were excellent, the travellers marched northwards, keeping a little to the west; the way became more difficult, but, notwithstanding that, they marched quickly.

Altamont, from the top of the sledge, watched the horizon with feverish attention; his companions were a prey to involuntary anxiety. The last solar observations had given latitude exact 83° 35′, by longitude 120° 15′; it was the position assigned to the American ship; the question of life or death was to be resolved during the day. At last, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, Altamont stood upright and stopped the little troop with a loud shout; pointing to a white mass, which any other eyes would have confounded with the neighbouring icebergs, he cried with a loud voice, "The Porpoise!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PORPOISE.

THE 24th of March was Palm Sunday, the day when all the Catholic countries of Europe rejoice. But what a contrast with these regions, where not even a blade of grass grew to cheer the poor travellers! Still, it was a day of rejoicing to them also, for at last they were about to find the means of preserving life.

They marched quicker; the dogs drew with greater energy, Dick barked with satisfaction, and the troop soon reached the American vessel. The Porpoise was entirely buried under the snow; she had lost all her masts and yards; all her rigging was broken when she was wrecked; she was completely hemmed in by a bed of rocks, then completely invisible. The Porpoise had been thrown on her side by the violence of the shock, her keel was half open, and she appeared uninhabitable.

The captain, Dr. Clawbonny, and Johnson cleared away fifteen feet of ice before they reached the inside of the ship; to their great joy they saw that the animals, whose numerous traces existed all round, had not reached the provisions.

"We have plenty of food and fuel," said Johnson, "but we can't live in that shell."

"Well, we must make a snow-house," said Hatteras; "we will instal ourselves on the continent as best we can."

"Yes," said the doctor, "but we need not be in a hurry, and we had better do it well while we are about it. We can make a berth in the ship for the present, and make a solid house capable of protecting us against the cold and the wild beasts. I'll be the architect, and you will see it will be a success."

"I've no doubt of that," answered Johnson; "let us instal ourselves here as best we can, and make an inventory of the ship's contents; unfortunately, I see neither long-boat nor canoe, and the pieces of the ship are not fit to build any craft with."

"Who knows?" answered the doctor. "Many things can be done with time and trouble; there is no question of sailing just now, but of making a good dwelling. Everything in its place."

"Yes," said Hatteras, "we must begin with what is necessary at once."

The three companions left the ship and returned to the sledge. Bell declared himself ready to set to work at once; the American shook his head when he heard that nothing could be done with his ship; but as any sort of discussion would have been out of place just then, they kept to the plan of taking refuge on board the Porpoise, and of constructing a vast habitation on the coast. At four o'clock in the afternoon the four travellers were installed, as well as possible under the circumstances, on deck; Bell had made a sort of horizontal flooring with the remains of masts and spars; they placed the frozen hammocks upon it, and the heat of the stove soon brought them to their natural state. Altamont, leaning on the doctor, had been able to get

to the corner reserved for him without much difficulty. When he set foot on his ship he let fall a sigh of satisfaction, which did not please the boatswain.

"He feels that he is at home now," thought he.

The rest of the day was consecrated to rest. The weather threatened to change under the influence of the west wind; the thermometer placed outside measured 22°. The Porpoise was situated beyond the frozen Pole in a latitude relatively less freezing, although nearer the north. They finished the rest of the bear next day, with some biscuits and tea found in the ship's stores; then fatigue took possession of them, and they slept profoundly.

The next morning Hatteras and his companions woke rather late. They were no longer uneasy about the morrow, and slept more peacefully; they only thought of lodging themselves as comfortably as they could. They looked upon themselves as colonists arrived at their destination, and only thought of making the future bearable.

"Well," said the doctor, stretching himself, "it is a great deal to know where we shall sleep at night, and what we shall eat to-morrow."

"We'd better begin by making the inventory of what the ship contains," answered Johnson.

The Porpoise had been perfectly equipped and provisioned for a distant campaign. The inventory gave a sufficient quantity of provisions, 6,150 lbs. of flour, suet, and raisins for puddings; 2,000 lbs. of salted beef and flour; 1,500 lbs. of pemmican; 700 lbs. of sugar, as much chocolate; a case and a half of tea, weighing 96 lbs.; 500 lbs. of rice; several barrels of preserved fruits and vegetables; limejuice in abundance, grains

of cochlearia, sorrel and cress; 300 gallons of rum and brandy. The powder-magazines contained a great quantity of powder, bullets, and lead; there was coal and wood in abundance. The doctor took especial care of the mathematical instruments, and a large pile of Bunsen that had been taken for electrical experiments. The provisions were sufficient to last five men two years on full rations. All fear of death from cold or hunger had vanished.

"Now our needs are provided for," said the doctor to the captain, "there is nothing to prevent your pushing on to the Pole."

"To the Pole?" repeated Hatteras, starting.

"Certainly," continued the doctor; "during the summer months what will prevent you taking a reconnoitring party across the land?"

"Across the land, yes; but across the sea?"

"Can't we build a boat with the planks of the Porpoise?"

"An American boat, you mean," said Hatteras, sneering, "commanded by that American."

The doctor understood the motive of the captain's repugnance, and let the subject drop.

"Now that we know what provisions we have," he continued, "we must build storehouses for them, and a house for us. There are plenty of materials, and we can easily make ourselves comfortable. I hope, Bell," added the doctor, and addressing the carpenter, "that you mean to distinguish yourself; besides, I can give you a little good advice."

"I am ready, Mr. Clawbonny," answered Bell; "if necessary, I could build a whole town with these blocks of ice."

"Oh! we don't want so much; we must take pattern from the agents of the Hudson Bay Company; they built forts which sheltered them from animals and Indians, and that is all we want. On one side we must build the house, and the magazines on the other with a sort of awning and two bastions to cover us. I will try to remember what I know about castrametation."

"I've no doubt we shall make something handsome under your direction," said Johnson.

"We must first go and choose the site," said the doctor. "Shall you come with us, Hatteras?"

"I leave it to you, doctor," answered the captain.

"While you are away I mean to climb the hill."

Altamont was still too weak to take any share in the work, and was left on board his ship while the Englishmen set foot on the continent. The weather was stormy and thick; at noon the thermometer marked 11° below zero; but in the absence of wind the temperature was bearable.

According to the situation of the coast, a large frozen sea seemed to extend westward as far as the eye could reach; it was bounded on the east by a rounded coast, cut up by deep estuaries, and rising suddenly at about 200 yards from the beach; it formed thus a vast bay, bristling with the dangerous rocks on which the Porpoise had been wrecked; in the distance rose a mountain which the doctor estimated 500 feet high. Towards the north a promontory ran into the sea after having covered a part of the bay. A small island emerged from the ice-field at about three miles from the coast, so that had it not been for the difficulty of entering the roadstead, it would have formed a safe and sheltered anchorage. There was also in a bend of

the coast a little port of easy access to ships if ever the thaw cleared that part of the Arctic Ocean. However, according to Belcher and Penny, all that sea is open during the summer months. On the side of a hill the doctor remarked a sort of circular table-land of about 200 feet in diameter; it overlooked the bay on three of its sides, and the fourth was closed in by a wall with a high peak; it could only be reached by steps cut out of the ice. This place seemed fit to build a solid construction upon, and might easily be fortified; Nature had prepared the ground; all that was now necessary was to profit by her work.

The doctor, Bell, and Johnson reached this table-land by cutting away blocks of ice with their axes; they found it perfectly level. The doctor, after having assured himself of the excellence of the site, resolved to clear away the ten feet of frozen snow which covered it; he was obliged to establish his habitation and magazines on a solid foundation. They worked hard all day Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; at last the soil appeared; it was formed of a very hard and close-grained granite, and its asperities were as sharp as glass; their pickaxes sent out masses of feldspar crystals, and garnets.

The doctor then gave the dimensions for the snow-house; it was to be about 40 feet long, 20 wide, and 10 high; to be divided into three rooms, a parlour, a bedroom, and a kitchen. The kitchen was on the left, the bedroom on the right, and the parlour in the middle. For five days they worked assiduously. They had plenty of materials; the ice-walls were obliged to be made thick enough to resist the thaws, for it would not have done to risk finding themselves shelterless

even in summer. As the house rose it began to have a good shape; it had four front windows, two for the parlour, one for the kitchen, and one for the bedroom; instead of glass they were made of handsome slabs of ice, according to Esquimaux fashion, and the light that came through them was as soft as that from cut glass.

In front of the parlour, between the two windows, was a long covered passage that gave access to the house; a solid door was taken from a cabin in the Porpoise, and closed it hermetically. When the house was finished, the doctor was enchanted with his work; it would have been difficult to state to what sort of architecture it belonged, though the doctor would have preferred the Gothic Anglo-Saxon, but solidity was the principal object; the doctor confined himself to placing strong buttresses against the front, and a steep roof sloped down from the granite wall. The stove chimneys ran up against the wall too. When the house was finished they took care to make it comfortable inside. They transported the beds from the Porpoise into the bedroom, and placed them in a circle round a vast stove. Forms, chairs, armchairs, tables, and cupboards were placed in the parlour, which also served as dining-room; lastly, they put the ranges from the ship in the kitchen with all the cooking utensils. Sails were spread on the floor and served for carpets; they were also hung in the doorways where there were no doors. The walls of the house were about five feet thick, and the embrasures of the windows looked like loopholes.

All this was extremely solid; what more did they want? The doctor let his fancy run wild on all the superb things that might have been done with the ice,

and amused his companions by describing them while they worked. Besides, he had read Kraft's description of the ice-house built at St. Petersburg in January, 1740, and of all it contained. One evening he told his companions all about this marvel.

"We could do all they did at St. Petersburg," he said to them; "we have everything they had, even the imagination."

"It was very fine, then?" asked Johnson.

"It was fairylike. The house was constructed by order of the Empress Anne, and she ordered it for the wedding of one of her buffoons in 1740; it was about as large as ours, but along the front six ice-cannons were placed; they were often fired with powder and bullets, but they did not burst; there were mortars cut out for 60lb. shells, so here we could make formidable artillery; the metal is not far off, and falls from the sky. But the most curious part was the palace front, which was ornamented with beautiful ice-statues; all along the terrace steps were vases of flowers and orange-trees, all cut from ice; on the right was an enormous elephant, from whose trunk flowed water all day and burning naphtha all night. We could make a perfect menagerie here."

"Oh, as to animals," answered Johnson, "we shall get plenty, and they'll be none the worse for not being made of ice."

"Well," said the warlike doctor, "we can easily defend ourselves against their attacks; but to go back to my ice-house. In the interior there were tables, toilettes, mirrors, candelabra, candlesticks, beds, mattresses, pillows, curtains, clocks, chairs, playing-cards, cupboards, complete services, all of chiselled ice."

"It was a real palace, then?" said Bell.

"Yes, a splendid palace, worthy of a sovereign. What a good thing ice is, especially to make poor shipwrecked fellows comfortable!"

The furnishing of the house took till March 31st; it was Easter Sunday, and was consecrated to rest; they passed it in the parlour, where divine service was read, and they all appreciated the comforts of their snow-house. The next day they began to build their store-houses and powder-magazine; it took about a week, including the removal of the things from the Porpoise; it was difficult work, for the temperature was too low to allow them to work long at a time. At last, on April 8th, the provisions, fuel, and ammunition were on *terra firma* and safely sheltered; the storehouses were situated to the north, and the powder-magazines to the south, of the table-land, about 60 feet from each end of the house; a sort of kennel was built near the storehouses for the Greenland dogs, and the doctor bestowed on it the title of the "dog palace." Dick shared the common dwelling. Then the doctor set about the means of fortifying the place. Under his direction the table-land was surrounded by an ice fortification, which protected it against any chance of invasion. While the doctor was constructing his forts he reminded one of Sterne's Uncle Toby, whose sweet temper and kindly disposition were his also. The work was so easy in the soft snow that the doctor was able to make his wall seven feet thick; as the table-land overlooked the bay he had no counterscarp, slope, or glacis to build on the outside; the snow parapet started from the rock on either side the house, and wound round the table-land. These castrametation works were finished

about April 15th, and the doctor seemed very proud of his work. If a tribe of Esquimaux had attacked the place it would have held out for a long time, but no such enemies were to be feared under such a latitude; when Hatteras went to observe the configuration of the bay, he never met with the slightest appearance of Greenland tribes. The shipwrecked crews of the Porpoise and the Forward seemed to have been the first to tread these unknown regions. But though they had nothing to fear from men, the animals might be formidable, and the fortress, thus defended, would guarantee the little garrison from their attacks.

CHAPTER VII.

A DISCUSSION ABOUT MAPS.

DURING these preparations for wintering, Altamont had recovered health and strength; he could even be employed in discharging the ship. His vigorous constitution had saved him, and he became once more the robust and nervous citizen of the United States; he was again an energetic and intelligent man, endowed with a resolute character. An American, bold and adventurous, ready for anything, he was a native of New York, and had navigated from childhood, as he told his new companions; his ship, the Porpoise, had been equipped and sent to sea by a society of rich merchants of the Union, at the head of whom was the famous Mr. Grinnel. He and Hatteras were alike in many things, but they were not sympathetic. The American talked a great deal more than Hatteras, but did not seem so sincere. The Englishman said his say once and for all, and then was silent; the other often talked a great deal and said nothing. The doctor formed his opinion of the American's character, and foresaw that the two captains would not be friends.

However, there were two commanders, and only one could be obeyed. Hatteras had the right of priority

and force over Altamont; but it must not be forgotten that the American was on his own ship. By policy or instinct Altamont felt himself drawn towards the doctor; he owed him his life, but he felt more friendship than gratitude towards the worthy man. Clawbonny's character had the same effect on everybody; friends grew up around him like corn in the sun. Some people are said to get up at five in the morning to make enemies; the doctor would have got up at four without succeeding.

However, the doctor tried to profit by Altamont's friendship to know the true aim of his expedition into the Polar Seas. But the American beat about the bush, and talked as usual about the North-West passage. The doctor suspected that it had another motive, the very one that Hatteras feared. He resolved never to broach the subject before the two adversaries, but he could not always prevent it cropping up. What he feared happened at last. When the house was finished the doctor resolved to inaugurate it by a splendid feast; he wanted to make their life seem a little more European. Bell had happened to kill some ptarmigans and a white hare, the first messenger of spring.

This feast took place on the 14th of April; the weather was very fine and dry, but the cold could not penetrate into the snow-house, and the fires burnt merrily in the stoves. They dined well; the fresh meat made an agreeable change after pemmican and salted meat; a marvellous pudding that the doctor had made himself was encored, every one asked for more; the learned chief, apron round waist, and knife at the belt, would not have dishonoured the butchers of the Lord High Chancellor of England.

At dessert, spirits made their appearance. The Ameri-

can was not a teetotaler, and the four Englishmen were no longer obliged to be so, and there was no reason for refusing a glass of gin or brandy; the doctor, therefore, prescribed a series of toasts. When the Union was proposed, Hatteras remained silent. It was then that the doctor asked the following—

"Now that we have overcome icebergs, ice-fields, and straits, and have got this far, there is something else to be done. I propose we give names to this hospitable land, where we have found salvation and rest; all the navigators in the world have been in the habit of naming the places they discover; it is our turn now to take back, with the hydrographic configuration of the coasts, the names of its capes, bays, points, and promontories."

"That's well said," cried Johnson; "besides, when we can call all these lands by their names we shall be more comfortable, and not be always thinking we are abandoned on an unknown continent."

"Besides," added Bell, "it will be easier to give and execute orders when we can call places by their names; we may be lost or forced to separate in some expedition, and there's nothing like knowing the name of a place when we want to get to it."

"Well," said the doctor, "as we are all agreed, let us begin, and not forget our country or friends. When I look at a map nothing gives me greater pleasure than seeing the name of a countryman at the end of a cape, a coast, or an island, or in the midst of a sea. It is like a charming intervention of friendship into geography."

"You are right, doctor," answered the American; "and the way you put things makes them more worth having."

"Well," answered the doctor, "let us begin at the beginning."

Hatteras had not yet taken part in the conversation; he was thinking. However, as he saw all his companions looking at him, he rose, and said—

"Unless there is any better opinion, and I think no one here will contradict me"—here Hatteras looked at Altamont—"it seems to me that we ought to give to our habitation the name of its clever architect, of the best man amongst us, and call it 'Doctor's House.'"

"That's it!" said Bell.

"The best name possible!" said Johnson.

"There could no[illegible] better!" answered Altamont. "Three cheers for Dr. Clawbonny!"

The doctor's health was drunk with three times three, and Dick barked in concert.

"We must give the doctor's name to the house till we can give it to some new land," said Hatteras.

"Ah!" said old Johnson, "if the terrestrial Paradise wanted a name, Dr. Clawbonny's would do for it marvellously."

The doctor wished to prevent them bestowing the honour upon him, but they insisted merrily that their dinner was being eaten in the doctor's parlour, and had been cooked in the doctor's kitchen, and they were all going gaily to sleep in the bedroom of the doctor's house.

"Now," said the doctor, "let us pass to the more important points of our discoveries."

"There is the immense sea which surrounds us, and which no ship has yet ploughed."

"No ship?" exclaimed Altamont. "What do you call the Porpoise, then? Perhaps you think she came by land?"

"Anyone might think so to see her on those rocks," replied Hatteras.

"That's as good as being blown up into the air, any way," answered Altamont.

Hatteras was going to reply quickly, when the doctor interfered.

"We were not talking about ships, but about a new sea," he said.

"It is not new," answered Altamont; "its name is on all the maps. It is called the North Sea, and I don't see any use in changing its name unless it turns out to be a strait or a gulf; then we can decide about it."

"Very well," said Hatteras.

"Now that's agreed upon," said the doctor, almost sorry at having raised the question.

"Now about the land we are on," continued Hatteras; "I think its name is not even on the most recent maps."

He looked at Altamont as he spoke. The American lowered his eyes and answered—

"You are mistaken again, Hatteras; it has a name already."

Hatteras was silent; his lips trembled.

"And what is its name?" asked the doctor, rather astonished at the American's affirmation.

"It seems to me, doctor, that every one has the right to name the land he is the first to discover. I certainly had the right——"

"But——" said Johnson, who did not like the coolness of the American.

"No one can pretend that the Porpoise has not been on this coast, even admitting that she came by land," said Altamont, looking at Hatteras.

"I don't allow that you have the right to name it under the circumstances. You did not discover it, I presume. Besides, what right have you to impose your conditions, when, but for us, you would be twenty feet underground?"

"And but for me and my ship," replied the American, quickly, "where should you be now? Dead of cold and hunger!"

"Come," said the doctor, trying to make peace, "be calm, I beg of you; there's a way of arranging everything. Listen to me."

"Mr. Hatteras may name all the other lands he discovers," said Altamont, "but this continent belongs to me. I will not even let it bear two names like Grinnell Land, which is called Prince Albert's Land too, because an American and an Englishman discovered it at the same time. Here it is different; my rights of priority are incontestable. No ship, before mine, has ever touched here. No human being, before me, has ever set foot on this continent; therefore I gave it a name, and it will keep it."

"What is the name?" asked the doctor.

"New America," answered Altamont.

Hatteras's fingers clenched on the table, but he made a violent effort, and contained his anger.

"Can you prove that an Englishman put foot on this soil before an American?" continued Altamont.

Johnson and Bell said nothing, though they were not less irritated than their captain by Altamont's manner. But they had nothing to answer. The doctor spoke again after a few minutes of painful silence.

"My friends," said he, "the first of all human laws is the law of justice; all others are contained in it

Let us be just. The priority of Altamont seems indisputable to me. We cannot deny it. That won't prevent England making further discoveries. Let us leave the name of New America to this continent. I suppose when Altamont named it he did not give any names to its bays, capes, and headlands, and I don't see why we should not call the bay 'Victoria Bay.'"

"Nor I," added Altamont, "provided we call the cape yonder 'Washington Cape.'"

"You might have chosen a name less offensive to English ears, sir," cried Hatteras, in a rage.

"But not one dearer to American ears," answered Altamont, proudly.

"Come, come!" said the doctor, who had begun to have hard work to keep the peace. "Let every country honour its great men, whether they be American or English. Now Altamont has chosen his, let us choose ours. If our captain——"

"Doctor," interrupted Hatteras, "as the land is American, I do not desire my name to be associated with it."

"Is your decision irrevocable?" asked the doctor.

"Quite," answered Hatteras.

The doctor did not insist.

"Well," said he, addressing the old sailor and the carpenter, "we at least can leave some trace of our passage here. I propose to call the island that we see three miles out 'Johnson Island' in honour of our boatswain."

"Oh, Mr. Clawbonny!" said Johnson, rather confused.

"And that mountain to the west we will call Bell Mount, if our carpenter consents."

"It is too much honour for me," answered Bell.

"It is only justice," said the doctor.

"Nothing could be better," said Altamont.

"Now we have to christen our fort," continued the doctor, "and we shall have no disagreement about that; it is neither to our Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria nor to Washington that we owe our present shelter, but to God, who, by bringing us together, has saved us all. Let us call it 'Fort Providence.'"

"An excellent name," said Altamont.

"Fort Providence," repeated Johnson; "that sounds well! When we come back from our excursions to the North, we shall pass Cape Washington to get to Victoria Bay, from there to Fort Providence, where we shall find rest and shelter in Doctor's House."

"That's settled, then," said the doctor. "Later on, as we make further discoveries, we shall have other names to give which I hope will cause no disagreement; for here, my friends, we must help and love each other; we represent humanity on this bit of coast. Do not let us give ourselves up to the detestable passions which plague society; let us be united so as to be strong and unshaken in adversity. Who knows what dangers Heaven has still in store for us before we get back to our country? Let us be five in one, and lay aside rivalries without cause. You hear me, Altamont? And you, Hatteras?"

The two men did not answer, but the doctor did as though they had. Then they changed the subject, and talked about the various hunting parties that were to be organised to renew and vary their provisions of meat; with the spring, hares, partridges, foxes, and even bears, would return; they resolved to take the first favourable day to send a party to reconnoitre New America.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXCURSION TO THE NORTH OF VICTORIA BAY.

THE next day, at sunrise, the doctor climbed the steep granite wall of rocks against which Doctor's House was built; it ended abruptly in a sort of cone. He reached the summit, and from there his view extended over a vast extent of irregular space, which seemed to be formed by some volcanic shock; an immense white sheet covered the land and sea, so that it was impossible to distinguish one from the other. When the doctor found out that this was the highest point in the neighbourhood he had an idea at which any one that knew him would not have been surprised. He thought of it as he went down, and had made himself master of it when he re-entered the snow-house, and told his companions about it.

"I have just thought that we might place a lighthouse on the top of the cone above our heads," he said to them.

'A lighthouse?" they cried.

"Yes; it would be doubly useful; it would guide us at night when we come back from our distant excursions, and would light up our table-land during the winter months."

"It would certainly be very useful," said Altamont; "but how shall you manage it?"

"With one of the Porpoise's lanterns."

"Granted; but what shall you feed it with? Are you going to use seal-oil?"

"No; it would not give light enough, it would scarcely pierce through the fog."

"Shall you make us some gas out of our coal?"

"No, that light wouldn't be strong enough either and it would waste our coal."

"Then," said Altamont, "I don't see——"

"As for me," answered Johnson, "since the mercury bullet, the ice-lens, and the building of Fort Providence, I believe Mr. Clawbonny capable of anything."

"Well," continued Altamont, "what sort of a light-house do you mean to use?"

"An electric one, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say; have you not a pile of Bunsen in perfect condition on board the Porpoise?"

"Yes," answered the American.

"I suppose you took it to make some experiments with, for it is all complete, the conducting wires and acids and everything necessary to set it going. We can easily get light from that. We shall see better, and it won't cost anything."

"That will be splendid!" cried Johnson, "and the less time we lose——"

"Well, the materials are there, and it will only take us an hour to raise a column of ice ten feet high; that will be quite enough."

The doctor went out, and his companions followed him to the summit of the cone; the column was soon

built, and crowned by one of the ship's lanterns. Then the doctor placed the conducting wires to the pile, which he put in the snow-house to keep it from freezing by the heat of the stoves. From thence the wires went up to the lantern of the lighthouse. It was soon done, and they waited for sunset to see the effect. At night two pieces of coal, placed at a proper distance from each other in the lantern, were brought together, and an intense light, which the wind could neither moderate nor extinguish, sprang out from the lantern. It was marvellous to see the light rivalling the whiteness of the plains, and throwing shadows of all the surrounding projections. Johnson clapped his hands.

"Mr. Clawbonny makes sunshine now," he said.

"One must know how to do a little of everything," said the doctor, modestly.

The cold put an end to the general admiration, and they all went and covered themselves up in their blankets.

After that their life was regularly organised. During the following days—from the 15th to the 20th of April—the weather was very uncertain; the temperature went down twenty degrees all at once, and sometimes it snowed in gusts, sometimes the wind was so cold and dry that it was impossible to move out. However, on the Saturday the wind fell, and made an excursion possible; they resolved, therefore, to give up that day to hunting in order to renew their provisions. At daybreak, Altamont, the doctor, and Bell, each armed with a double-barrelled gun, with sufficient ammunition, an axe, and a snow-knife in case a shelter might become necessary, set out under a clouded sky. During their absence Hatteras was to reconnoitre the coast. The

doctor took care to set the lighthouse going; its rays quite rivalled those of the sun, for electric light, which is equal to that of 3,000 wax candles, or 300 jets of gas, is the only one that can bear any comparison with that of the sun. The air was cold, dry, and quiet. The sportsmen made for Cape Washington; the frozen snow was easy to walk upon. In half-an-hour they had accomplished the three miles which lie between the Cape and Fort Providence. Dick accompanied them.

The coast got lower towards the east, and the high summits of Victoria Bay were lower on the north. That made the doctor think that New America might only be an island after all, but then there was no question of determining its configuration. The sportsmen went along the sea-coast, and soon got over the ground. They found no traces of habitation, not even a hut. They made thus about 15 miles during the first three hours, eating whilst marching; but their hunt threatened to be without result. They scarcely saw the trace of a hare, a fox, or a wolf. However, a few snow-birds fluttering about announced the returning spring, and with it that of the Arctic animals. The three companions had been obliged to go down inland to get round rocky peaks and deep ravines which were connected with Bell Mount, but after a short delay they regained the coast; the ice-blocks were not yet separated. Far from that, the sea was as frozen as ever; however, traces of seals announced the first visits of these amphibians to the surface of the ice-field. It was evident from the large footmarks and recent breaking of the ice that several of them had been recently on land. These animals are very fond of the sun's rays, and they stretch themselves on the coast to lie in

their beneficent heat. The doctor pointed out the fact to his companions.

"Let us notice this place carefully," he said; "it is very possible that when once the summer is come we shall find seals here by the hundred; they are easy to get at in these unfrequented regions. But we must take care not to frighten them, or they will disappear as if by magic to return no more; awkward fishermen have often attacked them in a mass with loud shouts and cries, and have often lost their cargoes by so doing."

"Are they only hunted for their skins and oil?" asked Bell.

"By Europeans, yes; but the Esquimaux eat them; they live on them, and the pieces of seal, which they mix with blood and grease, are not very appetising. But, after all, there's a way of doing it, and I engage to cut a few fine cutlets which, if you can once get accustomed to the colour, you won't disdain."

"Well, I'll engage to eat seal-flesh as much as you like, Mr. Clawbonny," answered Bell.

"You mean as much as you like, Bell. But you would never equal the voracity of a Greenlander, who consumes from ten to fifteen pounds of seal-flesh a day."

"Fifteen pounds!" cried Bell. "What stomachs!"

"Polar stomachs," answered the doctor—"prodigious stomachs which dilate at will, and, I may add, contract the same, for they support scarcity as easily as abundance. At the beginning of his dinner an Esquimaux is thin; at the end of it he is fat and hardly recognisable. It is true that his dinner often lasts all day."

"Evidently," said Altamont, "such voracity is peculiar to the inhabitants of cold countries."

"I believe it is," answered the doctor; "in the Arctic regions you must eat a great deal; it is one of the conditions not only of strength but of existence. The Hudson Bay Company gives every man eight pounds of meat, twelve pounds of fish, or two pounds of pemmican a day."

"Enough, I should think," said Bell.

"It is not so much as any one might suppose, and an Indian stuffed like that wouldn't do as much work as an Englishman fed on his pound of beef and pint of beer."

"Then, Mr. Clawbonny, everything is for the best."

"Certainly; but still an Esquimaux meal may well astonish us. When Sir John Ross was in Boothia Land he was always astonished at the voracity of his guides; he relates somewhere that two men—two, you hear—devoured in one day a quarter of an ox· they cut the meat into long strips, which they put in their throats; they cut off a piece close to their lips, and, their mouths full, passed it to their companions. Well, these gluttons swallowed pieces of meat that hung to the ground till they had all disappeared little by little; they ate like boa-constrictors, full length on the ground."

"Ha!" cried Bell, "what disgusting brutes!"

'Every one has his own way of dining," said the American, philosophically.

"Happily," replied the doctor.

"Well," said Altamont, "as the question of eating is so important in these latitudes, I am not astonished that they are always talking about it in accounts of Arctic voyages."

"Yes," said the doctor, "I have noticed that too; it is not only because they are obliged to have so much food, but also because it is so difficult to procure."

"However," said Altamont, "in the coldest parts of Norway the peasants don't require to eat so much; some milk, eggs, and birch-bark bread, sometimes some salmon, never any meat, and yet they are pretty robust."

"That is a question of constitution," observed the doctor, "and I could explain it. However, I believe that a second or third generation of Norwegian colonists in Greenland would finish by eating like Greenlanders. Even we should end by living like the Greenlanders, and should become regular gluttons."

Mr. Clawbonny makes me feel quite hungry," said Bell.

"Not me," added Altamont; "it makes me feel a horror of seal-flesh. Why, I believe we are going to make the experience. Isn't that a seal yonder?"

"It is a walrus," said the doctor. "Hush!"

The large amphibian was about two hundred yards from the sportsmen; he was rolling himself voluptuously in the pale rays of the sun. The three separated, so as to shut in the animal and cut off his retreat; they arrived thus at a few paces from him, and hiding behind some hummocks they fired; the walrus turned over, still full of vigour; he crushed the blocks of ice, and wanted to run away; but Altamont attacked him with his axe, and succeeded in cutting off his dorsal fins. The walrus made a desperate resistance, but several more shots finished him, and he was stretched lifeless on the ice-field, red with his blood. It was a fine animal, and measured fifteen feet from the extremity of its nose

to its tail; it would certainly have given several barrels of oil. The doctor cut off the most savoury parts of the flesh, and left the rest to the ravens, which at that season of the year were already to be seen.

Night began to draw in, and they thought of getting back to Fort Providence; the sky had become quite clear, and the stars shone out—waiting for the moon.

"Come, let's go back," said the doctor; "we haven't done much to boast of, but as long as the hunter takes home his supper he can't complain. We must take the shortest way, and try not to lose ourselves. The stars will guide us."

However, in these countries, where the Pole star is above the travellers' heads, it is not so easy to be guided by the stars; happily the moon and the great constellations came to help the doctor to find the way. To make it shorter, he resolved to cut across the land instead of winding round the coast; it was more direct but less sure, and after about half-an-hour's walking the little troup was completely lost. They debated about whether they had not better build a snow-house, and wait for daybreak; but the doctor feared that Hatteras and Johnson would be uneasy, and insisted upon going on.

"Dick is guiding us," he said, "and he is sure to know the way; his instinct is surer than a mariner's compass. Let us follow him."

Dick went on, and they followed him. Soon a light appeared on the horizon; it could not be mistaken for a star as it shone through the low mists.

"There is our lighthouse," said the doctor.

"Do you think it is, Mr. Clawbonny?" said the carpenter.

"I am sure it is. Come along."

As the travellers advanced the light became more intense, and they were soon enveloped in its rays. It threw gigantic shadows behind them on to the carpet of snow. They quickened their pace, and half-an-hour after they were climbing up the declivity of Fort Providence.

CHAPTER IX.

COLD AND HEAT.

HATTERAS and Johnson were anxiously expecting the sportsmen, and they were delighted to get back to their comfortable dwelling. The temperature had singularly lowered during the evening, and the outside thermometer marked 73° below zero. The sportsmen were quite worn out and almost frozen; happily there was a good fire in each stove, and they were ready to cook the produce of the hunt; the doctor transformed himself into a cook and grilled some walrus cutlets. At nine o'clock the five men sat down to a comfortable supper.

"Although I shall risk passing for an Esquimaux, I must say that meals are the principal things in a wintering."

Each of the guests had his mouth too full to answer the carpenter immediately. The doctor nodded his assent. The walrus cutlets were declared excellent, and they were all eaten, which was the best proof. At dessert the doctor prepared his coffee as usual; he let no one else have a hand in it; he made it on the table with a spirit-lamp, and poured it out boiling. He drank it so hot himself that Altamont said to him—

"You will set fire to yourself, doctor."

"There is no danger," answered the doctor.

"Your palate must be lined with brass," said Johnson.

"I drink my coffee at a temperature of 130°," said the doctor, "and I engage you to do the same."

"A hundred and thirty degrees!" cried Altamont; "but no one could bear their hands in liquid at that heat!"

"That is evident, for the hand can only bear 122° in water; but the palate and the tongue are not so sensitive as the hand, and can bear greater heat."

"You astonish me," said Altamont.

"Well, I'll soon convince you." And the doctor, taking the thermometer of the sitting-room, plunged it into his boiling coffee; he waited till the instrument marked 130° only, and then drank his coffee with evident satisfaction.

Bell tried to imitate him, but burnt himself in the process.

"It is because you are not used to it," said the doctor.

"Can you tell us the highest temperatures that the human body can bear?" asked Altamont of the doctor.

"There are some very curious facts on the subject," answered the doctor. "I remember one or two that will prove to you that we can get used to anything, even to not being roasted in an atmosphere that would roast a beef steak. It is related that servant-girls at the common oven of the town of La Rochefoucauld, in France, could remain ten minutes in the oven in a temperature of 300°—that is to say, 89° higher than boiling water—whilst apples and meat were cooking round them."

"What women!" cried Altamont.

"Another example which cannot be doubted is that of nine of our countrymen, in 1774, Fordyce, Banks, Solander, Blagdon, Home, North, Lord Seaforth, and Captain Philips, who supported an atmosphere of 295° whilst eggs and roast beef were cooking round them."

"And they were English!" said Bell, proud of his country.

"Oh, Americans would have done better than that."

"They would have been roasted," said the doctor, laughing.

"Why not?" answered the American.

"Anyway, they have not tried it, so I keep to my countrymen. I have heard of a case which would be quite incredible if we could doubt the veracity of the witnesses. The Duke of Raguse and Dr. Jung, a Frenchman and an Austrian, saw a Turk plunge into a bath which marked 170°."

"But it seems to me," said Johnson, "that he was not so extraordinary as the servants of the common oven or our countrymen."

"There is a great difference between plunging into hot air or hot water; hot air causes perspiration, which preserves the flesh from heat, but in hot water we do not perspire, and it scalds us. The extreme limit of heat for a bath is generally fixed at 107°. The Turk must have been an extraordinary man to bear such a heat."

"I am sure that Mr. Altamont will say an American could have done as much," said Johnson, laughing.

"There is little difference between men of different races when they are placed in the same circumstances," said the doctor, "whatever food they eat; and what is

more, the temperature of the human body is about the same at the Equator as at the Pole."

"Do you mean to say that our natural heat is the same here as in England?"

"There is little difference," answered the doctor; "as to the other mammalia, their temperature is generally higher than that of man. The horse's natural heat is about the same, so is that of the hare, elephant, porpoise, and tiger; but cats, squirrels, rats, panthers, sheep, oxen, dogs, monkeys, bucks, and goats attain 103°; and, lastly, the most favoured of all, pigs, surpass 104°."

"It is humiliating for us," said Altamont.

"The amphibians come next, and fish; their temperature varies much according to the water. A serpent has scarcely 86°, a frog 70°, and a shark a degree and a half lower; insects appear to have the same temperature as water and air."

"All that is very fine and good to know," said Hatteras, who had not spoken before, "but we talk as though we had tropical heat to brave. Would it not be more opportune to talk about the cold, to know what we are liable to be exposed to, and what have been the lowest temperatures known up till now?"

"The captain is right," said Johnson.

"There have been a great number of memorable winters in Europe," said the doctor; "it seems as if the more rigorous were destined to return periodically about every forty years, which epoch coincides with the greatest apparition of the sun's spots. In the winter of 1364 the Rhine was frozen up to Arles; in 1408 the Danube was frozen the whole length of its course, and the wolves crossed the Cattegat dry-shod; the Adriatic

and the Mediterranean were frozen at Venice, Cette, and Marseilles in 1509, and the Baltic was still frozen on the 10th of April; in 1608 all the cattle perished in England; in 1789 the Thames was frozen to Gravesend; the French have a terrible remembrance of the winter of 1813; lastly, 1829 was the earliest and longest winter of the nineteenth century. So much for Europe."

"But here, in the Polar circle, what degree of temperature is the most we are exposed to?" asked Altamont.

"I believe that we have experienced the greatest cold that has ever been observed," answered the doctor; "the alcohol thermometer registered one day 72° below zero, and, if I remember rightly, the lowest temperatures met with by Arctic travellers have been 61° at Melville Island, 65° at Port Felix, and 70° at Fort Reliance."

"Yes," said Hatteras, "this terrible winter has spoiled all, and stopped my plans."

"You were stopped by it?" said Altamont, looking fixedly at the captain.

"Yes, in our voyage westward," the doctor made haste to answer.

"Then," said Altamont, returning to the conversation, "the maximum and minimum of temperatures in which man can live are separated by about two hundred degrees."

"Yes," answered the doctor; "a thermometer exposed to the open air, and sheltered from all reverberation, never registers more than 135° above zero, and in the greatest cold it never descends below 72°. So, you see, we can make ourselves comfortable."

"But" said Johnson, "suppose the sun was to go out suddenly, would not the earth go much colder."

"The sun won't go out," answered the doctor; "but if it did the temperature would not go lower than the point I have indicated. A French *savant*, Fourrier, has proved that if the earth was placed in an atmosphere deprived of all heat, the intensity of cold at the Pole would be considerably more than we have experienced, and that there would be a formidable difference of temperature between day and night."

"Is not the temperature of America lower than that of any other country in the world, doctor?" asked Altamont.

"Yes, and even an American cannot be proud of that," answered the doctor, laughing.

"How is that explained?"

"Explanations have been given, but they are not satisfactory. Halley thought that a comet had once come into oblique contact with the earth, and changed the position of her axis of rotation—that is to say, of her Poles; he thought that the North Pole was formerly situated in Hudson's Bay, and was, by the shock, carried farther east, and the countries of the ancient Pole, frozen for so long, kept colder, and that long centuries of sunshine have not yet warmed them.'

"Do you admit that theory?"

"Not for an instant, for the western side of America has a much higher temperature than the eastern. The only explanation is that there are isotherm lines differing from the terrestrial parallels."

"I like hearing you talk about the cold in our present circumstances," said Johnson to the doctor.

"Yes we can bring practice to the help of theory.

These countries are a vast laboratory where experiments may be made on low temperatures; only always be on your guard. If any part of your body freezes, rub it immediately with snow to restore the circulation of the blood; if you come near the fire take care, for you may burn your hands or feet without perceiving it; that would necessitate amputation, and we must try to leave no part of ourselves in these boreal countries. And now, my friends, I think we had better recruit our strength by going to bed and to sleep. Who guards the stove?"

"I do," answered Bell.

"Well, take care not to let the fire get lower, for it is wretchedly cold to-night."

"Never fear, Mr. Clawbonny; it is too cold to forget the fire; but see, the sky doesn't look cold!"

"What a magnificent aurora borealis!" said the doctor, going to the window.

He was never tired of contemplating these cosmic phenomena, to which his companions now paid little attention; he had remarked that their apparition always preceded perturbations of the magnetic needle, and he prepared observations on this subject for his "Weather Book." Soon, while Bell watched near the stove, they were all sleeping the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER X.

THE PLEASURES OF WINTERING.

LIFE at the Pole is uniformly monotonous. Man is entirely at the mercy of the caprices of the atmosphere, and the greater part of the time it is impossible to go out. Long months pass thus while the winterers have only a mole's existence.

The next day the thermometer sank a few degrees, and eddies of snow absorbed all the daylight. The doctor saw that he was nailed to the house, with nothing to do except to clear the entrance lobby every hour and repolish the ice-walls, which the heat of the interior made damp; but the snow-house was built with extreme solidity, and the snow made it still more so by adding to the thickness of the walls. The stores were equally weatherproof. All the objects taken from the ship had been placed in the greatest order in these "merchant docks," as the doctor called them. Although these storehouses were only situated at sixty feet from the house, when there was a drift it was impossible to go to them, so that a certain quantity of provisions had to be kept in the kitchen for daily use.

The precaution of unloading the Porpoise had been opportune. The ship was subjected to a

slow but irresistible pressure which crushed her little by little; it was evident that nothing could be done with her pieces However, the doctor hoped to be able to make a long-boat out of her to get back to England; but the moment was not come for beginning to build one. For the greater part of the time the five winterers were quite idle. Hatteras was always thinking, stretched upon his bed; Altamont drank or slept, and the doctor took care to let them alone, for he was in continual dread of a quarrel. These two men rarely spoke to one another. During meals prudent Mr. Clawbonny always took care to lead the conversation to subjects that did not call out their self-love, but he had a great deal to do to keep down the sensitiveness of the two captains. He tried as much as possible to instruct, interest, and amuse his companions; when he put his travelling notes in order he told his companions about the subjects of history, geography, or meteorology which the situation suggested; he presented things to their minds in a way at once philosophic and amusing, taking care to let each incident teach a salutory lesson; his inexhaustible memory never failed him; he reminded his auditors of the facts they had all witnessed, and clinched his theories by personal arguments.

It may be said that this worthy man was the soul of the little community, a soul from which radiated truth and justice. His companions had absolute confidence in him; even Hatteras was fond of him; he made the existence of the five men, abandoned at six degrees from the Pole, seem quite natural; when the doctor spoke they could fancy themselves listening to him in his study at Liverpool. It was, however, a very different situation from that of shipwrecked mariners thrown on

to the islands of the Pacific, Crusoes whose fascinating history almost always excites the reader's envy. There a prodigal soil, an opulent Nature offer a thousand varied resources; in those fine countries a little intelligence and work procures all material necessities; hunting and fishing suffices for all the needs of man; trees grow for him, caverns open to shelter him, brooks flow to satisfy his thirst; magnificent foliage shades him from the heat of the sun, and the terrible cold never threatens him in the mild winters. A single seed thrown carelessly into the ground produced a harvest a month later. Every pleasure that can be tasted outside of society may be found there. Besides, these charitable islands are on the highway of ships, and the shipwrecked can always hope for deliverance, and patiently wait for it.

But here on the coast of New America what a difference! The doctor often thought of the comparison, but he kept it to himself; his greatest trouble was being obliged to be idle. He ardently desired the return of the thaw to begin his excursions again; but he felt afraid as he looked forward to it, for he foresaw grave altercations between Hatteras and Altamont. If ever they got to the Pole, what would happen through the rivalry of these two men? He wanted to reconcile them beforehand, but his task was difficult, for the one was penetrated with insular arrogance, and the other with the speculation, audacity, and conceit of his nation. When the doctor thought of the implacable competition of men, of their national rivalries, he did not shrug his shoulders, but he grew sad over human weakness. He often talked about it to Johnson; the old sailor and he were of the same opinion on the

matter; they deliberated on the best thing to do, and foresaw many complications for the future. However, the bad weather kept on; leaving Fort Providence, even for an hour, was not to be dreamed of. They were obliged to stay night and day in the snow-house. Every one was dull but the doctor, who found means to be busy about something.

"Is there no means of amusing oneself?" said Altamont one evening. "It is not living to be shut up all the winter like reptiles."

"That is true," answered the doctor; "but, unfortunately, we are not numerous enough to organise any system of recreation."

"Then you think that if we were more numerous we should have less to do to fight against this idleness?"

"Certainly, for complete crews have passed the winter in these northern regions, and have found means not to be dull."

"Well, I should like to know how they managed it," said Altamont; "they did not ask each other riddles, I suppose."

"They had two great helps to recreation, the press and a theatre."

"What! they had a newspaper!" said the American.

"They acted!" cried Bell.

"Yes; and it amused them a good deal too. Captain Parry proposed these two ways of amusement to his crew, and the proposition had an enormous success."

"Well," said Johnson, "I wish I'd been there; it must have been curious."

"It was both curious and amusing, Johnson; Lieutenant Beechey was made manager of the theatre, and Captain Sabine chief editor of the *Winter Chronicle*."

"A good title," said Altamont.

"The newspaper appeared every Monday, from November 18th, 1819, till March 20th, 1820. It reported all the incidents of wintering, the hunts, general news, accidents, meteorology, temperature; it registered jokes, more or less witty, and if it did not contain the wit of Sterne nor the sensation articles of the *Daily Telegraph*, it amused the crew; its readers were easy to please, and the trade of journalist was never easier."

"I should like to see some extracts from that gazette, doctor," said Altamont; "its articles must have been frozen from the first till the last."

"No, they were not," answered the doctor; "they would not have been appreciated by the Liverpool Philosophical Society or the London Literary Institute, but they were sufficient for crews buried beneath the snow. Should you like to judge for yourselves?"

"You don't mean to say you can remember——'

"No, but you had *Parry's Voyages* on board the Porpoise, and if you like I can read you what he says."

"Yes, do!" cried the doctor's companions.

The doctor fetched from the parlour cupboard the work in question, and he soon found the passage he wanted.

"Here are some extracts from the *Winter Chronicle*. It is a letter addressed to the editor":—

"We have all been greatly pleased with your proposition to establish a newspaper. I am convinced that, under your management, it will procure us much amusement and will lighten the load of our hundred days of darkness. The interest I take in it has made

me notice the effect produced by your announcement upon our society, and I can assure you, to use the expression consecrated by the London press, 'it made a profound sensation on the public.' The day after the appearance of your prospectus the demand for ink was quite unusual and without precedent. Our green tablecloths were immediately covered with the cuttings of quills, to the great detriment of one of our servants, who ran one under his nail when he shook them. I know also, on good authority, that Sergeant Martin has had no less than nine penknives to sharpen. All our tables are groaning under the unusual weight of writing-desks which had not seen daylight for at least two months, and they say that the depths of the hold have been opened several times to give issue to many reams of paper that did not expect to be troubled in their repose so soon. I must not forget to tell you that I have some suspicion that several articles in no way original will be put into your box. I can affirm that not later than yesterday evening an author was seen bending over his desk, holding open with one hand a volume of the *Spectator*, whilst with the other he was melting his frozen ink by the light of a lamp! I need not recommend you to be on your guard against such tricks; we must not let our *Winter Chronicle* contain what our ancestors read at their breakfasts more than a century ago."

"Good," said Altamont, when the doctor had finished reading; "there is true humour in that, and the fellow that wrote it had his wits about him."

"Yes," said the doctor; "listen; here is something amusing."

"Wanted, a middle-aged woman of respectable character to help to dress the ladies of the company of the 'Theatre Royal' of Northern Georgia. She will receive a good salary, and as much tea and beer as she likes. Apply to the theatre committee. N.B.—A widow preferred."

"Our countrymen were not hard to please," said Johnson.

"Did they get the widow?" asked Bell.

"I suppose so, for here is an answer addressed to the theatre committee":—

"GENTLEMEN,—I am a widow, and I can have the highest references as to my morals and capabilities. But before taking charge of the dress of the actresses of your theatre, I want to know if they will keep their breeches on, and if I can have the assistance of your vigorous sailors to lace their stays tightly enough. In that case you may rely on your servant,—A. B.

"P.S.—Could you not substitute brandy for small beer?"

"Bravo!" cried Altamont. "I can fancy the lady's-maids lacing with the windlass. The companions of Captain Parry were jolly fellows."

"Like all those who have attained their end," answered Hatteras.

He threw this remark in the midst of the conversation, and then fell again into his usual silence. The doctor did not wish to discuss the subject, and made haste to go on with his reading.

"Here," said he, "is a picture of Arctic tribulations;

it might be varied infinitely, but some of the observations are just, as you will see":—

"To go out in the morning to breathe the air, and setting foot outside the vessel, to take a cold bath in the cook's hole."

"To set out for a hunting excursion, to approach a superb reindeer, to take good aim, and when you try to fire to find that the priming is damp."

"To set out with a piece of bread in your pocket, and when you get hungry to find it so hardened by the frost that it may break your teeth but cannot be broken by them."

"To leave the table in a hurry on learning that a wolf is in sight, and on coming back to find that your dinner has been eaten by the cat."

"To come back from an excursion in profound and useful meditation, and to be suddenly awakened by the embraces of a bear."

"You see, my friends," said the doctor, "we could add to this list of Polar troubles, but when we are obliged to submit to them it becomes a pleasure to record them."

"Well, the *Winter Chronicle* is an amusing paper, and I wish we could subscribe for it!"

"Suppose we try to establish one?" said Johnson.

"We are scarcely numerous enough to be the editorial staff," said the doctor, "and we should have no readers."

'And no spectators if we thought of acting," answered Altamont.

"Tell us about Captain Parry's theatre, Mr. Clawbonny," said Johnson; "did they produce new plays?"

"Yes; at first two volumes found on board the Hecla were acted till the plays were quite worn out, as representations took place every fortnight; then authors set to to improvise, and Parry himself composed a comedy for Christmas that had an immense success; it was called *The North-West Passage; or, The End of the Voyage.*"

"A famous title," said Altamont; "but I acknowledge that if I had the play to write I should not know how to make it end."

"You are right," said Bell; "who knows how it will all end?"

"What is the good of thinking of the last act while the first go well? Let us leave it to Providence, my friends. The end is in the hands of the Author of all things; He will help us out of the difficulty."

"Let us go and dream about all that," answered Johnson; "it is late, and I am sleepy."

"You are in a great hurry, old fellow," said the doctor.

"I like my bed, Mr. Clawbonny. I have good dreams; I always dream about warm countries, so that really I pass half my life under the Equator and the other half at the Pole."

"You have a happy constitution," said Altamont.

"Well," answered the doctor, "it would be cruel to make poor Johnson wait. His tropical sun is waiting for him. Let us go to bed."

CHAPTER XI.

ALARMING TRACES.

DURING the night from the 26th to the 27th of April the weather changed: the thermometer sank considerably, and the inhabitants of Doctor's House perceived it by the cold that penetrated under their blankets. Altamont, who was on guard near the fire, took care to keep it up, and he was obliged to stock it with fuel to keep the interior temperature up to 50° above zero. This cooling of the atmosphere announced the end of the tempest, and the doctor rejoiced at it; their accustomed occupations would be taken up again, hunting excursions and surveys of the land; it would put an end to the idle solitude during which the most amiable tempers get peevish.

The next morning the doctor got up early, and opened up a road across the ice piled up to the cone of the lighthouse. The wind had veered north; the atmosphere was pure; long white sheets of snow offered a firm carpet to the foot. The five companions had soon left Doctor's House; their first work was to clear the house of the frozen masses which encumbered it; the table-land was no longer recognisable; it would have been impossible to discover the least vestige of a

habitation ; the tempest had filled up the inequalities of the ground, and had levelled it everywhere ; the ground had risen at least fifteen feet.

They were obliged to sweep away the snow, and give to the edifice a rather more architectural form. The work was not difficult, and after the ice had been taken away the walls were soon reduced to their ordinary thickness by using the snow-knife. At the end of two hours of constant work the granite foundation re-appeared, and access to the provision and powder stores became practicable. But as in such an uncertain climate the same weather might begin again any day, they made a fresh provision of eatables, which they transferred to the kitchen. The need of fresh meat began to be felt, and the hunters prepared to set out. The end of April is not the season of the Polar spring ; it was six weeks off yet ; the rays of the sun were not yet strong enough to bring out the rare flora of these regions. They feared that both birds and quadrupeds must be still scarce; however, a hare, a few brace of ptarmigans, or even a young fox, would be acceptable on the table of Doctor's House, and the hunters set out with zeal.

The doctor, Altamont, and Bell took upon themselves the task of exploring the country. Altamont was a clever shot and a good hunter, though he did not forget to boast of his exploits; Dick was his equal in his way, and less conceited. The three companions climbed the eastern side of the cone, and made their way across immense white plains ; but they had not gone more than a couple of miles from the fort before they met with numerous footprints of animals ; they continued from thence down to the shore of Victoria Bay, and

appeared to make a circle round Fort Providence. When the hunters had ascertained so much they looked at one another.

"Well," said the doctor, "there is no mistaking those footprints."

"No," answered Bell, "they are the prints of bears."

"Excellent game," said Altamont, "but to-day it has one fault."

"What?" asked the doctor.

"Abundance," answered the American.

"What do you mean?" said Bell.

"I mean that there are five distinct traces of bears, and five bears are a lot for five men."

"Are you sure of what you say?" said the doctor.

"Look and judge for yourself; here is a print unlike this one; the claws are wider apart. Here is the print of a smaller bear; compare them attentively, and you will see there are five."

"It's true enough," said Bell, after an attentive examination.

"Then," said the doctor, "we must not be uselessly rash, but very careful; these animals are famishing after their rigorous winter; they may be extremely dangerous; and as there's no doubt about their numbers——"

"Nor their intentions," added the American.

"Do you think they have discovered our presence on this coast?"

"Certainly, unless we have hit upon a bears' lair; but that does not explain their footprints in a circle. See, they arrived by the south-east, they stopped there, and began to make their examination of the ground."

"You are right," said the doctor; "and they have certainly been here in the night."

"And other nights too," answered Altamont, "only the snow covered their traces."

"No," answered the doctor; "it is more probable that they waited for the tempest to end, and, famished, they went to the coast of the bay in the hopes of surprising seals, and on their way they scented us out."

"That must be it," answered Altamont; "besides, it is easy to see if they come back to-night."

"How so?" asked Bell.

"By effacing their footprints on part of their line, and if to-morrow we find fresh ones it will be very evident that Fort Providence is the object of their promenade."

"Well," answered the doctor, "we shall at least know what to expect."

The three hunters set to work, and by raking the snow they soon obliterated the footprints for the space of a hundred yards.

"It's queer that those beasts could smell us at such a distance," said Bell; "we have not burnt anything greasy that might have attracted them."

"Bears have a piercing view and a very keen smell," said the doctor; "besides, they are very intelligent, almost the most intelligent animals there are, and they have scented something unusual here."

"They may have come as far as the table-land during the tempest," said Bell.

"Then why should they have stopped at this limit?" answered the American.

"Yes, that is unanswerable," replied the doctor, "and they will make their circle smaller and smaller on their look-out for Fort Providence."

"We shall soon see," answered Altamont.

"Now let us go on with our march," said the doctor, "but keep a sharp look-out."

This the hunters did; they expected to see some bear come out from behind an ice-hill, and they even took some of the blocks fo bears, which are as white; but to their great satisfaction they met with nothing. They came back at last half way up the cone, and looked all round from Cape Washington to Johnson Island, but without result. They saw nothing; all was immovable and white; not the slightest sound was heard, and they re-entered the house. When Hatteras and Johnson heard of the adventure, it was resolved to watch during the night with the most scrupulous attention. Night came; nothing touched its splendid calm; nothing was heard which might signal the approach of danger. The next day, at daybreak, Hatteras and his companions went well armed to look at the state of the snow; they found the same traces as the day before, but nearer; it was evident that the enemy prepared to besiege Fort Providence.

"They have opened a second parallel, 'said the doctor.

"And they have made a step forward," added Altamont. "Look at these steps advancing towards the table-land; they are those of a powerful animal."

"Yes, they gain on us little by little," said Johnson; "it's evident they mean to attack us."

"There is no doubt about that, answered the doctor; "we must avoid showing ourselves; we are not enough to fight with success."

"But where can the wretched bears be?" cried Bell.

"Behind some icebergs to the east; we must not risk our lives."

"And the hunting?" said Altamont.

"We must put it off for some days," answered the doctor. "Let us again obliterate the nearest footprints, and we shall see to-morrow if they are renewed. By that means we shall know our enemies' manœuvres."

The doctor's advice was followed, and they came back to garrison themselves in the fort; the presence of these terrible animals prevented any excursion. They attentively watched the neighbourhood of Victoria Bay. The lighthouse was taken down; it was of no use for the moment, and might attract the attention of the animals; the lamp and electric wires were put away in the house, then they began, in turns, to watch on the upper table-land. These new enemies could not be attacked by so small a number of men; the life of each was too precious to risk it in an unequal combat. Perhaps the bears would be put off the track, and then there would be some chance of meeting them singly in their excursions, and of attacking them with some chance of success. But no one was sorry to have something to do, if only to keep sentry over the enemy. The day of the 28th of April passed without signs of the bears. The next day, when they went to look for the traces, exclamations of astonishment broke from them. There was not a single trace.

"Good!" cried Altamont. "The bears are off the track; they are not persevering, and were tired of waiting! They are gone! A pleasant journey to them! and now for a hunt!"

"Who knows?" said the doctor. "I think we had better wait another day. It is certain that they did not come last night, at least on this side——"

"Let us go round the table-land," said Altamont, "and then we shall know more about it."

This advice was followed, but within a radius of two miles not the least trace was seen.

"Now let's go hunting," said the impatient American.

"Let us wait till to-morrow," answered the doctor.

"Very well," answered Altamont, who could scarcely contain his impatience.

They went back to the fort; but, like the day before, they relieved each other as sentries on the higher table-land. When Altamont's turn came he went to relieve Bell on the summit of the cone. As soon as he was gone, Hatteras called his companions to him. The doctor left his note-book, and Johnson his cooking-stove. Any one would have thought that Hatteras was going to speak of the dangers of the situation; he did not even think of them.

"I want to take advantage of the absence of that American to speak about business," he said; "there are things that have nothing to do with him, and that I will not let him meddle with."

Johnson and the doctor looked at one another, not knowing what the captain was driving at.

"I want," said he, "to come to an understanding with you about our future prospects."

"Yes," said the doctor; "now we are alone let us settle them."

"In a month's time," continued Hatteras, "or six weeks' at the latest, the weather will be fit for long excursions. Have you thought of what would be best to attempt during the summer?"

"What are your views, captain?" asked Johnson.

"You know that as far as I am concerned my life is devoted to the end I have in view. I suppose neither of you mean to go back——"

A silence followed this hint.

"If I go alone," said Hatteras, "I shall go as far as the North Pole; we are three hundred and sixty miles from it at the most. No men have ever been so near it, and I shall not lose such an opportunity without attempting even the impossible. What do you mean to do about it?"

"The same as you," answered the doctor, quickly.

"And you, Johnson?"

"I shall do what the doctor does."

"And you, Bell?"

"Captain," answered the carpenter, "it is true we have no family expecting us back to England, but it's our country after all. Don't you think of going back?"

"Yes, when we have discovered the Pole. The difficulties will get less instead of greater, for by going farther north we get away from the coldest parts of the globe. We have fuel and provisions for a long time. There is nothing to stop us, and we should be wrong not to go on now."

"Very well, we are all with you, captain," answered Bell.

"I never had any doubts of you. We shall succeed, and England will have all the glory of our success."

"But we have an American with us," said Johnson.

"I know it," said Hatteras, with a look of anger.

"We can't leave him here," said the doctor.

"No, we can't," answered Hatteras, mechanically; "but if he come who will command?"

"Why you, captain, of course."

"But suppose the Yankee refuses to obey my orders?"

"I do not think he will," said Johnson; "but if he does——'

"He will have to do with me," said Hatteras.

"How shall we travel?" said the doctor.

"Along the coast as much as possible," answered Hatteras. "But if we find an open sea, as we probably shall?"

Hatteras was evidently embarrassed.

"We might perhaps build a long-boat with the remains of the Porpoise," said Bell.

"Never!" cried Hatteras, violently.

"Why?" said Johnson.

The doctor shook his head; he understood the captain's repugnance.

"A long-boat made from the wood of an American ship would be American," continued Hatteras.

"But, captain——" began Johnson.

The doctor made him a sign not to insist at present. The question must be reserved till a more opportune moment; the doctor did not share Hatteras's repugnance, though he understood it, and he meant to make the captain change his decision. He turned the conversation, spoke of the possibility of going north along the coast to the Pole, and thus kept the conversation away from dangerous topics until it was interrupted by Altamont's return. The American had seen nothing, and the night passed quietly. It was evident that the bears had disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ICE PRISON.

THE next day a hunting party was organised, composed of Hatteras, Altamont, and the carpenter; the alarming traces had disappeared, and the bears had decidedly renounced their plan of attack, either from fear of their unknown enemies, or because nothing new had revealed the presence of animated beings on the snow-plains. During the absence of the three hunters the doctor was to go as far as Johnson Island to see the state of the ice, and to make some hydrographical observations. The cold was intense, but the five men bore it well: their epidermis had got used to the temperature. Johnson was to remain at Doctor's House, and guard the dwelling. The three hunters made their preparations for departure; they were each armed with a double-barrelled gun; they took a small provision of pemmican in case night should surprise them before the end of their excursion; they also took their snow-knives—a tool indispensable in these regions—and they stuck an axe in the belt of their buckskin jackets. Thus equipped and armed, they could go far, and as they were skilful and daring, they could count upon a good result from their hunting. They were ready at eight o'clock in the

morning, and set out. Dick gambolled before them; they climbed the hill to the east, went round the light-house cone, and started along the southern plain limited by Bell Mount.

The doctor, on his side, after having agreed with Johnson upon a danger signal, went down to the coast so as to gain the icebergs of Victoria Bay. The boatswain stayed alone, but not idle, at Fort Providence. He began by setting the Greenland dogs at liberty; they were enchanted to be free, and rolled themselves in the snow. He then did the housework, renewed the fuel and provisions, put the storehouses in order, mended the broken utensils, darned the blankets, and made the snowshoes for the long summer excursions. There was plenty to do, and the boatswain worked with the skill of a sailor, who has to be Jack-of-all-trades. While he was working, he thought about the conversation of the evening before; he thought of the captain, and of his heroic obstinacy in refusing to let an American, or even an American boat, attain the world's Pole before him.

"I don't see," he said to himself, "how we are to pass the ocean without a boat, and if the open sea is before us, sail we must. The best of Englishmen couldn't swim three hundred miles. Patriotism has its limits. Well, we shall see. There's plenty of time yet, and Mr. Clawbonny will manage somehow; he's clever enough to make the captain change his mind. I'll wager that he looks at the Porpoise as he goes to the island, and will see what she's good for."

All at once Johnson's reflections were interrupted by a detonation about three miles off.

"They've found something," thought the old sailor,

"and without going far, the report is so distinct. It's true the atmosphere is very pure." A second and third report followed immediately. "They've got to a good place," thought Johnson. Three more reports were heard. "Six shots," thought Johnson; "their guns are discharged now; the affair has been hit. Have they——" At the idea that came to him Johnson turned pale; he quickly left the snow-house and climbed the hill to the summit of the cone in a few minutes. What he saw made him shudder.

"The bears!" he cried.

The three hunters, followed by Dick, were running back as fast as they could, pursued by five gigantic animals; the six bullets had not hurt them; Hatteras, in the rear, only succeeded in maintaining a distance between the animals and himself by throwing his cap, axe, and even his gun at them. The bears stopped, according to their custom, to smell the object thrown, and so lost ground a little. It was thus that Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell, quite out of breath with running, reached Johnson, and they all let themselves slide down the slope to the snow-house. The five bears almost touched them, and the captain was obliged to ward off a paw with his snow-knife. In the twinkling of an eye Hatteras and his companions had shut themselves in the house. The animals had stopped on the upper table-land.

"At last!" cried Hatteras; "we can defend ourselves better five against five."

"Four against five!" cried Johnson, in a terrified tone.

"How can that be?" said Hatteras.

"The doctor!" answered Johnson, pointing to the empty parlour; "he is gone to the island."

"We must go to his aid," said Altamont.

Hatteras rushed to the door and opened it, but he had scarcely time to shut it again; his head was nearly broken by a blow from a gigantic paw.

"They are there!" he cried.

"All of them?" asked Bell.

"Yes, all!" answered Hatteras.

Altamont rushed to the windows and filled up the frames with blocks of ice cut from the walls of the house. His companions imitated him without speaking; the silence was only broken by Dick's howls. But these four men had only one thought: they forgot their own danger, and only thought of the doctor. Poor Clawbonny, the soul of the little colony, so good and unselfish! for the first time he was not there; he was in extreme peril of a frightful death, for when he had finished his excursion he would come back quietly and find himself in the presence of the ferocious animals. And there were no means of warning him.

"Your repeated shots must have put him on his guard," said Johnson; "he will think something extraordinary has happened."

"But if he was far off at the time," answered Altamont, "or if he did not understand? There are nine chances out of ten that he will come back without dreaming of danger. The bears are hidden by the steepness of the fort, and he cannot see them."

"Then we must get rid of the dangerous beasts before his return," answered Hatteras.

"But how?" said Bell.

The answer to this question was difficult: a sally appeared impracticable. They had barricaded the passage, but they knew that the bears were strong enough

to overthrow all obstacles and reach them if they chose. The prisoners were each posted in a room of the doctor's house in order to watch for any attempt at invasion; they could hear the bears going and coming, growling and scratching the snow-walls with their enormous paws. However, something must be done, for time was getting precious. Altamont resolved to make a loophole in order to fire on his assailants; in a few minutes he had made a sort of hole in the ice-wall, but his arm was hardly outside when it was snatched from his hand with irresistible force before he had time to fire.

"The devil!" cried he, "we are not the strongest here," and he made haste to stop up the loophole again. The situation lasted an hour, and no one could foresee how it would end. The chances of a sally were once more discussed; they were feeble because the bears could not be attacked singly. Nevertheless, Hatteras and his companions, in haste to have done with suspense, were going to attempt a direct attack, when the captain thought of a new means of defence. He took the poker which Johnson used for his stoves and plunged it into the fire; then he made an opening in the snow-wall without piercing it quite through, so as to keep a slight coating of ice outside. His companions watched him at work. When the poker was red-hot, Hatteras said—

"This red-hot poker will help me to repulse the bears, who cannot take hold of it, and then, through the loophole, it will be easy to fire on them without their being able to snatch our arms from us."

He then took the poker from the fire and pushed it through the wall. The snow, melting by its contact, steamed with a deafening noise. Two bears ran up,

seized the poker, and howled terribly, while four shots went off at once.

"They are hit," cried the American and Bell.

"We'll try again," said Hatteras, closing up the aperture momentarily. The poker was soon red-hot again; Altamont and Bell took their place after having reloaded their guns. Hatteras again put in the red-hot poker, but this time an impenetrable surface stopped him

"Malediction!" cried the American.

"What's the matter?" asked Johnson.

"The matter is, that the animals are blocking up the house and burying us alive."

"They can't be."

"You see the poker can't get through! It's getting quite ridiculous."

It was getting more than ridiculous, it was quite alarming. Things were getting worse. The intelligent bears used the best means of stifling their prey.

"Well, this is hard!" said old Johnson, mortified. "Men would be bad enough, but bears!"

Two more hours went by without bringing any change in the situation of the prisoners; the sally had become impossible; the thickness of the walls prevented them hearing any noise outside. Altamont walked about with the agitation of a nervous man who is exasperated at finding a danger beyond his courage. Hatteras thought with terror of the doctor, and of the serious peril that threatened his return.

"Oh!" cried Johnson, "if Mr. Clawbonny was only here!"

"Well! what would he do?" answered Altamont.

"He would get us out of the difficulty."

"I should like to know how," said Altamont.

"If I knew I should not want him," answered Johnson. "However, I know what advice he would give us now."

"What?"

"That of taking some food; that will do us good. What do you think, Mr. Altamont?"

"I suppose we must eat even in the ridiculous position we are in," answered the American.

"I bet that after dinner we shall find some means of getting out of it," said Johnson.

No one answered him, but they went to the table. Johnson, educated by the doctor, tried to be philosophical in danger, but he did not succeed. They all began to be uncomfortable; the air grew dense in the hermetically-closed dwelling; the air could not be renewed by the stove-funnel, which drew badly, and it was easy to foresee that in a limited time the fire would go out; the oxygen, absorbed by the lungs and the fire, would soon be changed for carbonic acid gas, the noxious influence of which is well known. Hatteras was the first to perceive this new danger, and pointed it out to his companions.

"Then we must get out of here at any risk," answered Altamont.

"Yes," answered Hatteras; "but we had better wait till night; we will make a hole in the roof; that will renew our provision of air; then one of us will post himself at the opening and fire on the bears."

"It is the only thing to do," replied the American.

This agreed upon, they waited for the moment to attempt the adventure, and during the following hours Altamont broke out in imprecations against a state of things in which bears played a better part than men.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MINE.

NIGHT came, and the parlour lamp already began to pale in the atmosphere deprived of oxygen. They made their last preparations at eight o'clock. The guns were carefully loaded, and an opening was made in the roof of the snow-house. The work had been going on for several minutes, and Bell was doing it skilfully, when Johnson left the bedroom, where he had been watching, and came rapidly towards his companions. He seemed uneasy.

"What is the matter?" asked the captain.

"Nothing," answered Johnson, "and yet——"

"Yet what?" said Altamont.

"Hush! Don't you hear a singular noise?"

"Where from?"

"There, against the bedroom wall."

Bell left off work to listen. A distant noise as though ice was being pierced was heard in the wall.

"The bears have changed their tactics," said Johnson; "they have renounced their plan of suffocating us."

"Or else they think we are suffocated already," said Altamont, beginning to get angry.

"They are going to attack us," said Bell.

"Very well, we will fight it out," answered Hatteras.

"I'm glad they are," said Altamont; "I've had enough of invisible enemies. We shall see them, and fight."

"Our guns are of no use in this narrow space," said Johnson.

"We must use our axes and knives, then."

The noise augmented; the scratching was heard distinctly. The bears had attacked the wall at the angle where it leant against the declivity.

"The animal that is boring is not six feet from us," said Johnson.

"You are right, Johnson," answered the American; "but we have time to get ready to receive him."

The American took his axe in one hand and his knife in the other, and placed himself in a posture of attack. Johnson loaded his gun in case firearms should be necessary. The noise grew louder; the ice cracked under the pressure. At last only a thin coating separated the assailant from his adversaries; suddenly it was broken through like the paper hoops at a circus, and a black and enormous animal appeared in the semi-obscurity of the room. Altamont was about to strike, when a well-known voice cried out—

"In Heaven's name, stop!"

"The doctor! the doctor!" cried Johnson.

It was the doctor who had thus rolled into the room.

"Yes, it is I, my friends," said he, picking himself up nimbly.

His companions were thunderstruck, but their astonishment soon gave place to joy; every one wanted to shake hands with him at once; Hatteras was much moved.

"Is it indeed you, Mr. Clawbonny," said the boatswain.

"Yes, old fellow, and I was more anxious about your fate than you could be about mine."

"But how did you know that we were attacked by the bears?" asked Altamont; "we were afraid of seeing you come back tranquilly to Fort Providence without thinking of danger."

"Oh! I saw it all," answered the doctor; "your shots awoke my attention; just then I was nearing the remains of the Porpoise; I climbed a hummock, and saw the five bears running after you; what a state of fright I was in! When you rolled down the hill, and I saw the momentary hesitation of the animals, I knew you had time to barricade yourselves in the house. Then I gradually approached, sometimes crawling, sometimes gliding, amongst the icebergs; I arrived near the fort, and saw the enormous animals at work like immense beavers; they were piling up blocks of ice, and, in fact, burying you alive. It is a good thing they did not think of hurling blocks from the summit of the cone, or you would have been crushed without mercy."

"But," said Bell, "you were in great danger, Mr. Clawbonny; it's a wonder they did not attack you."

"They did not think of it; the Greenland dogs that Johnson had let loose came up to a short distance from them, and they took no notice; they thought themselves sure of more savoury game."

"Thanks for the compliment," said Altamont, laughing.

"Oh! there's nothing to be proud of. When I understood the bears' tactics I resolved to join you. I was obliged to wait till night for prudence sake, and as

soon as twilight came I glided noiselessly to the slope near the powder-magazines. I chose the spot on purpose to bore a gallery. I was three hours doing it with my famous snow-knife, and at last I am here worn out and famished."

"To share our fate?" said Altamont.

"To save us all; but give me a piece of bread and meat: I am nearly fainting from want of food."

The doctor was soon biting a lump of salt meat with his white teeth. While he was eating he showed his willingness to answer the questions that were put to him.

"We can escape by the same road that Mr. Clawbonny came," said Bell.

"And leave our enemies to pillage our magazines," said the doctor.

"We must stay here," said Hatteras.

"Of course we must," answered the doctor, "and get rid of these animals as well."

'Are there any means of doing it?" asked Bell.

"Certainly, sure means," answered the doctor.

"I told you that Mr. Clawbonny would get us out of this," said Johnson, rubbing his hands. "There's always something in his knowledge-bag."

"Doctor," said Altamont, "can't the bears get into the gallery you have bored?"

"No, I took care to stop up the opening, and now we can get to the powder-magazine unknown to them."

"That's right. Now tell us how you mean to get rid of these ridiculous visitors."

"It is very easy, and part of the work is done already."

"How?"

"You will see; but I forgot, I did not come here alone."

"What do you mean?"

"I have a companion to introduce to you."

So speaking, the doctor dragged out of the gallery the body of a fox, recently killed.

"A fox!" cried Bell.

"I killed him this morning," answered the doctor, "and it is a good thing I did."

"But your plan?" asked Altamont.

"I mean to blow up the bears all at once with a hundred pounds of powder."

They looked at the doctor in astonishment.

"But how shall we get the powder?"

"From the magazine. This gallery leads to it. I didn't bore ten cables' length for nothing. I could have attacked the wall nearer the house."

"But where do you mean to make your mine?" asked the American.

"In front of our slope, at the farthest point from the magazines."

"But how will you allure all the bears at once?"

"Leave that to me," said the doctor; "let us now set to work. We have a gallery of a hundred feet to bore during the night; it is tiring work, but we five can manage it by taking it in turns. Bell will begin, and we can take some rest in the meantime."

"The more I think of Mr. Clawbonny's plan the more sure I think it," said Johnson.

"It is sure," answered the doctor.

"Oh, as long as you say so they are dead bears, and I already feel their furs on my shoulders."

The doctor crawled into the gallery, followed by

Bell; where the doctor could pass, his companions could easily follow. The two miners reached the powder-store, and got out amidst the barrels, ranged in order. The doctor gave Bell the necessary indications; the carpenter attacked the opposite wall, the one that leaned against the slope, and his companion came back to the house. Bell worked for an hour, and bored a depth of about ten feet. At the end of that time Altamont came to take his place, and did about the same amount of work; the snow was carried into the kitchen, and the doctor had it melted so that it might take up less room. The captain followed the American, then Johnson. In ten hours, at eight in the morning, the gallery was quite open. At the first dawn of day the doctor went to look at the bears through a loophole he made in the powder-magazine. The patient animals had not quitted the place. They were there walking about and growling; they wandered round the house, that was disappearing under the piled-up blocks. But a moment came when their patience seemed exhausted, for all at once the doctor saw them push back the ice they had piled up.

"They are demolishing their own work, and mean to get at us," said he to the captain, who was standing near; "but we shall have the pleasure of demolishing them first. We've no time to lose, though."

The doctor crawled to the point where the mine was to be; there he caused the room to be enlarged to the width and height of the slope; in the upper part the ice was only left about one foot thick; they were obliged to put supports to prevent it falling in. A stake was fixed in the ground, the fox tied to the top, and a long cord, knotted in the lower part, went along the gallery

to the powder-store. The doctor's companions followed his instructions without understanding them.

"There's the bait," said he, pointing to the fox. At the foot of the stake he placed a small barrel capable of containing about a hundred pounds of powder.

"And here's the mine," added he.

"But how shall we manage not to be blown up at the same time as the bears?" asked Hatteras.

"We are far enough off the theatre of the explosion; besides, our house is solid, and if it gets a little knocked about we can easily mend it."

"Now how are you going to manage it?" said Altamont.

"By pulling this cord we shall pull down the prop that supports the roof above the mine; the fox will then suddenly appear on the slope; the animals, famished by a long fast, will not hesitate to throw themselves on the unexpected prey. At that moment I fire the mine, and blow up the guests and their meal."

"That's it! that's it!" said Johnson, who was listening attentively.

Hatteras, having absolute confidence in his friend, asked no explanation, but Altamont wanted to know all about it.

"Doctor," said he, "how can you calculate the exact length of time your wick will be burning, so that the explosion shall come at the right moment?"

"It's very simple," said the doctor. "I shall have no calculation at all to make."

"Have you a wick a hundred feet long, then?"

"No."

"Are you going to make a trail of powder?"

"No, that might miss fire."

"Then some one must devote themselves, and go and set fire to the mine."

"If they must, I'm your man," said Johnson, quickly.

"It is not necessary," said the doctor, shaking hands with the old boatswain; "our five existences are precious, and they will be spared, thank God!"

"Then," said the American, "I give up guessing."

"What would be the good of having learnt physics, if I did not know how to manage it? Have we not an electric pile and wires long enough—those we used for our lighthouse?"

"Well?"

"We can set fire to the mine when we please, instantly, and without danger."

"Hurrah!" cried Johnson.

"Hurrah!" repeated his companions, not caring whether their enemies heard them or not.

The electric wires were at once unrolled along the gallery from the house to the mine. One of their extremities remained rolled up in the pile and the other placed in the little barrel, the two ends at a little distance from one another. At nine o'clock all was ready. It was time, for the bears were getting furious over their work of demolition. The doctor decided that the moment was come. Johnson was stationed in the powder-magazine, and charged with pulling the cord fastened to the stake.

"Now," said the doctor to his companions, "prepare your arms in case the besiegers should not be killed at once, and get near Johnson; immediately after the explosion, rush out."

"All right!" answered the American.

"Now we've done all man can do, may Heaven help us!"

Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell went to the powder-magazine. The doctor remained alone by the pile. Soon he heard Johnson's voice in the distance, calling out—

"Look out!"

"All right!" he answered.

Johnson gave the cord a good pull; it dragged down the stake; then he rushed to the loophole and looked out. The surface of the slope had sunk in. The fox's body appeared on the surface. The bears, surprised at first, soon threw themselves on their new prey.

"Fire!" cried Johnson.

The doctor immediately established the electric current between the two wires; a formidable explosion took place; the house shook as it would have done in an earthquake; the walls split. Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell rushed out, ready to fire. But their arms were useless; four of the five bears were mangled to pieces, and the fifth, half-roasted, ran away as fast as he could.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" cried Clawbonny's companions, whilst they pressed round their saviour.

CHAPTER XIV.

POLAR SPRING.

THE prisoners were free; they showed their delight and gratitude to the doctor. Johnson rather regretted his bearskin, burnt and spoilt, but it did not spoil his delight. The day was passed in restoring the snow-house, which had been much knocked about in the explosion. They cleared away the blocks of ice the bears had heaped up against it, and mended the disjointed walls. The work was done quickly, while the old boatswain amused them with his songs. The next day the temperature suddenly changed, and the thermometer went up to 15° above zero. So considerable a difference was much felt both by men and things. The southern breeze brought with it the first indications of a Polar spring. This relative warmth lasted several days; out of the wind the thermometer gave 31° above zero; symptoms of a thaw began to show themselves. Crevices appeared in the ice; salt water oozed from the rocks like the cascades of an English park; some days later, rain fell in great abundance.

A thick mist rose from the snow; it was a good sign, and the melting of these enormous masses seemed near. The sun's pale disc grew deeper in colour, and traced

longer spirals above the horizon; night scarcely lasted three hours. Another symptom, not less significative, was the appearance of bands of ptarmigans, wild geese, plovers, and fowls; the air was filled with their deafening cries, which our navigators remembered from the spring before. Hares were easily shot as they showed themselves on the coasts of the bay, and Arctic mice, whose little burrows form a system of regular cells. The doctor made his companions notice that almost all these animals began to lose their white winter fur or feathers to take to their summer clothing; Nature brought forth their food in the form of mosses, poppies, dwarf grass, and saxifrages. A new existence seemed to spring out of the melting snow. But with the harmless animals came their famished enemies; the foxes and wolves arrived in quest of their prey; lugubrious howlings were heard during the short obscurity of the nights. The wolf of these countries is very near parent to the dog; he barks, too, and often the most practised ears are deceived, even those of dogs themselves. This fact was noticed on the land of Hudson Bay, and the doctor confirmed it in New America. Johnson took care not to let his yoke-dogs loose, as they might be taken in too. As to Dick, he was too experienced a dog to throw himself into the wolves' jaws. Provisions of fresh meat were abundant for the next fortnight; they shot partridges, ptarmigans, and snow-ortolans, which furnished a delicious addition to their food. The sportsmen had not to go far from Fort Providence. The small game seemed to come to meet their shots; their presence singularly animated these silent tracts, and Victoria Bay presented an unaccustomed aspect, rejoicing to the eye. The fortnight that

followed the encounter with the bears was filled by these divers occupations. The thaw made visible progress; the thermometer went up to 32° above zero; torrents began to pour down the ravines, and thousands of cataracts sprang from the side of the hills.

The doctor cleared about an acre of ground, and sowed cress, sorrel, and cochlearia in it; their little green leaves were just starting from the ground, when all at once, with inconceivable rapidity, the cold came back like a master in his empire. In a single night, by a violent north wind, the thermometer sank nearly forty degrees; it fell to 8° below zero. Everything was frozen; birds, quadrupeds, and amphibians disappeared as if by enchantment; the seals' holes were closed again, the crevices disappeared, the ice became as hard as granite again, and the cascades, frozen in their fall, hung in long crystal stalactites. It was like a transformation scene, and happened during the night from the 11th to the 12th of May. When Bell put his nose outside in the morning he nearly left it.

"Oh, Boreal Nature!" cried the disappointed doctor, "this is worthy of thee! Never mind! I shall only have to sow my seeds over again."

Hatteras took things less philosophically, he was in such a hurry to recommence his discoveries. But he was obliged to resign himself.

"Will this weather last long?" asked Johnson.

"No," answered Clawbonny; "it is the Cold's last word! You see he is at home here, and you can't expect him to be driven out without a protest."

"He protests strongly," said Bell, rubbing his face.

"Yes; but I ought to have foreseen it, and not

sacrificed my grains like an ass, for if I had thought of it I could have made them grow near the kitchen stove."

"But how could you foresee such a change in the weather?" asked Altamont.

"Because there is an almost certain periodical return of cold in May, and it generally takes place between the 11th and 13th of the month, that's all."

"Is there any explanation of so curious a fact?" asked the American.

"Yes, two; either by the interposition of a greater quantity of asteroids between the sun and the earth at that epoch of the year, or simply by the melting of the snows, which absorb a great quantity of heat as they dissolve. The two causes are plausible, but I am not certain of the explanation; I ought to have been of the authenticity of the fact, and not have risked my plantations."

The cold lasted for the rest of the month; there were no means of killing game for the simple reason that there was no game to be killed; fortunately they had a large provision of fresh meat. The five men were thus condemned to a fresh period of inactivity. During the fortnight from the 11th to the 25th of May their monotonous existence was only interrupted by one incident, the serious illness of the carpenter; he was attacked with diphtheria; the doctor saw from his tumefied amygdals, and the false membrane that covered them, the nature of the terrible malady. Happily the remedy was not far off; the doctor contented himself by putting little pieces of ice in the invalid's mouth; in a few hours the tumefaction began to diminish, and the false membrane disappeared.

Twenty-four hours later Bell was on his feet again. They were all astonished at the doctor's treatment.

"It is the country for diphtheria," said the doctor; "it is not astonishing that the remedy should be near the evil."

"The remedy would have been useless without the doctor," added Johnson, in whose mind Mr. Clawbonny began to assume gigantic proportions.

During their forced leisure the doctor resolved to have an important conversation with the captain; he wanted to make Hatteras change his mind about going northward without a boat or a canoe wherewith to cross the bays or straits. The doctor scarcely knew how to begin, and yet he knew the matter must be decided soon, as June was so near, and would bring the epoch for long excursions. At last, after long reflection, he took Hatteras aside, and with his kindly manner said—

"Hatteras, do you believe I am your friend?"

"Certainly," said the captain, "my best, and perhaps only one."

"If I give you a counsel," continued the doctor, "a counsel you have not asked me for, shall you look upon it as disinterested?"

"Yes, for I know that personal interest has never guided you; but what are you driving at?"

"Wait a minute, for I have another question to ask you. Do you believe that I am as good an Englishman and as ambitious for the glory of my country as you?"

Hatteras looked with surprise at the doctor.

"Yes," he answered, interrogating him with a look.

"You want to get to the North Pole," the doctor continued; "I understand your ambition, and partake of it; but if we want the end, we must have the means."

"Have I not sacrificed everything in order to succeed till now?"

"No, Hatteras, you have not sacrificed your personal repulsion, and even now you are ready to refuse indispensable means of reaching the Pole."

"Ah, you mean about that man's boat——"

"Come, Hatteras, let us look at the matter without passion, and examine it coolly under all its aspects. The coast on which we are wintering may not extend six degrees northward; if the accounts that we have heard prove true, we must find a vast extent of open sea. Now, in presence of that Arctic Ocean, free from ice, and easily navigable, what shall we do if we have no means of crossing it?"

Hatteras did not answer.

"Should you like to find yourself a few miles from the Pole without being able to reach it?"

Hatteras let his head fall into his hands.

"Now let us examine the question from a moral point of view. I understand that an Englishman should sacrifice his fortune and his existence to give England another glory! But because a canoe made of planks taken from an American ship, a shipwrecked vessel of no value, will touch the newly-discovered land, or traverse the unknown ocean, how can that lessen the honour of the discovery? If you had discovered the hull of an abandoned vessel on this coast, should you have hesitated to use it? You know that it is only to the commander of the expedition that belongs the honour of the discovery? And I should like to know what prevents a boat built by four Englishmen, and manned by four Englishmen, being English from its keel to its gunwale?"

Hatteras was still silent.

"No," said Clawbonny; "it is not the boat you object to, it is the man."

"Yes, doctor, yes," answered the captain, "I hate that American with an Englishman's hatred, that man whom fate has thrown in my road——"

"In order to save you?"

"It seems to me that he defies me, that he considers himself master here, that he thinks my destiny is in his hands, and that he has guessed my plans. Did he not show what he was when we talked about giving names to these new lands? Has he ever acknowledged what he came here for? You cannot take from my mind an idea that is killing me, that he is the commander of an expedition of discovery, sent by the government of the Union!"

'And suppose he is, what proves that the expedition was trying to reach the Pole? America, like England, might attempt the North-West Passage. Any way, Altamont knows nothing of your plans, for neither Johnson, nor Bell, nor you, nor I have said a word about them before him."

"Well, let him always ignore them."

"That cannot be, for we must not leave him here alone."

"Why not?" asked the captain, rather angrily. "Cannot he stay at Fort Providence?"

"He would not consent to, Hatteras; besides, how could we abandon him, not being certain of finding him on our return? It would be more than imprudent, it would be inhuman. Altamont will come; he must come! but as it is of no use now to give him ideas that he has not, we will tell him nothing, and build a boat destined in appearance to reconnoitre the coasts."

Hatteras could not bring himself to acknowledge that the doctor was right. Mr. Clawbonny waited for an answer that did not come.

"And if that man refuse to have his ship broken up?" said the captain at last.

"In that case you will have right on your side; you will build the boat whether he consent or no."

"May he refuse!" cried Hatteras.

"Before he can refuse we must ask him; I will do that."

That very evening, at supper, Clawbonny led the conversation on to their plans for the summer excursions, in order to determine the hydrography of the coasts.

"You will come with us, I suppose?" he said to Altamont.

"Certainly," answered the American; "we must know how far New America extends."

Hatteras looked fixedly at his rival while the latter was speaking.

"And for that," added Altamont, "we must do the best we can with the remains of the Porpoise; we must build a good boat with them."

"You hear, Bell?" said the doctor. "We will set to work at it to-morrow."

CHAPTER XV.

THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

THE next day Bell, Altamont, and the doctor went down to the Porpoise; there was plenty of wood; the old three-masted boat, crushed by the shock of the icebergs, might still furnish the principal parts of the new one. The carpenter set to work immediately; they wanted a vessel capable of putting to sea, and yet light enough to be transported on the sledge. During the last days of May the temperature rose; the thermometer went up above freezing point, spring came for good this time, and the men were obliged to leave off their winter garments. Rain was frequent, and snow began to take advantage of the declivities in the ground to go off in waterfalls and cascades. Hatteras could not contain his satisfaction at seeing the ice-fields give the first signs of thawing. An open sea meant liberty to him. Whether his predecessors were mistaken or not on the great question of a Polar basin was what he hoped to know before long. On that the success of his enterprise depended. One evening, after a rather warm day, during which the breaking up of the ice-fields was manifest, he led the conversation to the interesting subject of an open sea. He went over

again the arguments that were familiar to him, and found as usual a warm partisan in the doctor; besides, his conclusions were just.

"It is evident," said he, "that if the ocean gets rid of the ice in front of Victoria Bay, its southern part must be free as far as New Cornwall or Queen's Channel. Penny and Belcher both found it free."

"I am of your opinion, Hatteras," answered the doctor, "and we cannot doubt the evidence of these illustrious sailors; people have vainly tried to explain their discovery as an effect of mirage; but they were too positive not to be sure of their fact."

"I have always thought so," said Altamont; "the Polar basin extends not only west but east too. The open sea which Penny and Belcher saw near the coasts of Grinnell Land, Morton, Kane's lieutenant, perceived also in the strait that bears Kane's name."

"We are not in Kane's Sea," said Hatteras, coldly, "and, consequently, we can't verify the fact."

"It is probable, at least," said Altamont.

"Certainly," replied the doctor, who wished to avoid a useless discussion. "What Altamont thinks is very likely the truth, unless the ground presented the same peculiarities, and caused the same effect, under different latitudes. I, too, believe that there is an open sea both east and west."

"It is of no consequence either way!" said Hatteras.

"I am not of your opinion, Hatteras," said the American, whom the captain's assumed indifference began to make angry; "it may be of great consequence to us."

"When, pray?"

"When we think of returning."

"Who thinks about returning?" cried Hatteras.

"Nobody," answered Altamont; "but we shall stop somewhere, I suppose."

"Where?" asked Hatteras.

This was the first time the question had been put directly to Hatteras. The doctor would have given one of his arms to stop the discussion. Altamont did not answer, and the captain repeated the question.

"Where's that?" he said, with insistance.

"Where we are going," answered the American calmly.

"Who knows where?" said the conciliating doctor.

"I say, therefore," continued Altamont, "that if we wish to take advantage of the Polar basin for our return, we might attempt to get to Kane's Sea; it will take us more directly to Baffin's Sea."

"That's your opinion," said the captain, ironically.

"Certainly it is, and I believe that if ever these northern seas become practicable, that way to them will be taken as the most direct. Doctor Kane's was a great discovery."

"Indeed!" said Hatteras, biting his lips till the blood came.

"Yes," said the doctor, "it cannot be denied; we must give honour to whom honour is due."

"Besides," continued the obstinate American, "no one has ever come so far north as Kane."

"I am glad to think that now Englishmen have come farther!"

"And Americans with them," said Altamont. "What am I, then?" he continued, proudly.

Hatteras could scarcely contain himself. "You," he answered, "you are a man who gives to chance as much

honour as to science. Your American captain went for nothing—for nothing but hazard——"

"Hazard!" cried Altamont. "You dare say that Kane did not owe his great discovery to his own energy and skill?"

"I say that the name of Kane is not a name to utter in the country that Parry, Franklin, Ross, Belcher, and Penny have made illustrious, in the seas which contain the North-West Passage discovered by the Englishman M'Clure."

"M'Clure!" answered the American. "You instance that man, and yet you will not give any credit to hazard. Was it not hazard alone that favoured him?"

"No," answered Hatteras, warmly—"no. It was his courage, his determination, that made him stay four winters in the ice."

"Why, he could not come back; he was frozen up, and he ended by abandoning his ship, the Investigation, to get back to England."

"My friends——" interrupted the doctor.

"Besides," continued Altamont, "let us leave the man and look at the result. You speak of the North-West Passage; it is not found yet."

Hatteras started with rage at this, and the doctor tried to interfere.

"You are wrong, Altamont," said he.

"No, I'm not," answered the obstinate fellow; "M'Clure did not sail through the North-West Passage, and no vessel has left Behring Straits and reached Baffin's Sea."

Hatteras got up and said—"I will not allow the glory of an English captain to be any longer attacked in my presence."

"You will not allow," said the American, getting up too; "but facts speak for themselves, and you cannot silence them."

Hatteras was pale with anger.

"Be calm, my friends," said the doctor; "we are discussing a scientific point."

"I'll tell you the facts," continued Hatteras, who was now deaf to all remonstrance.

"And I'll answer them!" answered the American.

Johnson and Bell did not know how to look.

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, authoritatively, "allow me to speak; I have the right, for I know the facts as well as you—better, and you will grant that I can speak without prejudice."

"Oh, yes," cried Bell and Johnson, who were getting uneasy, and made a majority favourable to the doctor.

"Go on, Mr. Clawbonny; the gentlemen will listen to you, and it will instruct us all," said Johnson.

"Yes, do!" said the American.

Hatteras sat down again, and made a sign of assent.

"I will relate the exact facts," said the doctor, "and if I alter or omit a detail, correct me."

"We have entire confidence in you, Mr. Clawbonny," answered Bell.

"Here is the map of the Polar Seas," continued the doctor, who had got up to collect his briefs; "it will be easy to follow the navigation of M'Clure, and you can judge of what he did."

The doctor spread one of the excellent maps published by the Admiralty on the table—one that contained the most modern discoveries made in the Arctic Regions; then he continued—

"In 1848, as you know, two ships, the Herald, under

Captain Kellet, and the Plover, under Moore, were sent to Behring Straits to try to discover traces of Franklin; their search was fruitless; in 1850 they were joined by M'Clure, who commanded the Investigator, a ship in which he had made the campaign of 1849 under the orders of James Ross. He was followed by Captain Collinson of the Enterprise, but he got the start of him and arrived at Behring Straits, where he declared that he would wait no longer, that he would set out on his own responsibility, and that he would discover Franklin or the Passage—you hear, Altamont?"

The American showed no sign of assent or dissent.

"On the 5th of August, 1850," continued the doctor, "after having had his last communication with the Plover, M'Clure plunged into the eastern seas by an almost unknown route; you see hardly any land is indicated on the map. On the 30th of August the young officer sighted Cape Bathurst; on the 6th of September he discovered Baring Land, which he found out afterwards forms part of Banks' Land, and then Prince Albert Land; then he resolutely followed this long strait, which separates these two large islands, and which he named after the Prince of Wales. Let us enter it in thought with the courageous navigator! He hoped to pass out into Melville Basin, which we crossed, and his hope was well founded; but he found an insuperable barrier in the ice at the mouth of the strait. Then, stopped in his course, M'Clure wintered from 1850 to 1851, and during that time he crossed the ice-bank to assure himself that the strait conducted to Melville Sea."

"Yes," said Altamont, "but he did not get across it."

"Wait a little," said the doctor. "While they were

wintering M'Clure's officers surveyed the neighbouring coasts, Creswell, Baring Land, Haswelt, on the south, Prince Albert Land, and Wynniat, Cape Walker, on the north. In July, during the first thaws, M'Clure tried again to get his ship into Melville Sea; he got within twenty miles of it, when the wind dragged him irresistibly southwards. Then he decided to go down Prince of Wales' Straits again, and coast Banks' Land, to try on the west what he had not been able to do on the east; he tacked about; on the 18th he sighted Cape Kellet, and on the 19th Cape Prince Alfred, two degrees higher; then, after a terrible struggle with the icebergs, he remained welded in Banks' Passage, at the entrance to that suite of straits which lead back to Baffin's Bay."

"But he could not get through them," answered Altamont.

"Wait a little longer, and have some of M'Clure's patience. On the 26th of September he fixed his winter quarters in Mercy Bay, at the north of Banks' Land, and stopped there till 1852; when April came M'Clure had only eighteen months' provisions left. However, he would not go back; he set out in a sledge, crossed Banks' Strait, and arrived at Melville Island. Thereabouts he hoped to find Commander Austin's ships, sent to meet him by way of Baffin's Bay and Lancaster Strait; he touched at Winter Harbour on the 28th of April, the place where Parry had wintered thirty-three years earlier; but he found no ships; he only discovered a cairn, in which was a document that informed him that Austin's lieutenant, M'Clintock, had passed there the year before and had gone again. Where others would have despaired M'Clure did not. He placed another document in the cairn, in which he

announced his intention of getting back to England by the North-West Passage, which he had found, passing through Lancaster Strait and Baffin's Bay. If we hear no more about him, it is because he must have been dragged to the north or west of Melville Island; then, no wise discouraged, he came back to Mercy Bay to winter for the third time, from 1852 to 1853."

"I never questioned his courage," answered Altamont, "but only his success."

"In the month of March," continued the doctor, "reduced to two-third rations after a rigorous winter, during which no game was to be had, M'Clure decided to send back half his crew to England either by Baffin's Bay or Mackenzie River and Hudson's Bay; the other half were to be left to bring the Investigator back to Europe. He chose the weakest men, those to whom a fourth wintering would have been fatal; everything was ready for their departure, which was fixed for April 15th, when, as he was walking on the ice with his lieutenant, Creswell, M'Clure saw a man running from the north and making signs to him; that man was Lieutenant Pim, of the Herald, the lieutenant of the same Captain Kellet whom he had left two years before in Behring's Straits, as I told you. The lieutenant was followed by a band of sailors from the Herald, amongst whom was an ensign from a French vessel, M. de Bray, who served as a volunteer amongst Kellet's officers. You do not doubt about the meeting of our countrymen?"

"Not in the least," answered Altamont.

"Well, let us see what happened afterwards, and if the North-West Passage was really cleared. Notice, that if you compare Parry's discoveries with those of

M'Clure, you will find that the northern coasts of America have been rounded."

"Not by a ship," answered Altamont.

"No, but by a man. M'Clure went to see Captain Kellet at Melville Island; in twelve days he traversed the hundred and seventy miles that separate Mercy Bay from Winter Harbour; he agreed with the commander of the Herald to send him his invalids, and came back to his ship; many in M'Clure's place would have thought they had done enough, but the intrepid young man wished to try fortune again. Then—and it is to this that I call your attention—then his lieutenant, Creswell, accompanying the invalids and infirm to the Investigator, left Mercy Bay, gained Winter Harbour, and after a journey of 470 miles on the ice, reached Beechey Island on the 2nd of June, and a few days after he took passage with twelve of his men on board the Phœnix."

"I was serving on board her then," said Johnson, "with Captain Inglefield, and we came back to England."

"And on the 7th of October, 1853," continued the doctor, "Creswell arrived in London, after having traversed all the space between Behring Straits and Cape Farewell."

"Well," said Hatteras, "does going in on one side and coming out at the other mean having passed?"

"Yes," answered the American, "but by traversing 470 miles on the ice."

"Well, what does that matter?"

"Everything; did M'Clure's ship make the passage?"

"No," answered the doctor, "for after wintering a fourth time, M'Clure was obliged to abandon it in the midst of the ice."

"Well, if ever the North-West Passage become practicable it must be so for ships and not sledges; or, if not ships, a long-boat at least."

"A long-boat!" cried Hatteras, who saw an evident intention in the American's words.

"Altamont, you are making a puerile distinction, and we are all against you," said the doctor.

"That is not difficult for you—you are four against one. But that does not prevent me keeping to my own opinion."

"Keep it to yourself, then!" cried Hatteras.

"What right have you to speak to me like that?" cried the American, furious.

"My right as captain!" answered Hatteras.

"Am I at your orders?" asked Altamont.

"Certainly you are, and if——"

Here the doctor, Johnson, and Bell interfered, it was time, for the two enemies were taking stock of one another. The doctor felt deeply grieved. However, after a few words of conciliation, Altamont went to bed whistling "Yankee Doodle," and, whether he slept or not, did not utter another word.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOREAL ARCADIA.

On the 29th of May the sun did not set for the first time; its disc just touched the horizon and rose again; the time for twenty-four hours' daylight had begun. The next day the radiant planet appeared surrounded by a magnificent halo, a circle shining with all the colours of the prism. Such phenomena, though frequent, always attracted the doctor's attention; he never forgot to note their date, character, dimensions, and appearance; the one he saw that day was elliptical, a form about which there is not yet much known. Soon the cries of the birds came back; bands of bustards and Canada geese, coming from the distant countries of Florida or Arkansas, fled north with astonishing rapidity and brought back the spring under their wings. The doctor shot a few, as well as three or four early cranes, and even a solitary stork. The snow melted on all sides under the action of the sun; the salt water, spread over the ice-field from the crevices and seals' holes, hastened the decomposition; mixed with the sea-water, the ice formed a sort of pale mud, which Arctic navigators call slush. Large ponds formed themselves on the land round the bay, and the

disburdened ground seemed to put forth vegetation all at once.

The doctor then began his gardening again. He had plenty of seed; he was much surprised to see a sort of sorrel growing wild between the rocks, and he admired the creative force of Nature which asks for so little to manifest itself. The heath then began to show timidly its little pale pink flowers—a pink in which it seemed that a "'prentice han'" had put too much water. Still the flora of New America left much to be wished for, though even that rare and timid vegetation was pleasant to see; it was all that the feeble rays of the sun could give, a last remembrance of the Providence that had not completely forgotten these far-off lands. At last it began to be really warm; on the 15th of June, the doctor noticed that the thermometer marked 57° above zero. He could scarcely believe his eyes; the aspect of the country changed; innumerable and noisy cascades fell from all the summits caressed by the sun; the ice became disjointed, and the grand question of an open sea was at last going to be decided. The air was filled with the roar of avalanches that were precipitated from the top of the hills to the depths of the ravines, and the breaking up of the ice-fields caused a deafening crash. They made an excursion as far as Johnson Island; it was really only an islet without importance; but the old boatswain was none the less enchanted to have given his name to the few rocks lost in the midst of the seas. He even wished to climb a high rock at the risk of breaking his neck. Hatteras had carefully surveyed the land up to and beyond Cape Washington during the march; the melting of the snows had sensibly altered the country; ravines and hills appeared

where the vast carpet of snow had seemed to cover uniform plains.

The house and magazines threatened to melt, and it was often necessary to repair them; happily, temperatures of 57° are rare in these latitudes, their average is just above freezing-point.

Towards the 15th of June the long-boat began to look ship-shape. Whilst Bell and Johnson worked at its construction, some grand shooting excursions were organised with considerable success. They succeeded in killing some reindeer; these animals are very difficult to approach. Altamont adopted the Indians' tactics with them; he crawled on the ground, imitating with his gun and his arms the horns of one of these timid quadrupeds, till he got near enough for a sure shot. But the musked oxen that Parry found in such troops at Melville Island did not appear to frequent the shores of Victoria Bay. A long excursion was therefore resolved upon to hunt the precious animal, and to survey the land to the east. Hatteras did not mean to get up to the Pole by that part of the continent, but the doctor wanted to have a general idea of the country. They therefore decided to make for a point east of Fort Providence.

They set out on the 11th of June. The weather was very fine, with the thermometer at 41° The air was calm and pure, and the three sportsmen, each armed with a double-barrelled gun, an axe, a snow-knife, and followed by Dick, left Doctor's House at six in the morning; they were equipped for an excursion that might last two or three days, and carried provisions in consequence. At eight o'clock Hatteras and his two companions had gone seven miles. They had not met

with a single living thing. The country was covered with vast plains, which extended as far as the eye could reach; newly-formed brooks crossed them in great numbers, and vast pools mirrored the oblique rays of the sun. The soil belonged to the great division of sedimentary land so largely spread over the surface of the globe.

Some erratic blocks were seen of a nature foreign to the soil, and whose presence there was difficult of explanation; veins of slate and the different products of limestone ground were met with in abundance, especially some species of curious transparent and colourless crystals, possessing the peculiar refraction of Iceland spar. But, although he was not shooting, the doctor had no time for geological studies; his companions hurried him on too rapidly. However, he studied the ground and talked as much as possible, for without him a perfect silence would have reigned amongst the little troop. Altamont did not want to talk to the captain, who did not want to answer him.

Towards ten o'clock, the sportsmen had made about a dozen miles eastward; the sea was hidden below the horizon; the doctor proposed to halt for breakfast. The meal was rapidly eaten, and in half-an-hour's time they set out again. The ground then was sloping down gradually; some snow still remained in the declivity of the rocks, and had the appearance of waves unfurling in open sea under a strong breeze. The country was still a plain, without vegetation, that no living thing seemed to have frequented.

"Decidedly," said Altamont to the doctor, "we are not lucky sportsmen. I acknowledge that animals would not find much to eat here, but boreal game has no right to be particular."

"Don't despair," answered the doctor; "the summer season has hardly begun, and if Parry met with so many animals in Melville Island, there's no reason why we should not here."

"But we are more north," answered Hatteras.

"Certainly, but the north has nothing to do with it; you must take into consideration the frozen Pole only; that is to say, where we wintered with the Forward; as we get higher up we get away from the coldest parts of the globe; we ought, therefore, to find above it what Parry, Ross, and others have found below it."

"Well," said Altamont, with a sigh of regret, "till now we've done more walking than sporting."

"Patience," said the doctor; "the aspect of the country is gradually changing, and I should be much astonished should game fail us in the ravines where vegetation has been able to spring up."

"You must acknowledge," said Altamont, "that we are crossing a country quite uninhabited and quite uninhabitable."

"Oh, uninhabitable is a big word," answered the doctor; "I don't believe in any country being uninhabitable; men could fertilise even this country."

"Do you really think they could?" asked Altamont.

"Certainly! If you were to go to the countries so celebrated in the infancy of the world, to the spots where Thebes, or Nineveh, or Babylon was, in our ancestors' fertile valleys, it would seem to you impossible that men have ever been able to live in them; even the atmosphere has become vitiated since the disappearance of human beings. It is the general law of nature that makes the countries we do not live in, or have ceased to live in, unhealthy and sterile. You may

be sure that man makes his own country, by his presence, his habits, his industry; and, I may even add, by his breath; little by little he modifies the exhalations from the soil and the atmospheric conditions, and he makes the air healthier at the same time that he breathes it! There are uninhabited countries, but uninhabitable never."

Talking thus, the sportsmen marched on and arrived at a sort of valley, at the bottom of which wound a river, almost thawed; its southern site had brought out a slight vegetation on its banks. The soil seemed to wish to produce; a few inches of vegetable soil would have made it fertile. The doctor pointed this out to his companions.

"See," said he, "would it not be possible for some enterprising colonists to establish themselves in this ravine? With industry and perseverance they would make another thing of it—not the country of temperate zones, I do not go so far as that, but a presentable country. Why, unless I am mistaken, here come some four-footed inhabitants! The rascals know the best places to come to."

"They are Polar hares," cried Altamont, loading his gun.

"Wait," cried the doctor—"wait a minute, furious sportsman that you are. The poor animals don't dream of running away. See, they are coming up to us."

Three or four hares, jumping about amongst the small heather and fresh moss, advanced near the three men, whose presence they did not seem in the least to fear; their pretty little ways hardly disarmed Altamont. They were soon rubbing against the doctor's legs; he caressed them, saying—

"We cannot give a bullet when we are asked for a caress. The death of these little beasts is useless to us."

"You are right, doctor," answered Hatteras; "we must let them live."

"Look at those ptarmigans coming to us, those cavaliers on their long stilts!"

A whole winged tribe came up to meet the sportsmen, little suspecting the danger which the doctor's presence had averted. Even Dick stood still, lost in admiration. It was a curious and touching spectacle to see these pretty animals running, leaping, and fluttering about without fear; they rested on the shoulders of the good doctor, and lay down at his feet; they courted his unaccustomed caresses, and seemed to do all they could to welcome their unknown guests. The doctor looked like a charmer. The hunters continued their march, climbing up the wet banks of the brook, followed by the tame flock, and in a turn of the valley they came upon a herd of eight or ten reindeer, eating lichens half-buried in the snow—charming animals to look at, graceful and tranquil, with the curved antlers which the female carries as proudly as the male; their skins were of a woolly appearance, and had already put off their winter whiteness to take to their summer grey and brown; they did not seem more frightened nor less tame than the hares and birds of the peaceful country. Such must have been the first relations between men and animals.

The sportsmen arrived in the midst of the herd before they had made a movement to run away; this time the doctor had much trouble in containing Altamont's instincts; the American could not calmly see

the magnificent game without wishing to bring it down. Hatteras looked with a softened air at these gentle animals, who came and rubbed their noses on the clothes of the doctor, the friend of all living things.

"But," said Altamont, "did we not come here to shoot?"

"Yes, the musked oxen," said Clawbonny, "but nothing else; we should not know what to do with this game; we have enough provisions as it is; let us enjoy the touching spectacle of man mixing with animals without inspiring them with fear."

"That proves they have never seen them before," said Hatteras.

"Evidently," replied the doctor; "and from observing them we can draw the conclusion that these animals are not of American origin."

"How so?" said Altamont.

"If they had ever set foot on the shores of Northern America, they would know what to think of the biped and mammifer called man, and they would certainly have run away at the sight of us."

"Oh," answered Altamont, "a sportsman does not think about that, and game always belongs to the country of him who kills it."

"Come, be calm, Nimrod! For my own part I would rather never shoot another thing in my life than put terror into this charming population. See, even Dick fraternises with the pretty beasts. Believe me, let us be good when we can; goodness is strength."

"As you like," answered Altamont, who did not understand the doctor's tenderness; "but I should like to see what you would do amongst a herd of wolves with goodness for your only arm."

"Oh, I don't pretend to charm wild beasts," answered the doctor; "I don't believe much in Orpheus; besides, bears and wolves would not come to us like hares, partridges, and these reindeer."

"Why not," answered Altamont, "if they had never seen men?"

"Because such animals are naturally ferocious, and ferocity, like wickedness, engenders suspicion; it is a remark that observers have made about men as well as about animals."

All that day was passed in the ravine, which the doctor called Boreal Arcadia. After a supper which had not cost the life of a single inhabitant of the place, the three sportsmen slept in the hollow of a rock that seemed scooped out on purpose to give them a comfortable shelter.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALTAMONT'S REVENGE.

THE next morning the doctor and his two companions awoke after a night passed in the most perfect tranquillity. The cold had made itself felt at the approach of morning, but they were well covered, and had slept profoundly, guarded by the peaceful animals. The weather was still fine, and they resolved to consecrate that day to surveying the country, and in looking for musked oxen. They were obliged to give Altamont the opportunity of a little sport, and it was decided that should they turn out as tame as the other animals he should still have the right to kill them. Besides, their flesh, though strongly impregnated with musk, makes savoury food, and the sportsmen looked forward to taking back to Fort Providence some pieces of its fresh meat.

The march offered no peculiarity during the first hours of the morning; the country to the north-east already began to change its aspect; undulations in the soil presaged a change. If New America was not a continent, it must at least be an important island; besides, there was no question of verifying its geography. Dick ran far ahead, and soon pointed the

track of musked oxen; he rushed on rapidly, and was quickly out of sight. They guided themselves by his clear and distinct barking, which told them that the faithful dog had, at last, discovered the object of their wishes. They made haste on, and after a march of an hour and a half they found themselves in the presence of two large and formidable-looking animals; these singular quadrupeds seemed astonished at Dick's attacks without being afraid of them; they were eating a sort of pink moss which carpeted the soil. The doctor knew them at once by their horns, thick at the bottom, by the curious absence of snout, by their chamfer, busked like that of sheep, and their short tail; their structure caused naturalists to give them the name of "ovibos," a composite word indicating the two species of animals they belong to. They were covered with a long thick hair, and a sort of fine brown silk hair.

At the sight of the sportsmen the two animals soon ran away, and the three men ran after them as fast as they could. But it was difficult for people to get up to them whom half-an-hour's running put completely out of breath. Hatteras and his companions stopped.

As soon as the doctor could breathe again, he said—

"I will give you those beasts for Americans; they do not seem to have a very flattering opinion of your countrymen."

"That proves we are good hunters," answered Altamont.

When the animals saw that they were no longer pursued, they stopped in a posture of astonishment; it was very evident that it was impossible to outrun

them, so they resolved to hem them in; they were on a sort of plateau, and the huntsmen, leaving Dick to worry them, went down into the neighbouring ravines so as to get round the plateau. Altamont and the doctor hid themselves at one of its extremities behind a rock, whilst Hatteras was to go to the opposite extremity, appear suddenly on the plateau, and drive the animals towards them. In half-an-hour's time they were all at their posts.

"This time you will not object to the quadrupeds getting a bullet or two?" said Altamont.

"No, it is a fair fight," answered the doctor, who, notwithstanding his habitual kindness, was a sportsman at bottom. They were still talking when they saw the two musked oxen start, Dick at their heels; a little farther Hatteras shouting and driving them towards the doctor and the American, who soon started to meet the magnificent prey. The oxen immediately stopped, and, less frightened at the sight of a single enemy, turned back upon Hatteras, who stood to meet them, took aim, and fired at the first animal. The bullet struck it in the middle of the forehead, but did not stop its course. A second shot only made the beasts furious; they threw themselves on the unarmed huntsman, and had him down instantly.

"He is lost!" cried the doctor.

While Clawbonny pronounced these words in the accent of despair, Altamont started to go to Hatteras's succour, then he stopped, struggling with himself and his prejudices.

"No!" cried he, "that would be dastardly!" and he rushed forward to the theatre of the struggle with Clawbonny. His hesitation had not lasted half a

second. But if the doctor saw what was passing in the American's mind, Hatteras understood it, and would rather have let himself be killed than have implored the intervention of his rival. He had scarcely time to perceive it, however, for Altamont appeared close to him. Hatteras was on the ground trying to ward off the feet and horns of the two animals; but such an unequal struggle could not have lasted long. He was on the point of being torn to pieces when two shots were heard; Hatteras felt the bullets graze his head. Altamont flung away his discharged gun, and threw himself on the irritated animals. One of the oxen, hit in the heart, fell at once; the other in the height of fury was going to rip up the unfortunate captain when Altamont attacked him in front, and plunged one hand, armed with the snow-knife, into its open jaws; with the other he split open its head with a terrible blow from his axe. All this was done with marvellous rapidity—a lightning flash would have illuminated the whole scene. The second ox fell dead.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried Clawbonny.

Hatteras's life was saved, and he owed it to the man he detested more than any one else in the world. What passed in his soul in that instant is one of the secrets of the human heart that admits of no analysis. Without hesitation he advanced towards his rival, and said in a grave tone—

Altamont, you have saved my life."

"You saved mine first," answered the American.

There was a moment's silence, then Altamont added—

"We are quits."

"No, Altamont," answered the captain; "when the doctor drew you out of your icy tomb I ignored who

you were, and you have saved my life at the peril of yours, knowing who I am."

"You are a fellow-being," answered Altamont, "and an American, whatever else he may be, is no coward."

"No," cried the doctor, "he is a man!—a man like you, Hatteras!"

"And, like me, he shall partake of the glory that is before us!"

"The glory of going to the North Pole?" said Altamont.

"Yes," said the captain, proudly.

"I had guessed right, then!" cried the American. "Truth before self-love! No, I never had the great idea that has brought you thus far; it was trying to get through the North-West Passage, and nothing else."

"Altamont," said Hatteras, holding out his hand to the American, "be our companion in glory, and come with us to discover the North Pole!"

Altamont took the proffered hand and pressed it warmly. When they turned towards the doctor they saw tears in his eyes.

"Ah," said he, drying his eyes, "what a happy man you have made me! You have sacrificed that miserable question of nationality to join in a common success. You see that England and America have nothing to do with us, and that a strong sympathy ought to bind us together against the dangers of our expedition. If the North Pole is reached, what matters who discovers it?"

The two new friends felt themselves more united still by the friendship which the good doctor felt for both of them. He talked of the folly of national rivalries, and of the good understanding so necessary to

men situated as they were. His words came from the depths of his heart.

"And now," said he, "it is my turn to do something. As I am no good as a sportsman, I must utilise my other talents."

And so saying he began to cut up the ox, and in a few minutes had skilfully taken about a hundred pounds of appetising meat from its body; he divided it into three parts; they each took one and set out on their way back to Fort Providence. At ten o'clock in the evening the sportsmen, marching in the oblique rays of the sun, reached Doctor's House, where Johnson and Bell had prepared a good meal for them. But before going to the table the doctor said triumphantly, pointing to his two hunting companions—

"You know, Johnson, that I took an Englishman and an American with me, did I not?"

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny," said the boatswain.

"Well, I have brought back two brothers."

The sailors shook hands joyfully with Altamont; the doctor related to them what the American captain had done for the English captain, and that night the snow-house sheltered five happy men.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAST PREPARATIONS.

THE next day the weather changed, the cold came back, and snow and rain succeeded each other during several days. Bell had finished his boat; it was perfectly adapted to the ends it had to serve; part of it had a deck, and its sides were high, so that it could be put to sea in bad weather with its mainsail and jib; it was light enough to be drawn on the sledge without burdening the dogs too much. At last a most important change for our winterers took place in the state of the Polar basin. The ice began to break up in the middle of the bay; the highest icebergs, incessantly mined by the shocks, were only waiting for a heavy tempest to drift away from their moorings. Hatteras would not wait for the breaking up of the ice before beginning his excursion. As they were going by land, it did not matter much whether the sea was open or not; he therefore fixed their departure for June 25th; by that date all their preparations could be finished. Johnson and Bell then set about putting the sledge into working order; the framework was made solid, and the runners well mended. The travellers wished to take advantage of the few weeks' fine weather that

Nature grants to the hyperborean countries for their excursion.

Some days before their departure, on the 20th of June, the icebergs left some free passes, which were taken advantage of to try the boat as far as Cape Washington. The sea was far from being open, but it no longer presented a solid surface and it would have been impossible to attempt walking across the broken ice-fields. The boat showed her good qualities during the half-day's navigation. As they were returning the navigators witnessed a curious incident. It was the capture of a seal by a gigantic bear; the animal was, fortunately, too much occupied to see the boat, for he would certainly have chased it; he was lying in wait by a crevice in the ice-field, into which the seal had evidently plunged. The bear was watching for its re-appearance with the patience of a sportsman or angler. He was immovable and silent, giving no sign of life. But all at once the surface of the hole became agitated; the amphibian came up to breathe; the bear lay stretched out on the ground and put its two paws round the crevice. An instant after the seal reappeared and put its head out of the hole, but it had not time to plunge again; the bear tightened its paws round the seal's neck, and pulled it right out of its favourite element. Then came a rapid struggle; the seal defended itself for a few minutes, but was soon stifled on its adversary's breast; the bear carried it off without trouble, although it was very large, and, jumping from one block of ice to another till it reached the land, disappeared with its prey.

"That animal has rather too many paws at his disposition; I am glad to see the back of him," cried Johnson.

The boat soon regained the little creek that Bell had managed for it. There were still four days to wait before the moment fixed for the departure of Hatteras and his companions. The captain hurried on the last preparations; he was in haste to leave New America, that land which was not his and which he had not named; he did not feel at home. On the 22nd of June they began to load the sledge with the camping materials, the tent and provisions. The travellers took two hundred pounds of salt meat, three cases of preserved vegetables, fifty pounds of pickle and limejuice, six quarters of flour, packets of cress and cochlearia, furnished by the doctor's plantations; adding two hundred pounds of powder, instruments, arms, smaller baggage, the boat, the halkett-boat, and the weight of the sledge; the whole made a weight of about fifteen hundred pounds to be drawn—a great deal for four dogs; it was the more irksome to them from having to work continually; the Esquimaux relay them every four days; but the travellers meant to help them when necessary, and only meant to take short days' marches. The distance from Victoria Bay to the Pole was at the most only 355 miles from Victoria Bay; it would take a month to reach it if they did twelve miles a day; when land failed they counted upon finishing the journey in the boat, without fatigue for dogs or men.

The health of both was excellent; the doctor's counsels had kept them from the maladies inherent to the climate. They had grown rather thinner, which delighted Clawbonny; but they had now become used to their rough existence, both in body and mind, and now the acclimatised men could face the greatest trials of fatigue or cold without fearing to succumb to

them; not one of them doubted about the ultimate success of their enterprise, and they looked forward to returning home after it was accomplished. The doctor engaged them to put themselves in training some time beforehand.

"I don't ask you to imitate the English runners who weigh eighteen pounds less after two days' training, and twenty-five after five, but we must do a little to put ourselves in the best possible condition for so long a journey. The first principle of training is to get thinner, and the results are almost incredible. People who could not run a mile without losing breath before they went into training do easily twenty-five afterwards. It is reported that a certain Townsend ran a hundred miles in twelve hours, without stopping."

"That was fine," said Johnson, "and if we must get thinner still——"

"It is not necessary, but, without exaggerating, it can't be denied that it is a good thing to train; it gives more resistance to the bones, more elasticity to the muscles, fineness to the hearing, and precision to the sight."

At last, trained or not, the travellers were ready on the 23rd of June; it was a Sunday, and the day was consecrated to absolute repose. The instant for departure approached, and the inhabitants of Fort Providence did not await it without emotion. Leaving the snow-hut that so well served as a house, Victoria Bay, and the hospitable coast was not all pleasure. Should they find the buildings there when they returned? Would not the sun's rays finish melting their fragile walls? On the whole, they had been happy there! The doctor recalled all this to the

remembrance of his companions at their evening meal, and he did not forget to thank Heaven for its visible protection. At last the hour for sleeping came; they went to bed earlier so as to get up early. Thus passed the last night at Fort Providence.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MARCH NORTHWARD.

THE next day, at daybreak, Hatteras gave the signal for departure. The dogs were harnessed to the sledge; they had been well fed, allowed to rest, and comfortably lodged during the winter, and there was no reason why they should not be required to work hard through the summer. The Greenland dogs were good animals after all; their savage nature had been gradually transformed, and they had lost their resemblance to the wolves and had become more like Dick, that model of the canine race—in short, they were getting civilised.

Dick had certainly helped to educate them; he had given them lessons in politeness, and preached by example; like an Englishman, Dick did not fraternise at once, especially with dogs who had not been introduced to him; but by dint of sharing the same privations and the same fortune these animals of different race became friendly. Dick, who was a kindly dog, made the first advances, and all the four-footed tribe soon became a troop of friends. When the doctor caressed the Greenland dogs Dick showed no jealousy.

They set out at six in the morning, and were favoured with very fine weather; after they had

rounded the bay and passed Cape Washington they made straight north, directed by Hatteras; at seven o'clock the travellers had lost sight of the lighthouse cone and Fort Providence. Hatteras felt the difference between the circumstances attending the setting out on that excursion and those that attended him when he set out in search of coal. Then he left revolt and despair behind him on board his ship, and he was not certain of finding what he went to seek; he left a crew half dead with cold, and set out with companions enfeebled by the miseries of an Arctic winter; he was going south when all his hopes lay north. Now, on the contrary, surrounded by healthy and vigorous friends, sustained, encouraged, and helped, he was marching towards the Pole, the goal of his life! No man had ever been so near acquiring that immense glory for his country and himself. The doctor liked to think that these reflections were present to the mind of the captain, and could scarcely doubt it on seeing him so ardent. The good doctor rejoiced with his friend, and since the reconciliation of the two captains, of his two friends, he thought himself the happiest of men—he, to whom all ideas of envy, hatred, and competition were unknown—he, the best of created beings. What would happen during the journey, or what would result from it, he ignored, but it began well, and that was a great deal. The western coast-line of New America was lengthened by a suite of bays beyond Cape Washington; in order to avoid such an immense circuit, the travellers, after getting over the first declivities of Bell Mount, directed their course northward by the upper plateaux. It was a great saving of distance; Hatteras wished, unless unforeseen obstacles of mountains or straits

should prevent, to draw a straight line of 350 miles from Fort Providence to the Pole.

The march was easy; the elevated plains were carpeted with hard snow, over which the sledge glided easily, and the men could walk surely and rapidly in their snow-shoes. The thermometer was at 37° The weather was not quite settled; it was now misty, now clear; but neither cold nor storms would have stopped travellers so determined to push forward. The compass easily indicated the road; the needle moved with less hesitation as it got farther from the magnetic pole; it is true that, once the magnetic point passed, it turned back towards it and pointed south, thus to say, to the north; but this inverse indication did not make the calculation embarrassing. Besides, the doctor invented a simple system of landmarks that prevented them having to use the compass much; once their situation established, they looked for some object situated due north about two or three miles in front; they then marched towards it till they reached it; then they chose another point in the same direction; by that means they never got much out of the straight road.

They walked about twenty miles in twelve hours during the first days of the journey; the rest of the time was consecrated to rest; the tent afforded a sufficient shelter at night. The temperature showed a tendency to get higher; the snow melted completely in places, according to the caprices of the ground, whilst other places kept their immaculate whiteness. They often had to cross great pools where the water came half-way up their legs; they laughed at their dripping condition, and the doctor was glad to meet with these unexpected baths.

"Water has no right to wet us in this country," he

said; "that element ought only to exist here in a solid state or as a gas; ice or vapour it may pretend to, but to water it ought not."

They did not forget sport during their march, as they required fresh food. Altamont and Bell, without going too far away, searched the neighbouring ravines; they shot ptarmigans, geese, and a few grey hares; these animals passed gradually from confidence to fear; they became very difficult to approach. Without Dick the sportsmen would not have accomplished much. Hatteras recommended them not to go more than a mile away, for he had not a day, nor an hour, to lose, as they could only count upon three months of fine weather. Besides, every one was wanted at the sledge when the way became difficult, in narrow defiles or inclined plateaux; then they all harnessed themselves to keep the vehicle steady, drawing, pushing, or sustaining it; more than once they were obliged to unload it entirely, and even that did not prevent shock, and consequently damages, which Bell repaired as well as he could. The travellers on the third day met with a lake several acres in extent, and still quite frozen from its eastern situation, sheltered from the sun; the ice was even strong enough to support the weight of the travellers and the sledge. The ice seemed to date from a far-off winter, for the lake could never thaw on account of its situation; it was a compact mirror over which the Arctic summers had no control; the banks were covered with dry snow, the underlayers of which evidently belonged to preceding years. From that point the ground inclined visibly, from whence the doctor concluded that it could not extend far north; it was very probable that New America was only an island, and did not extend to the Pole. The soil grew

more level, a few little hills alone appeared on the west, looking less from their distance, and lost in a bluish mist.

The travellers had not suffered much from fatigue till then; they only suffered from the reverberation of the sun's rays on the snow; the intense reflection might give them snow-blindness, impossible to avoid. At any other season they would have travelled by night to avoid this inconvenience, but there was no night then. Happily the snow had a tendency to melt, and lost much of its brilliancy.

The temperature rose on the 28th of June to 45° above zero; this rising of the temperature was accompanied by abundant rain, which the travellers received stoically, even with pleasure; it came to accelerate the decomposition of the snow; they were obliged to put on their buckskin moccasins, and change the runners of the sledge. The march was retarded, but still they advanced. Sometimes the doctor picked up round or flat stones, like shingle worn by the waves, and then he thought he was near to the Polar basin; however, the plain stretched out as far as the eye could reach. It offered no vestige of habitation, neither huts, nor cairns, nor Esquimaux dwellings; our travellers were evidently the first to tread this new country; the Greenlanders who inhabit the Arctic lands never go so far, and yet in this country the miserable creatures, always hungry, would have found plenty of food; bears were seen following the little troop to the leeward, without showing any intention of attacking it; in the distance musked oxen and reindeer appeared in immense herds; the doctor would have liked to catch some of the latter to reinforce the dogs, but they were very shy, and impossible to take alive.

On the 29th Bell killed a fox, and Altamont was fortunate enough to bring down a musked ox of average size after having given his companions a great idea of his skill and *sang-froid*; he was a marvellous hunter, and the doctor, who appreciated it, admired him much. The ox was cut up, and furnished fresh and abundant food. These chance meals were always received with pleasure; those who cared least about good eating could not help looking with satisfaction at the slices of fresh meat. The doctor laughed at himself when he caught himself in ecstasy before the succulent morsels.

"We need not be ashamed of it," he said; "eating is an important thing in Polar expeditions."

"Above all," answered Johnson, "when it depends on a shot more or less skilful."

On the 30th the country, contrary to all expectation, became very hilly, as if it had been shaken by some volcanic commotion; sharp cones rose on all sides, and some of them attained a great height. A breeze from the south-east began to blow with violence, and soon became a veritable tempest; it wound about the snow-crowned rocks and the ice-mounts, which on land took the form of hummocks and icebergs; their presence on these elevated plateaux remained inexplicable even to the doctor, who explained most things. After the tempest came warm, damp weather; it was quite a thaw; on every side was heard the breaking up of the ice, mixing with the imposing roar of the avalanches.

The travellers took care not to march at the foot of a hill, or even to speak loudly, for the sound of their voices, by agitating the air, might occasion a catastrophe; they were witnesses of frequent and terrible falls of ice that they had not time to foresee; the principal

characteristic of a Polar avalanche is its instantaneity; in that they differ much from those of Norway and Switzerland; there a mass of snow is formed which gets larger by the addition of snow and rocks as it rolls and falls with increasing rapidity, devastating forests and burying villages, but taking some time over it; not so the Arctic avalanches; a block of ice moves and falls instantly; a cannon-ball is not more rapid, nor lightning quicker. The noise it makes in falling resembles thunder, and awakens echoes more plaintive than loud. Sometimes the transformations in the scenery were astonishing; a mountain became a plain by a rapid thaw; when the water in the fissures of the rocks froze in a single night it burst all obstacles, and was still more powerful when it became ice than when it became steam.

No accident, fortunately, happened to the sledge and its conductors; by dint of precaution all danger was avoided. Besides, the hilly country was not of vast extent, and three days after, on July 3rd, the travellers found themselves on easier plains. There they were astonished by a fresh phenomenon which scientific men studied long; the little troop was skirting a range of hills about fifty feet high, and extending for several miles; their eastern slopes were covered with snow, but with quite red snow. The travellers were surprised, and even a little terrified, at the first sight of this long crimson curtain. The doctor made haste to reassure his companions; he had heard of the phenomenon, and knew the chemical analysis made of it by Wollaston, De Candolle, and Baüer; he told them that red snow was to be met with, not only in the Arctic countries, but also in Switzerland amidst the Alps; De Saussure collected a considerable quantity on the Breven in 1760;

and, since, Captains Ross, Sabine, and other navigators have brought some of it from their boreal expeditions. Altamont questioned the doctor on the nature of this extraordinary substance, and learnt that the colouring was owing entirely to the presence of organic corpuscles; scientific men were a long time seeking to know if these corpuscles were animal or vegetable; they found out at last that they belonged to the family of microscopical fungi, of the species Uredo, and Baüer proposed calling them "Uredo niralis."

Then the doctor plunged his stick into the snow and showed his companions that the layer was nine feet deep, and he gave them to calculate how many of these fungi there were in a space of several miles, scientific men having counted as many as 43,000 in a square centimetre. By the appearance of the slope the colouring must have dated from a much earlier period, for the fungi do not decompose either in the evaporation or the fusion of the snow, and their colour does not change. The phenomenon, although explained, was none the less strange; the colour red is little met with in nature in large tracts; the reverberation of the sun's rays on this purple carpet produced strange effects; it gave to the surrounding objects, to the rocks, men, and animals, a flaming colour, as though they were lighted up by an inward fire, and when the snow melted it seemed as if torrents of blood were flowing down to the very feet of the travellers. The doctor, who had not been able to examine this substance when he perceived it on the crimson cliffs of Baffin's Bay, carefully collected several bottles. This red soil, the "Field of Blood," as the doctor called it, was only passed after a three hours' march, and the country resumed its habitual aspect.

CHAPTER XX.

FOOTMARKS ON THE SNOW.

A THICK fog lasted all day on the 4th of July. The northern route was maintained with difficulty; at every moment they were obliged to rectify it by the compass. Happily no accident happened during the obscurity; Bell only lost his snow-shoes, which he broke against a rocky projection.

"I thought," said Johnson, "that after having frequented the Mersey and the Thames we knew something about fogs, but I see I was mistaken."

"Well," answered Bell, "we ought to light torches like they do in Liverpool or London."

"Why not?" replied the doctor; "that's a good idea; they would not light the way much, but they would make us see the guide."

"But how are we to make the torches?" asked Bell.

"With some tow dipped in spirits of wine and fixed on the end of our sticks."

A quarter of an hour after the little troop was again marching on, lighted by torches, in the midst of the damp obscurity. But if they went more directly they went no quicker, and the fog lasted till the 6th of July,

when it became suddenly colder, and the wind carried off the fog. The doctor found that they had only made eight miles a day during the fog, after taking a careful observation of their position. On the 6th they hastened on to make up for lost time, and started very early. Altamont and Bell still marched on ahead to explore the ground and keep a look-out for game; Dick accompanied them; the weather had become clear and very dry with astonishing rapidity, and although the guides were two miles from the sledge, the doctor did not lose sight of one of their movements. He was much astonished at seeing them stop all at once, and remain in a state of stupefication; they seemed to be looking in front of them and sweeping the horizon. Then bending to the ground, they examined it attentively and got up surprised. Bell seemed to wish to go on, but Altamont stayed him with his hand.

"What can be the matter with them?" said the doctor to Johnson.

"I am looking at them too, Mr. Clawbonny, and I can't make them out."

"They have found some animal tracks," answered Hatteras.

"That can't be," answered the doctor.

"Why?"

"Because Dick would bark."

"They are footprints they are looking at, any way."

"Let us hurry on," said Hatteras; "we shall soon know what it is."

Johnson excited the dogs, who ran on more rapidly. In about twenty minutes the five travellers were reunited, and Hatteras, the doctor, and Johnson shared

the surprise of Altamont and Bell. Fresh footprints of men, visible and incontestable as though only made the day before, were scattered on the snow.

"They are Esquimaux," said Hatteras.

"They must be; here are the prints of their snow-shoes," said the doctor.

"What do you make of this footprint, then?" said Altamont, showing one repeated several times. "Does that belong to an Esquimaux?"

The doctor looked attentively, and was stupefied; the mark of a European shoe, with its nails, its sole and heel, was profoundly imprinted in the soil; there was no doubt about it.

"Europeans here!" cried Hatteras.

"That's evident," said Johnson.

"But," said the doctor, "that is so improbable that we must look well before we decide."

The doctor did look well, and was more and more astonished. The hero of Daniel Defoe was not more stupefied when he saw the footprint on the sand of his island; he felt afraid, but Hatteras was greatly disgusted. A European so near the Pole! They marched on to survey the tracks; they were repeated for about a quarter of a mile, then they inclined towards the west. When they arrived at that point they asked themselves if they should follow them any longer.

"No," said Hatteras. "We will——"

He was interrupted by an exclamation from the doctor, who had just picked up an object more convincing still. It was the objective of a pocket telescope.

"This time there is no doubt about it!" he said.

"Forward!" cried Hatteras.

He spoke so energetically that they all followed him,

and the sledge again began its interrupted march. They each surveyed the horizon carefully, except Hatteras, who was greatly angry, and wished to see nothing. However, as there was a risk of falling into a detachment of travellers, they were obliged to be cautious; it was really unfortunate to be preceded on that unknown route. The doctor, though he was not angry like Hatteras, could not help feeling vexed, notwithstanding his habitual philosophy. Altamont appeared just as much vexed, and Johnson and Bell growled menacing words between their teeth.

"Come," said the doctor, "do not let us be downhearted about it."

"It isn't worth going to the Pole to find that other folks have been there," said Johnson, without being heard by Altamont.

"And we can't help being certain," said Bell.

"No," replied the doctor, "the more I think about it, the more I tell myself that it is impossible, improbable, the more I see that the evidence of the shoeprint is incontestable. I should not have minded an Esquimaux, but a European!"

"The fact is that if we find all the beds taken in an inn at the end of the world it will be vexatious," answered Johnson.

"Particularly vexatious," answered Altamont.

"Well, we shall see," said the doctor.

That day passed without any new incident coming to confirm the presence of strangers on that part of New America, and at last they chose the place for their evening encampment. As a violent north wind had sprung up they were obliged to seek a shelter for the tent at the bottom of a ravine; the sky was menacing;

long clouds fled along rapidly; they were so low that they almost touched the ground, and the eye could scarcely follow them in their wild career; the tent could scarcely stand against the wind.

"There's a nasty night coming on," said Johnson, after supper.

"We must fasten the tent down with some big stones," said the doctor.

"You are right, Mr. Clawbonny, for if the wind carries off our tent, God knows when we shall catch it again."

The utmost precautions were, therefore, taken to ward off the danger, and the tired travellers tried to sleep. But it was impossible; the tempest was unchained, and rushed from south to north with incomparable violence; the clouds were scattered about like steam from a boiler that has just exploded; the last avalanches were precipitated into the ravines, and awoke all the echoes with the noise of their fall; the atmosphere seemed to be the theatre of a life-and-death combat between air and water, two elements formidable in their anger; fire alone was wanting to the battle. The excited ear could distinguish in the general roar particular noises, not those that accompany the fall of heavy bodies, but the sharp sound of breaking; and others clear and firm, like the snapping of steel. The latter were explained naturally by the breaking off of the avalanches, but the doctor did not know what to attribute the others to. Profiting by one of those anxious lullings of the wind when it seems to be taking breath to blow with greater violence, the travellers exchanged their suppositions.

"Those shocks," said the doctor, "sound as though

icebergs and ice-fields were knocking against each other."

"Yes," answered Altamont, "it seems as if the whole surface of the earth was being dislocated. Just listen."

"If we were near the sea," said the doctor, "I should believe it came from the breaking up of the ice."

"It is the only thing that explains the noise," answered Johnson.

"Perhaps we have reached the coast," said Hatteras.

"That is not impossible," answered the doctor. "Listen," he added after a violent cracking noise; "does not that sound like the crushing of ice-blocks? We must be very near the ocean."

"If we are," said Hatteras, "I shall not hesitate risking myself on the ice."

"There will be no need for that after such a tempest," answered the doctor; "we shall see to-morrow; if there are any travellers out to-night I pity them with all my heart, whoever they may be."

The tempest raged uninterruptedly for ten hours, and none of the men could get an instant's sleep; the night passed anxiously. Under such circumstances, a fresh incident, a tempest, an avalanche might cause a grave delay. The doctor would have much liked to go out and survey the state of things, but it was impossible in such a wind. Happily, the tempest grew calm in the early hours of the morning; they could leave the tent, which had so valiantly resisted; the doctor, Hatteras, and Johnson went to a hill about 300 feet high, which they did not find much difficulty in climbing. Their eyes then surveyed a metamorphosed country, made of rocks and sharp points, and entirely free from ice. It was summer suddenly following

winter, chased by a tempest; the snow shaved off by the tempest, as if by a sharp blade, had not had time to melt, and the soil appeared in all its primitive nakedness. But Hatteras only looked towards the north. There the horizon was bathed in blackish vapour.

"That looks as if the ocean were there," said the doctor.

"Yes, it must be," answered Hatteras.

"That colour is what we call the 'blink' of open sea," said Johnson.

"Precisely," said the doctor.

"Let us make haste back to the sledge, and hasten to the new ocean!" cried Hatteras.

"You must be delighted," said Clawbonny to the captain.

"Yes, certainly," he answered, enthusiastically; "in a short time we shall reach the Pole. Doesn't that prospect make you happy too, doctor?"

"Yes, I am always happy, above all when my friends are."

The three Englishmen returned to the ravine, and, the sledge ready, they raised the tent. They set out again, and each of them feared to find the footprints of the day before, but during the remainder of the way not a vestige of foreign or native footsteps was to be seen on the soil. Three hours after they arrived at the coast.

"The sea! the sea!" they cried with one voice.

"And the open sea!" cried the captain.

It was ten o'clock in the morning. The tempest had freed the Polar basin; the ice, broken up and dispersed, was drifting in all directions; the largest blocks, form-

ing icebergs, had "weighed anchor," as the sailors say, and floated about in open sea. The field had been rudely shaken by the wind; a hail of fine ice-blades, splinters, and dust lay on the surrounding rocks. The little that remained of the ice-field round the banks seemed mildewed, for it was covered with seaweed and discoloured varec. The ocean extended as far as the eye could reach; no island or new land limited the sight. The coast formed two capes on the east and on the west, which sloped gradually down to the sea; the sea broke over their extremities in white flakes, and the soil of New America ended under the Polar Ocean, without convulsions, tranquilly and by a slight inclination; it was rounded by an open bay, limited by two promontories. In the centre a projecting rock made a natural little port, sheltered on three points of the compass; it penetrated into the land by the wide bed of a brook, formed by the melted snow, and now a torrent. After Hatteras had surveyed the configuration of the coast he resolved to launch the boat that very day, to take the sledge to pieces and embark it for future excursions. These preparations would take the rest of the day, so they dressed the tent, and after a refreshing meal they set to work; during this time the doctor took his instruments to determine the hydrography of a part of the bay. Hatteras hastened the work, for he was in haste to start; he wanted to be first to leave *terra firma* in case some detachment should reach the sea.

At five o'clock in the evening Johnson and Bell had finished. The boat balanced herself gracefully in the little harbour, its mast erect, its jib and mainsail furled; the provisions and pieces of the sledge embarked, there remained nothing but the tent and some materials of

encampment to embark the next day. When the doctor came back he found everything ready. Seeing the boat quietly sheltered from the wind; it came into his head to give this little port Altamont's name. He experienced no difficulty in carrying out his idea; every one was willing; so the port was called Altamont Harbour. According to the doctor's calculations, it was situated in latitude 87° 05′ by longitude 118° 35′ in Greenwich meridian—that is to say, at less than 3° from the Pole. The travellers had cleared a distance of 200 miles from Victoria Bay to Port Altamont.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OPEN SEA.

THE next morning Johnson and Bell embarked the materials for encampment, and at eight o'clock their preparations for departure were terminated. As they were leaving the coast the doctor began to think of the travellers whose footprints they had seen. He asked himself if these men too were bound for the Pole, if they had any means of crossing the Polar ocean, if they should meet them on the way. No vestige of them had been met with for three days, and certainly, whatever else they had done, they had not reached Altamont Harbour. It was a place virgin of any human footstep. However, the doctor, pursued by his thoughts, wished to survey the country once more, and he climbed an eminence of a hundred feet; from thence his eye could sweep the whole southern horizon. Arrived at the summit he put his pocket telescope up to his eye. What was his surprise to see nothing with it—not even objects near him! That seemed to him very singular; he examined it again, and at last looked at the telescope; it had lost its objective. It was a sudden revelation; he cried out so loudly that his companions heard him, and their anxiety was great

at seeing him run down the hill as fast as he could.

"Well, what is it now?" said Johnson.

The doctor was out of breath, and could not utter a word; at last he got out these:—

"The footprints—the detachment——"

"Have you seen any one?" asked Hatteras.

"No! no!" continued the doctor, "the objective—my objective—mine!"

And he showed his incomplete instrument.

"Ah!" cried the American, "have you lost——"

"Yes! and the footprints were our own,' cried the doctor. "We lost ourselves in the fog, and made a circuit."

"But the shoe-print?" said Hatteras.

"Bell's shoe; don't you remember he broke his snow-shoes, and walked all day in the snow?"

"So I did," said Bell.

And the error was so evident that they all burst out laughing, except Hatteras, who, however, was not the least happy at the discovery.

"How stupid we were!" said the doctor, when they had done laughing. "What suppositions we made! Europeans here indeed! Decidedly we must think before we speak. Well, now we are set at rest on that point we have only to start."

A quarter of an hour after they had all taken their places in the boat, which, under her mainsail and jib, soon left Altamont Harbour. Their maritime excursion began on Wednesday, the 10th of July; the navigators were then very near the Pole, at a distance of exactly 175 miles; if there was any land situated on that point of the globe the sea voyage must be very

short. There was not much wind, but it was favourable. The thermometer was at 50° above zero, and the weather was quite warm. The boat had not suffered from its journey on the sledge; it was in good condition, and easily manœuvred. Johnson steered; the doctor, Bell, and the American settled themselves as well as they could amongst the baggage, placed partly on the deck and partly underneath it. Hatteras, in the bow, fixed his eyes on the mysterious point towards which he felt himself drawn like the magnet to the magnetic pole. He wished to be the first to discover any shore that might be seen. He noticed that the surface of the Polar ocean was made of short waves, like those that hemmed-in seas produce. He saw in that an indication that land was near, and the doctor shared his opinion.

It is easy to understand why Hatteras was so desirous to find a continent at the North Pole. He would have been terribly disappointed if the uncertain sea had stretched itself where a portion of land, however small, was necessary to his plans. How could he give a special name to a point in the ocean? How could he plant his country's flag in it? How take possession in the Queen's name of a part of the liquid element?

Nothing limited the Polar basin to the line of the horizon; it mixed with the clear sky of these zones. Some icebergs floating in the offing seemed to make a passage for the bold navigators. The aspect of this region was a strange one. Perhaps it was the nervous state of the travellers that made them think it looked so. However, the doctor's description of the scene corresponds with that of Penny, who said that the sea seemed animated by millions of living creatures. The

liquid plain, coloured by vague shades, was strangely transparent, so that the eye could penetrate to untold depths; it seemed as if the Polar basin was lighted underneath like an immense aquarium; it was doubtless caused by some electrical phenomenon. The boat seemed suspended over a bottomless abyss. Innumerable flocks of birds fled over these strange waters like thick thunder-clouds. Birds of passage and sea-birds, all the specimens of the great aquatic family, from the albatross, so common to austral countries, to the penguin or razor-bill of the Arctic seas, were there. Their cries were continual and deafening. The doctor was a good naturalist, but he could not remember the names of them all, and he caught himself bending his head when their wings beat the air with indescribable power. Some of these aërial monsters measured twenty feet across when their wings were extended; they covered the boat entirely in their flight, and there were birds by legions there whose nomenclature has never appeared in the London *Index Ornithologus*.

When the doctor turned to look at the surface of the sea he met with animals no less astonishing, and, amongst others, the meduses, the width of which sometimes reached thirty feet; they served as food to the aërial population, and floated like veritable islands in the midst of the gigantic varec and alga. There was a great deal of difference between these and the microscopical meduses observed by Scoresby in the Greenland seas, whose number in a space of two square miles he estimated would have taken 80,000 individuals, occupied night and day, to count. The scene was no less marvellous in the sea, where thousands of fish of all sorts were to be seen in the clear water; sometimes these

animals plunged rapidly into the depth of the liquid mass, where they disappeared, growing smaller and smaller like phantasmagoria; sometimes, quitting the depths of the ocean, they mounted, gradually getting bigger, to its surface. The marine monsters seemed nowise afraid at the appearance of the boat; they touched it as it passed with their enormous fins; where professional whalers would have been rightly terrified, our travellers did not even know their danger, and yet some of these inhabitants of the sea were of formidable proportions.

The young seals played together; the unicorn fish, armed with its long, straight, and conical arm, which it uses to saw the ice-fields, pursued the timid cetaceans, innumerable whales spouting columns of water and mucilage; the north-caper, with its loose tail and training fins, cutting the waves with wonderful rapidity, feeding itself as it goes with animals as rapid as itself, whilst the idler white whale swallows tranquilly molluscs as indolent as it is.

Farther down the Greenland anarnacks, long and black, the giant cachalots, a species spread over all seas, swimming in the midst of reefs of ambergris or having Homeric battles that reddened the ocean over a surface of several miles; the cylindrical physals, the large Labrador tegusik; the dauphins with sabre-like spines, all the family of seals and sea-horses, marine dogs, horses, bears, lions, and elephants, seemed to be feeding in their ocean meadow, and the doctor admired these innumerable animals as easily as he would have done the fish in the Zoological Gardens.

The atmosphere in these regions was supernaturally clear; it seemed charged with oxygen; the navigators

breathed it with delight, and it seemed to give them a fuller life; they were a prey to a veritable combustion; their digestive, respiratory, and other functions acted with superhuman energy; their ideas, excited in their brains, became grandiose; they lived a day in an hour. The boat glided peacefully in the midst of these marvels, impelled by a slight wind, which the albatrosses fanned into activity with their great wings.

Towards evening Hatteras and his companions lost sight of the coast of New America. Night reigned in the temperate and equinoctial zones; but here the sun traced a spiral parallel with that of the ocean. The boat, bathed in its oblique rays, could not leave the luminous centre which moved as she did. The animated beings of the hyperborean regions felt, however, the approach of evening as if the radiant planet had disappeared behind the horizon. Birds, fish, and cetaceans disappeared, no one could tell where. In the depths of the air or sea? To their cries and the movement of the waves agitated by the respiration of the marine monsters soon succeeded a profound silence; the waves slept in an insensible undulation, and night exercised its peaceful influence under the glittering rays of the sun.

Since her departure from Altamont Harbour the boat had gained one degree north; the next day nothing of it appeared on the horizon, neither the high peaks that signal land in the distance nor those particular signs by which sailors know its approach. The wind was fair, and there was very little swell; the birds and fishes came back as numerous as on the day before; the doctor, as he leaned over the waves, could see the cetaceans leave their deep retreats and mount gradually to the surface of the sea; some icebergs, and here and

there some scattered blocks, alone broke the monotony of the ocean. But, on the whole, ice was rare, and would not have hindered the passage of a ship. The boat was then ten degrees above the Frozen Pole, and according to the parallels of temperature it was the same as if she had been ten degrees below. It was not astonishing, therefore, that the sea should be free at that epoch, as it must have been also near Disko Bay in Baffin's Bay. This observation has great practical importance, for if ever whalers can get so far north, either by the seas to the north of America or by those north of Asia, they are assured of rapidly getting a cargo, for that part of the ocean seems to be the general resort of whales, seals, and all marine animals.

At twelve o'clock there was still nothing to be seen on the horizon: the doctor began to doubt the existence of a continent under these elevated latitudes. But when he reflected he felt forced to believe in the existence of a boreal continent; in the first days of the world, after the cooling of the earth's surface, the waters, formed by the condensation of atmospheric vapours, must have obeyed the centrifugal force, and have rushed to the equatorial zones, abandoning the immovable extremities of the globe. From thence the necessary immersion of countries in the neighbourhood of the Pole. Both Hatteras and the doctor found this reasoning good. The captain tried to pierce through the mists on the horizon. His telescope never left his eyes. He sought in the colour of the water, in the form of the waves, the indications of approaching land. As he stood there, his attitude full of energetic desire and anxious interrogation, any one would have admired him who did not know his thoughts.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE APPROACH TO THE POLE.

THE time went by in the midst of this uncertainty. Nothing was to be seen on the well-marked circumference, nothing but water and sky, not even a scrap of those terrestrial herbs which made Christopher Columbus tremble when he was on the way to the discovery of America. At last, towards six in the evening, a vapour of undecided form, but sensibly elevated, appeared above the level of the sea; the sky was perfectly clear, so that the vapour could not be a cloud; it disappeared by moments and reappeared, as if agitated. Hatteras was the first to observe this phenomenon; he kept his telescope fixed upon it, and examined it attentively for an hour. All at once some indication made him stretch out his arm towards the horizon and cry out—

"Land! land!"

At those words they all got up as if by an electrical commotion. A sort of smoke was seen above the sea.

"I see! I see!" cried the doctor.

"Yes, certainly—yes," said Johnson.

"It is a cloud," said Altamont.

"Land! land!" answered Hatteras, with a conviction not to be shaken, and the five navigators examined

it again with the greatest attention. But, as it often happens with objects that their distance renders indistinct, the point noticed seemed to have disappeared. At last they saw it again, and the doctor thought he saw a rapid light, twenty or twenty-five miles north.

"It is a volcano!" said he.

"A volcano under so elevated a latitude?" asked Altamont.

"Why not?" continued the doctor. "Is not Iceland a volcanic land?"

"Yes, Iceland," answered the American; "but so near the Pole?"

"Well, our illustrious countryman, Commodore James Ross, found two volcanoes on the austral continent, which he named the Erebus and the Terror; they were in full activity, and were situated in longitude 170° by latitude 78°! Therefore, why should not volcanoes exist at the North Pole?"

"It is possible, certainly," answered Altamont.

"Ah!" cried the doctor, "I see it distinctly; it is a volcano!"

"Well," said Hatteras, "we will run right on to it."

He gave orders to that effect, but the manœuvre sent the boat away from the noticed point, and it could not be found again. The proximity of the coast could no longer be doubted. In twenty-four hours their voyage would be accomplished, and they would set foot on soil that no human foot had ever trodden. However, no one manifested the joy which such a discovery might be expected to produce; each one asked himself what sort of a country it could be, so near the Pole. Animals seemed to avoid it. In the evening, the birds, instead of seeking a refuge there, fled south-

ward. Was it, then, so inhospitable that a seamew or a ptarmigan could not find an asylum in it? Even the fish, the large cetaceans, fled rapidly from the coast through the transparent water. From whence came this sentiment of repulsion, if not of terror, common to all the animated beings that haunt this part of the globe?

Night came, and the travellers felt sleep make their eyelids heavy. It was Hatteras's watch. He took the helm; the doctor, Altamont, Johnson, and Bell, stretched on the seats, went to sleep, one after the other, and were soon plunged in the land of dreams.

Hatteras wished to keep awake; he did not want to lose any of the precious time; but the slow movement of the boat cradled him insensibly, and he fell, in spite of himself, into a deep sleep. The boat hardly moved, as there was scarcely enough wind to fill the sail. In the distance a few icebergs reflected the rays of the sun, and formed luminous patches in full ocean. Hatteras began to dream. His rapid thought wandered over the whole of his existence; he ascended the river of his life with the rapidity peculiar to dreams, which no one as yet has been able to calculate; he went over his wintering Victoria Bay, Fort Providence, Doctor's House, the finding of the American under the ice. Then he went farther back in thought; he dreamed of his ship, of the burning of the Forward and his companions, the traitors who had brutally abandoned him. What had become of them? He thought of Shandon, Wall, and the brutal Pen. Where were they? Had they been able to reach Baffin's Bay across the ice? Then his imagination went farther back still, and he thought of his departure from England, his preceding voyages, his abortive endeavours, his misfortunes. Then he forgot

his present position, his approaching success, and his half-realised hopes. From his joy his dream threw him into grief. It went on thus for two hours; then his thought assumed another aspect; it took him to the Pole; he saw himself setting foot on an English continent, and unfurling the flag of the United Kingdom.

Whilst Hatteras slumbered thus, an enormous cloud of an olive colour rose from the horizon and darkened the ocean. Tempests invade the Arctic seas with the rapidity of lightning. The vapours engendered in the equatorial countries come to be condensed above the immense glaciers of the North, and the masses of air replace them with irresistible violence. At the first gusts of wind the captain and his companions threw off slumber, ready to manœuvre. The sea rose in high waves on slender foundations; the boat, tossed about by a violent swell, plunged into deep abysses, or oscillated on the point of a sharp wave with an inclination of forty-five degrees.

Hatteras had seized the helm again with a firm hand; sometimes it pushed him and made him bend. Johnson and Bell were occupied in lading out the water from the boat.

"We didn't reckon upon this," said Altamont, holding on to the seat.

"We must expect anything here," answered the doctor.

These words were exchanged in the midst of the noise of wind and waves. The violence of the wind reduced the waves to impalpable liquid dust. It became almost impossible to hear each other. It was difficult to keep to the north; the thick mist prevented them seeing more than a few yards in front; every guiding point had disappeared. To their excited minds this sudden tempest seemed like a solemn warning that Nature forbade access

to the Pole. However, the energetic faces of the men showed that they would neither yield to wind, nor waves, but would go on to the end. They struggled thus all day, risking their lives at every moment, getting no nearer the north, but not losing distance gained; they were wet through by warm rain and sea-water, which the wind threw in their faces; the cries of birds mingled with the wind.

But towards six in the evening they felt a sudden calm. The wind fell with a miraculous suddenness. The sea became as calm as if a swell had not been raising it for twelve hours. The tempest seemed to have respected that part of the Polar ocean. What had happened? An extraordinary and inexplicable phenomenon of which Captain Sabine was a witness during his voyages in the Greenland seas. The fog had not cleared away, but had become strangely luminous. The boat was sailing in a zone of electric light without heat. The mast, sails, and rigging stood out black against a background of luminous air; the navigators were plunged in a bath of transparent rays, and their faces were lighted up by the reflection. The sudden calming of that portion of the ocean was doubtless caused by the ascending movement of columns of air, whilst the tempest, like a cyclone, turned round this peaceful centre. But the fiery atmosphere brought an idea into Hatteras's mind.

"The volcano!" he cried.

"Is it possible?" asked Bell.

"No, no," answered the doctor. "We should be stifled if its flames reached us!"

"Perhaps it is the reflection of it on the fog," said Altamont.

"No, it cannot be that either, for if it was we should be near land, and hear the noise of the eruption."

"What can it be, then?" asked the captain.

"It is a cosmic phenomenon," answered the doctor, "and a rare one. If we continue our route we shall get out of this luminous sphere into the obscurity of the tempest again."

"Whatever we get into we will keep on," answered Hatteras.

"Yes," cried his companions, who did not dream of taking rest in the tranquil basin.

The sail hung from the shining mast in fiery folds; the oars dipped in glittering waves, and seemed to raise billows of sparks made of drops of luminous water. Hatteras, compass in hand, kept a northward direction; little by little the fog grew less luminous and transparent; the wind was heard roaring within a few cables' length, and soon the boat, bending under a violent gale, entered again into the zone of the tempest. But the gale had happily veered south, and the boat could run before the wind, straight to the Pole, running the risk of foundering, but rushing along in mad speed; if any rock had been in the way she must infallibly have been broken to pieces. However, not one of these men raised an objection; not one spoke of prudence. They were taken with the thirst of danger and adventure. They went on thus, not blindly but blinded, finding the frightful rapidity too slow for their impatience. Hatteras held the helm in its imperturbable direction, in the midst of waves foaming under the whip of the tempest.

The approach to the coast began to be felt; strange symptoms were in the air. All at once the fog opened like a curtain torn by the wind, and during the space of a lightning flash they could see a volley of flames rise to the sky.

"The volcano! the volcano!" was the cry that escaped them all; but the fantastic vision had disappeared; the wind veered suddenly round to the south-east, whirled the boat round, and compelled her to fly from the inaccessible land.

"Malediction!" cried Hatteras, "we were not three miles from the coast."

Hatteras could not resist the violence of the tempest, but he would not yield to it, and shifted with the wind, which blew more furiously than ever. The boat was often thrown so much on her side that it was to be feared that the keel would turn up out of the water; still she managed to rise again under the action of the rudder, like a steed whose knees bend and who is pulled up by the spur of his rider. Hatteras, his hair blown about by the wind, and his hand on the helm, seemed to be the soul of the bark and to be one with her, like the man-horse, or the centaurs of old. Suddenly a frightful spectacle rose before them. At less than ten cables' length from them an iceberg balanced itself on the foaming waves; it rose and fell like the boat, and threatened to crush her in its fall, or even by its touch. But with the danger of being precipitated into the abyss there appeared another, no less terrible; for the floating iceberg was covered with white bears, crowded together and mad with terror. The iceberg reeled about and sometimes bent at angles so acute that the animals rolled on the top of one another. Their growls mixed with the roar of the tempest, and a formidable concert escaped from the floating menagerie. If the ice-mountain lopped over, the bears would certainly try to board the boat. During a quarter of an hour, which seemed as long as a century, the boat and iceberg sailed

together, sometimes separated by twenty cables, sometimes nearly touching each other; sometimes the boat was so near that the bears could have let themselves fall into it. The Greenland dogs trembled with fear; Dick was immovable.

Hatteras and his companions were silent; they did not even think of tacking about to get out of the frightful neighbourhood, and they kept to their route with inflexible vigour. A vague sentiment, more like astonishment than terror, had taken possession of them; they admired the terrifying spectacle which completed the struggle of the elements.

At last the iceberg sailed gradually away, pushed by the wind, which the boat resisted with her mainsail, and it disappeared in the fog, showing its presence by the far-off growls of its monstrous crew. At that moment the tempest redoubled its fury; the bark, raised up out of the waves, began to turn with a giddy rapidity; its mainsail was torn off, and fled away like a large white bird; a sort of maelstrom had formed itself amongst the waves; the travellers, caught in the whirlpool, turned with such speed that the water-lines seemed not to move, notwithstanding their incalculable swiftness. They were gradually sinking; a powerful suction drew them to the bottom of the gulf, and was swallowing them up alive. They all five rose and looked at each other in terror. The vertigo was gaining upon them, when all at once the boat rose perpendicularly. Her bow passed the line of whirlpool; she fled out of the centre of attraction, and escaped by the tangent of the circle, which turned about a thousand times in a second; she was thrown out with the rapidity of a cannon. Altamont, the doctor, Johnson, and Bell were dashed down on to their seats. When they rose, Hatteras had disappeared. It was two o'clock in the morning.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ENGLISH STANDARD.

AFTER the first moment of astonishment a cry escaped from the four men.

"Hatteras!" said the doctor.

"Disappeared!" said Johnson and Bell.

"Lost!"

They looked around them. Nothing was to be seen on the stormy sea. Dick barked in despair; he wanted to throw himself into the sea, and Bell could scarcely prevent him.

"Take the helm, Altamont," said the doctor; "we must do all we can to find our unfortunate captain!"

Johnson and Bell rowed vigorously. Altamont seized the helm, and the helm obeyed him. They spent an hour looking for Hatteras on the theatre of the catastrophe, but in vain. The poor captain was lost—lost so near the Pole, near the end of all his ambition! The doctor called, cried, let off firearms; Dick joined his lamentable bark to his voice; but no one answered to the calls of the captain's two friends. Then a profound grief took possession of Clawbonny; his face sank into his hands, and his companions heard him weeping. At that distance from land, without an oar or spar to cling to, Hatteras could not have

reached it alive, and if he did at last touch the desired haven, it would be as a mangled corpse. After an hour's search they were obliged to continue their route northwards and struggle against the dying fury of the tempest.

At five in the morning of July 11th the wind calmed, the swell gradually lowered, the sky resumed its Polar clearness, and less than three miles off land showed itself in all its splendour. The new land was only an island, or rather a volcano placed like a lighthouse at the World's Boreal Pole. The mountain was in full eruption, and vomited a mass of burning stones and incandescent rock; it seemed agitated by reiterated shocks like the respiration of a giant; the projected stones were sent high up in the air in the midst of jets of intense flame, and the streams of lava ran down its sides in impetuous torrents; here flaming serpents crawled amidst smoking rocks; there burning cascades fell in the midst of a purple vapour, and, lower down, a river of fire, formed of a thousand ignited streams, threw itself into the sea.

The volcano seemed to have only one crater, from whence escaped the fiery column, crossed by transverse lightning, as though electricity played a part in this magnificent phenomenon. Above the flames hung an immense cloud of smoke, red at its base, and black at the summit. It rose with incomparable majesty, and rolled itself in thick columns. The sky was blackened; the darkness that reigned during the tempest which the doctor could not account for, evidently came from the columns of smoke spread out before the sun like an impenetrable curtain. He then remembered a similar fact which took place in 1812 at the Barbadoes, which at twelve in the day was plunged into profound darkness by the mass of cinders thrown out of the crater in the island of Saint Vincent.

The enormous volcano, found thus in the midst of the ocean, measures a thousand cables in height, about the same as Mount Hecla. A line drawn from base to summit formed with the horizon an angle of about eleven degrees. It seemed to rise gradually from the midst of the waves as the boat approached it. It presented no traces of vegetation; it had not even a coast, but its sides fell straight into the sea.

"Can we land?" asked the doctor.

"The wind is carrying us on to it," answered Altamont.

"But I do not see anywhere we can set foot on."

"We are too far off," answered Johnson; "but we shall easily find a creek for the boat, and that is all we want."

"We will go to it, then," said Clawbonny, sadly.

The doctor did not care now to look at the strange land before him. The Pole was there, but not the man who had discovered it. At a hundred steps from the rocks the sea was boiling under the action of subterranean fire. The island it surrounded might measure eight or nine miles in circumference, not more, and the calculations showed it to be so near the Pole that the world's axis passed exactly through it. On approaching the island the navigators discovered a miniature fiord just sufficient to shelter their bark; they made for it immediately, with the fear of finding their captain's body thrown on to the coast by the tempest. It seemed difficult, however, for a body to rest there; there was no shore, nothing but abrupt rocks; a thick layer of cinders, virgin from any human foot, covered their surface above the reach of the waves.

At last the boat glided into a narrow opening between two rocks, where she was perfectly sheltered from the surf. Then Dick's lamentable barking grew worse; the poor animal called the captain in the only language it knew;

he asked the pitiless sea and the echoless rocks to restore him. He barked in vain, and the doctor was caressing him with his hand unable to calm him, when the faithful animal, as if he meant to take his master's place, made a prodigious jump and bounded first on to the rocks amidst a dust of cinders that made a cloud round him.

"Dick! Here, Dick!" called the doctor.

But Dick did not hear, and disappeared. They then went on with the landing; Clawbonny and his companions stepped out, and the boat was solidly moored. Altamont was about to climb an enormous heap of stones when Dick's barking was heard at some distance louder than usual. It expressed grief and not anger.

"Listen!" said the doctor.

"He is on the track of some animal," said the boatswain.

"No, no!" answered the doctor, "he is lamenting. Hatteras's body is there."

At these words the four men followed Dick's footprints amidst a shower of blinding cinders; they arrived at a fiord where the waves came up about ten feet. There Dick was barking by the side of a corpse wrapped in the English flag.

"Hatteras! Hatteras!" cried the doctor, throwing himself upon the corpse of his friend.

But he immediately uttered a cry of joy. The body, apparently inanimate, was warm under his hand.

"He lives! He lives," cried he.

"Yes," said a feeble voice, "alive and on the land of the Pole, where the tempest threw me! Hurrah for Queen's Island!"

"Hurrah for England!" cried the five men with one voice.

"And for America!" said the doctor, giving one hand to Hatteras, and the other to the American.

Dick, too, cried "Hurrah!" in his own peculiar manner, which, after all, was as good as any other. For the first few minutes our travellers gave themselves up to the joy of seeing their captain again. The doctor examined him, and found that his wounds were slight. The wind had carried him to a part of the shore where landing was dangerous; the courageous sailor was swept out to sea again several times, but at last he succeeded in holding on to a piece of rock and hauling himself out of the waves. There he lost consciousness after having wrapped himself in his flag, and only came to himself when he felt Dick's caresses and heard him barking. After his wounds were dressed Hatteras could get up and walk with the help of the doctor's arm to the boat.

"The Pole! The North Pole!" he repeated as he walked.

"You are happy now!" said the doctor.

"Yes, happy! And you, my friend, do you not feel happy and joyful at being here? This land we are treading is Polar land! The sea we have just crossed is the Polar sea! The air we are breathing is Polar air! Oh, the North Pole! the North Pole!"

So speaking, Hatteras was a prey to a violent excitement, a sort of fever, and the doctor tried vainly to calm him. His eyes shone with extraordinary brilliancy, and his thoughts were boiling in his brain. Clawbonny attributed this state of over-excitement to the peril the captain had just been in. Hatteras evidently needed repose, and they looked about for a spot to encamp in. Altamont soon found a grotto made of rocks, which

their fall had arranged in the form of a cavern; Johnson and Bell brought provisions to it, and set the Greenland dogs at liberty. Towards eleven o'clock everything was ready for the meal; the tent-cloth was used for a tablecloth; the breakfast, consisting of pemmican, salt meat, tea, and coffee, was spread out on the ground, ready to be eaten. But, beforehand, Hatteras would have the position of the island taken, so the doctor and Altamont took their instruments and found that the grotto was situated exactly in latitude 89° 59′ 15″. The longitude at that height has no importance, for all the meridians meet a few hundred feet higher.

The isle, therefore, was exactly situated at the North Pole, and the ninetieth degree of latitude was only forty-five seconds from there, exactly three-quarters of a mile, that is to say, at the summit of the volcano. When Hatteras knew the result he wished it to be consigned in an official report, written out twice, and placed in a cairn on the shore. The doctor took his pen, and there and then drew up the following document, one of the copies of which is now in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society of London :—

"This 11th day of July, 1861, by northern latitude 89° 59′ 15″, Queen's Island was discovered, at the North Pole, by Captain Hatteras, commander of the brig Forward, of Liverpool; whoever finds this document is begged to send it to the Admiralty.

"(Signed)

"JOHN HATTERAS, Commander of the Forward; DOCTOR CLAWBONNY; ALTAMONT, Commander of the Porpoise; JOHNSON, Boatswain; BELL, Carpenter."

"Now, my friends, to the table," said the doctor, gaily.

CHAPTER XXIV.

POLAR COSMOGRAPHY.

Of course they were obliged to sit down on the ground, as the ground was the table.

"But," said Clawbonny, "who would not give all the tables and all the dining-rooms in the world to dine in latitude 89° 59′ 15″?"

They could think and talk of nothing but the Pole. The dangers they had risked to reach it, dangers to risk in going back, all were forgotten in the joy of the present. Their success was unprecedented. What neither ancients nor moderns, neither Europeans, Americans, nor Asiatics could accomplish, they had done. The doctor was listened to attentively while he related all that science and his exhaustless memory could give about the actual situation. They drank the toast he proposed with veritable enthusiasm.

"To John Hatteras!" said he.

"To John Hatteras!" answered his companions with one voice.

"To the North Pole!" answered the captain, with an accent that seemed strange coming from a being who till now had shown himself so cold and self-sustained. They touched cups, and the toasts were followed by much hand-shaking.

"It is the most important geographical fact of our epoch!" said the doctor. "Who would have thought that this discovery would precede those of the centre of Africa and Australia? Hatteras, you have accomplished more than Sturt, Livingstone, Burton, or Barth!"

"You are right, doctor," answered Altamont; "it seemed as if the North Pole would be the last part of the world discovered, on account of the difficulties of the enterprise. The day that any Government is determined to discover the centre of Africa it will inevitably succeed with enough men and money; but here nothing seemed less certain than success, and we might have met with absolutely insuperable obstacles."

"Insuperable!" cried Hatteras, vehemently; "there are no insuperable obstacles; there are more or less energetic wills, that is all!"

"Well," said Johnson, "we are here all right, but I wish Mr. Clawbouny would tell me what there is so particular about this Pole!"

"Why it is the only immovable point on the globe, while all the others turn with extreme rapidity."

"But I don't perceive that we move any the less here than in Liverpool!" answered Johnson.

"Because both here and in Liverpool you participate yourself in the movement or repose! But the fact is no less certain. The earth is endowed with a movement of rotation which is accomplished in twenty-four hours, and this movement is supposed to operate on an axis whose extremities pass through the North and South Poles. Well! we are at one of these necessarily immovable extremities."

"Then," said Bell, "while all our countrymen are turning round rapidly we stand still."

"We nearly do, for we are not quite at the Pole."

"You are right, doctor," said Hatteras, gravely; "there are still forty-five seconds to get over before we reach the precise point."

"That isn't worth talking about," said Altamont; "we may consider ourselves immovable."

"Yes," continued the doctor, "whilst the inhabitants of the equator go round at the rate of three hundred and ninety-six leagues an hour!"

"And without being any the more tired!" said Bell.

"But," said Johnson, "independently of the movement of rotation, does not the earth move round the sun?"

"Yes; once a year."

"Is it more rapid than the other?" asked Bell.

"Much more, and although we are at the Pole, we go round the sun like all the other inhabitants of the world. We are only immovable with regard to the earth's movement on her axis."

"Now that's too bad," said Bell, with a comical accent of regret, "I thought I was quiet for once; one can't have a minute's rest in this world!"

"Will you tell us how quickly we go round the sun, Mr. Clawbonny?" asked Johnson.

"We go at the rate of seven leagues and six tenths a second."

"It is scarcely believable, Mr. Clawbonny," said Bell. "More than seven leagues a second, and it would have been so easy to keep still, if God had been willing."

"Why, Bell," said Altamont, "if we were still we should have neither night nor day, nor any spring, summer, autumn, nor winter!"

"Without counting a more fearful result still!" said the doctor.

"What's that?" asked Johnson.

"Why, that we should fall in the sun!"

"Fall in the sun?" echoed Bell, surprised.

"Certainly. If the movement round the sun were to stop, the earth would be precipitated into the sun in sixty-four days and a half."

"Fancy falling for sixty-four days!" said Johnson.

"It would take quite that," replied the doctor, "for there is a distance of thirty-eight millions of leagues to get over."

"What is the weight of the earth?" asked Altamont.

"It weighs five thousand eight hundred and eighty-one millions of tons."

"No one can imagine that much," said Johnson.

"Well, you can imagine it better when I tell you that it weighs as much as seventy-five moons put together, and it would take three hundred and fifty thousand earths to make the weight of the sun."

"All that's crushing!" said Altamont.

"Crushing is the word," answered the doctor; "but I come back to the Pole, as the cosmography of this part of the world has never come so opportunely—unless you are tired of it."

"Pray go on," said Altamont.

"I told you," continued the doctor, who had as much pleasure in giving information as his companions had in receiving it—"I told you that the Pole was immovable in comparison to the other points of the globe. Well, it is not altogether exact."

"What," said Bell, "I am not even so still as I thought?"

"No, Bell, the Pole is not always exactly at the same place; the Polar star was formerly much farther from

the celestial Pole, than it is at present. Our Pole is therefore slightly movable; it describes a circle in about twenty-six thousand years. That comes from the precession of the equinoxes that I will tell you about by-and-by."

"But," said Altamont, "suppose the Pole moved quicker some day?"

"There, Altamont, you touch upon a question that scientific men asked themselves after a singular discovery."

"What was that?"

"In 1771 the carcass of a rhinoceros was found on the shore of the Frozen Sea, and in 1799 that of an elephant on the coasts of Siberia. How did these inhabitants of warm countries come to be found under like latitudes? That gave rise to strange rumours amongst the geologists, who were not so wise as a Frenchman, M. Elle de Beaumont, has been since; he demonstrated that these animals lived under elevated latitudes, and that the torrents of rivers had carried their corpses where they were found. But as that explanation was not then offered, guess what the imagination of men of science invented.'

"Oh, men of science are capable of anything," said Altamont, laughing.

"Yes, of anything to explain a fact; well, they supposed that the Pole was formerly at the equator, and the equator at the Pole."

"Bah!"

"They did, seriously. Now if their supposition was right, as the earth is flattened at the Pole for more than five leagues, the sea, transported to the new equator by the centrifugal force, would have covered mountains twice as high as the Himalayas; all the countries in the neighbourhood of the Polar circle, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Siberia, Greenland, and New Britain, would

have been buried under five leagues of water, whilst the equatorial regions, thrown up to the Pole, would have formed plateaux at the height of five leagues."

"What a change!" said Johnson.

"How did they explain the revolution in things?" asked Altamont.

"By the shock of a comet. The comet is the *Deus ex machinâ*; every time cosmography is puzzling, a comet is called in to help. At the least sign from a *savant*, a comet comes and settles everything."

"Then you think such a revolution is impossible, Mr. Clawbonny?" said Johnson.

"Quite impossible."

"But if it were to happen?"

"If it happened the equator would be frozen in four-and-twenty hours!"

"If it happened now," said Bell, "people would be capable of saying that we have not been to the Pole!"

"Oh, there's no danger, Bell! But to return to the immobility of the terrestrial axis: if we were to pass the winter in this place, we should see the stars describe a perfect circle round us. As to the sun, it would appear at the spring equinox, the 23rd of March, and would appear to us exactly cut in two by the horizon, and would get up gradually higher, forming very long curves; but once the sun is risen it sets no more, and remains visible for six months; then its disc falls again to the level of the horizon at the autumnal equinox, and as soon as it is set it rises no more all the winter."

"You spoke just now of the earth being flattened at the Poles," said Johnson; "will you explain that to us, Mr. Clawbonny?"

"The earth being once fluid, you understand that its

movement of rotation would send a part of its mobile mass to the equator, where its centrifugal force is greatest. If the earth had been stationary, it would have remained a perfect sphere; but on account of the phenomenon I speak of, its form is ellipsoidal, and the points of the Pole are five leagues nearer the centre than the points of the equator."

"Then," said Johnson, "if our captain wanted to take us to the centre of the earth we should have five less leagues to go?"

"Precisely."

"Well, captain, we've come part of the way. Here's an opportunity we ought to take advantage of——'

Hatteras did not answer. He was not thinking of the conversation.

"If we took the advice of certain men of science we should attempt the expedition; but let me finish, and then I will tell you all about it; I want to explain how the flattening at the Poles causes the precession of the equinoxes—that is to say, why, each year, the spring equinox arrives one day sooner than it would do if the earth was perfectly round. It comes simply from the fact that the attraction of the sun operates differently on the rounded part of the globe situated at the equator, which then experiences a retrograde movement. Subsequently it is that which changes the place of this Pole, as I told you before. But, independently of that effect, the flattening has another, which we should perceive if we were endowed with mathematical sensibility."

"What do you mean?" asked Bell.

"Why, we are heavier here than in Liverpool."

"Heavier?"

"Yes, we, our dogs, guns, and instruments; there

are two reasons for that; the first is that we are nearer the centre of the globe, which consequently attracts us more; now that force of attraction, or gravitation, is nothing but weight. The second is the rotatory force, which has no influence at the Pole, and so much at the equator; objects there have a tendency away from the earth, and consequently are less heavy."

"But seriously," said Johnson, "is not our weight the same everywhere?"

"No; according to Newton's law bodies attract each other in direct proportion to their bulk, and in indirect proportion to the square of their distances. Here I weigh more because I am nearer to the centre of gravitation, and on another planet I should weigh more or less according to the bulk of the planet."

"What would be the difference in the moon?"

"In the moon, my weight, which is 200lbs. at Liverpool, would only be 32lbs."

And in the sun?"

"Oh! in the sun I should weigh more than 5,000lbs."

"Good Lord!" cried Bell; "why, you would want a screw-jack to lift your legs!"

"Probably," said the doctor, laughing at Bell's amazement; "but here the difference is not sensible and with the same effort of the muscles Bell could jump as high as on the Mersey quays."

"Yes, but in the sun?" repeated Bell, whose astonishment continued.

"The moral of all this is that we are well where we are, and that it is useless to want to be elsewhere."

"You spoke just now," said Altamont, "about making an excursion to the centre of the earth. Has any one ever thought of doing such a thing?"

"Yes, and that will terminate all I have to say about the Pole. There is no point of the globe that has given rise to more hypotheses or chimeras. The ancients, ignorant of cosmography, placed there the garden of the Hesperides. In the Middle Ages they supposed that the earth was supported by gudgeons, placed at the Poles, on which it turned; but when they saw that comets moved freely in the circumpolar regions they were obliged to renounce that means of support. Later, a French astronomer, Bailly, maintained that Plato's Atlantides lived here. In modern times it has been maintained that there existed an immense opening at the Poles from whence issued the light of the aurora borealis, and by which we might penetrate into the interior of the globe; then in the hollow sphere they imagined the existence of two planets, Pluto and Proserpine, and a luminous air caused by the pressure they underwent."

"You don't mean to say it was said seriously?" asked Altamont.

"It was written, and very seriously. Captain Synness, one of our countrymen, proposed to Humphrey Davy, Humboldt, and Arago to undertake the journey, but they refused."

And they did well."

"I think so. However that may be, you see that imagination has had a wide field about the Pole, and that sooner or later we must come back to the simple reality."

"Besides, we shall find out," said Johnson, who did not abandon his idea.

"Well, we will begin excursions to-morrow," said the doctor, smiling to see that the old sailor was so little convinced, "and if there is a private opening into the interior of the earth, we will go together."

CHAPTER XXV.

MOUNT HATTERAS.

AFTER the conversation recorded in the last chapter the grotto was transformed into a bedroom, and they were soon asleep, all except Hatteras. Why did sleep forsake the extraordinary man? Was not the ambition of his life accomplished? Had he not carried out all the bold plans he had cherished? Why did not calm succeed agitation in his ardent soul? Any one would have thought that, once his projects accomplished, Hatteras would no longer feel the tension on his nervous system, and would have found in sleep the calm he wanted. After success it seemed natural that he should even experience the feeling of sadness which often accompanies the fulfilment of desire. But no. He seemed more excited. It was not, however, the thought of the return journey that agitated him thus. Did he want to go further still? Had his ambition no limit, and would he find the world too little for his ambition of discovery? However that may be, he could not sleep. And yet that first night passed at the Pole was pure and tranquil. The island was absolutely uninhabited. There was not a bird in the inflamed air, not an animal on the soil of cinders, not a fish in the boiling waters;

no sound except the roar of the mountain as it sent forth its lava and smoke.

When Bell, Johnson, and the doctor awoke, Hatteras was not with them. Anxious about him, they left the grotto and saw him standing on a rock, his eyes fixed on the summit of the mountain. The doctor went to him and spoke to him several times before he succeeded in arousing him from his contemplation. At last the captain seemed to understand.

"Come," said the doctor, who examined him attentively, "we are ready for our last excursion, ready to go round the island."

"The last?" said Hatteras, with that intonation of voice peculiar to people who talk in their sleep; "yes, the last certainly. But," he added, with great animation, "the most marvellous."

As he spoke he pressed his forehead with both hands, as if to calm his excited brain.

At that moment Altamont, Johnson, and Bell reached him; Hatteras then seemed to shake off his state of hallucination.

"My friends," said he, in softened accents, "I thank you for your courage, your perseverance, and the superhuman efforts that have allowed us to set foot on this land."

"Captain," said Johnson, "we have only obeyed: all the honour is yours."

"No! no!" continued Hatteras, with emotion. "It belongs to all of you as much as to me! To Altamont equally. O let me thank you with all the joy and gratitude I feel!"

Hatteras pressed the hands of his brave companions, and marched backwards and forwards, seemingly unable to contain himself any longer.

"We have only done our duty as Englishmen," said Bell.

"And our duty as friends," added the doctor.

"Yes, but all did not do their duty; some failed. But we must forgive them, those who betrayed and those who let themselves be engaged in the betrayal! Poor fellows! I forgive them. You hear me, doctor?"

"Yes," answered the doctor, whom the exaltation of Hatteras began to alarm seriously.

"I do not intend them to lose the little fortune they came so far to seek. Nothing shall be changed in my promises, and they shall be rich—if ever they see England again!"

It would have been difficult not to be moved by the accent Hatteras put into these words.

"Why, captain," said Johnson, trying to jest, "any one would think you were making your will."

"Perhaps I am," answered Hatteras, gravely.

"But you have a long and glorious existence before you yet," continued the old sailor.

"Who knows?" answered Hatteras.

These words were followed by silence. The doctor dared not interpret the meaning of the captain's last words. But Hatteras soon made himself understood; he continued excitedly—

"My friends, listen to me. We have done much up till now, but there remains much to do."

The captain's companions looked at one another in profound astonishment.

"Yes, we are on Polar land, but we are not at the Pole itself!"

"How so?" asked Altamont.

"I don't know where we are, then," said the doctor, who would not understand Hatteras.

"I have said that an Englishman should set his foot on the Pole of the Globe, and an Englishman shall do it. We are still forty-five seconds from the place, and there I shall go."

"But it is at the summit of the volcano!" said the doctor.

"I shall go."

"The cone is inaccessible!"

"I shall go."

"There is an open flaming crater!"

"I shall go."

The energetic conviction with which Hatteras pronounced these last words cannot be rendered. His friends were stupefied; they looked with terror at the mountain vomiting forth its flames. The doctor pressed Hatteras to renounce his plan; he said all he could think of, from the humblest prayer to amicable threats; but he made no impression on the captain, afflicted with what may be called Polar madness. There remained only violent means to stop the man who insisted on going to his death. The doctor would only employ them in the last extremity. He hoped that the physical impossibility of success would stop Hatteras in the execution of his plan.

"Well, if you go," said he, "we will follow you."

"Yes," answered the captain, "half-way up the mountain! no farther! You must take back to England one of the official reports of our discovery, if——"

"But——"

"I have decided," answered Hatteras, with a tone that showed he was not to be shaken in his determi-

nation; "since the wishes of a friend are not enough, the captain commands."

The doctor did not insist any longer, and a few minutes afterwards the little troop, equipped for its difficult ascension and preceded by Dick, set out. The weather was superb. The thermometer was at 52°, and the atmosphere was clear with that lucidity peculiar to so high a latitude. It was eight o'clock in the morning. Hatteras marched on first with his brave dog; Bell and Altamont, the doctor and Johnson, followed him closely.

"I am afraid," said Johnson.

"No, no; there is nothing to fear," answered the doctor; "we are with him."

It is difficult to give an idea of the peculiar physiognomy of the island. It appeared to be of quite recent formation. The rocks only kept in their places by a miracle of equilibrium. The mountain was but a heap of stones fallen from the crater. No earth, not a bit of moss, nor the most meagre lichen, not the slightest trace of vegetation. The carbonic acid vomited by the crater had not had time to get united to the hydrogen of the water, nor the ammonia of the clouds, to form organised matter under the action of light. This island in open sea was only due to the successive aggregation of volcanic ejections: several mountains of the globe have been formed in the same way: they make themselves. Etna has thrown out a volume of lava greater than its bulk, and the Monte Nuovo, near Naples, was made in the short space of forty-eight hours. The mass of rocks of which Queen's Island was composed had evidently come from the bowels of the earth; it had the Plutonian character in the highest

degree. In its place formerly stretched the immense sea formed on the beginning by the condensation of watery vapours in the cooled earth; but as the volcanoes of the ancient and new world went out, or rather got blocked up, new craters took their place.

The earth may be likened to a vast boiler where immense quantities of vapour are confined at a tension of thousands of atmospheres, and which would blow up the world but for the safety-valves called volcanoes; when one of these valves is closed another opens, and it is not astonishing that at the Poles, where the earth's crust is thinner, a volcano should have raised itself above the waves.

The doctor remarked these peculiarities as he followed Hatteras; he was treading upon a volcanic deposit of pumice made of slag, cinders, and eruptive rocks similar to the syenites and the granite of Iceland. But he attributed a modern origin to the Island because no sedimentary earth had had time to form. Water was wanting too. If Queen's Island had counted many centuries of existence thermal springs would have issued from her midst, as they do in the neighbourhood of volcanoes. There was not only not a spot of water, but the vapours which hung above the streams of lava seemed absolutely anhydrous. Thus the island was of recent formation, and as one day it had appeared, so at another it might disappear and plunge again into the waves. The ascent grew more difficult as they got higher; the sides of the mountain became quite perpendicular, and they were obliged to take great precaution not to be hurled down. Columns of cinders turned round the travellers, and threatened to

suffocate them, or torrents of lava lay in their way. On some of the horizontal surfaces the streams were cooled and solidified in the upper part, and the boiling lava flowed over their hardened crust. They were obliged to probe the ground to avoid being plunged into the burning streams. From time to time the crater vomited forth rocks, reddened by the ignited gas; some of these rocks burst in the air like cannon-balls, and their pieces were thrown to enormous distances. All these dangers proved the folly of undertaking the ascent. However, Hatteras climbed on with surprising agility, and, disdaining the help of his stock, he got to the top of the steepest slopes. He soon reached a circular rock forming a sort of plateau about ten feet wide; an incandescent river surrounded it, and only left a narrow passage, by which Hatteras skilfully passed. There he stopped, and his companions came up to him. Then he seemed to measure with his eye the distance yet to be traversed; horizontally he was at about a hundred cables from the crater—that is to say, the mathematical point of the Pole; but vertically he had yet fifteen hundred feet to climb. The ascension had already lasted three hours; Hatteras did not seem fatigued; his companions could not go any farther. The summit of the volcano appeared to be inaccessible. The doctor resolved, at any price, to prevent Hatteras going any higher. He tried at first to reason with him, but the captain's exaltation seemed to have reached delirium; on the way he had shown signs of increasing madness, and those who have known him and followed him in the divers phases of his existence will not be surprised. His excitement increased as he climbed higher above the ocean; he no longer lived in

the region of men: he thought he was growing with the mountain.

"Hatteras," said the doctor to him, "this is enough; we cannot go any farther."

"Stay here, then," answered the captain in a strange voice; "I shall go higher up."

"No! What you are doing now is useless! You are at the Pole here!"

"No, no! higher!"

"Don't you know me, Hatteras? I am your friend—Clawbonny."

"Higher! higher!" replied the madman.

"Then we will not allow——"

The doctor had not finished these words when Hatteras, by a superhuman effort, had cleared the stream of lava and was thus out of his companions' reach. They all uttered an exclamation of dismay, for they believed Hatteras to be drowned in the torrent of fire; but the captain had reached the other side, followed by Dick, who would not leave him. He disappeared behind a curtain of smoke, and they heard his voice in the distance crying—

"To the North! to the North! To the top of Mount Hatteras! Remember, Mount Hatteras!"

It was impossible to dream of following the captain; there were twenty chances of falling where he had passed with that luck peculiar to madmen; it was impossible to leap over the fiery torrent, and equally impossible to get round it. Altamont tried in vain to pass it, and almost perished in the attempt; his companions were obliged to hold him back.

"Hatteras! Hatteras!" cried the doctor.

But the captain did not answer, and Dick's barking

alone was heard on the mountain. However, they could see Hatteras at intervals across the columns of smoke and under the rain of cinders. Sometimes an arm, sometimes his head, appeared. Then he disappeared, to reappear once more clinging to the rocks. His height diminished with the fantastic rapidity of objects that rise in the air. Half an hour after he seemed only half his size.

The atmosphere was filled with the dull roar of the volcano; they felt its flames. Hatteras was still climbing, followed by Dick. From time to time a landslip occurred below them, and some enormous rock, increasing in rapidity, rebounded on the peaks and fell to the bottom of the Polar basin.

Hatteras did not even turn. He had fastened the English flag to his stock. His terrified companions watched all his movements. His dimensions gradually became microscopical, and Dick looked like a big rat. At one moment the wind blew a vast curtain of flame on to them. The doctor cried out in agony; but Hatteras reappeared waving his flag.

The spectacle of this fearful ascension lasted more than an hour—an hour's struggle against vacillating rocks and beds of cinders, in which this hero of the impossible disappeared to his waist. Sometimes he positively crawled up the mountain or swung himself by his hands, and oscillated in the wind like a dried leaf. At last he arrived at the summit of the volcano, at the very orifice of the crater. The doctor then hoped that he would return, and cried once more—

"Hatteras! Hatteras!"

The doctor's appeal moved Altamont to the depths of his soul.

"I will save him!" he cried, and with one leap he cleared the torrent of fire and disappeared amidst the rocks. Clawbonny had not time to stop him. Hatteras was then on the top of the mountain, and kept advancing above the gulf on an overhanging rock. Stones rained around him. Dick still followed him. Hatteras waved his flag, lightened up by the flames, on the edge of the crater. He held it with one hand, and with the other he pointed to the Pole of the celestial sphere in the zenith. He seemed still to hesitate. He was still seeking the mathematical point where all the meridians meet, and on which, in his sublime folly, he wished to set his foot. All at once the rock on which he was, fell, and he disappeared. A terrible cry from his companions mounted to the summit of the mountain. A second, a century, went by. Clawbonny believed that his friend had perished, and was for ever buried in the depths of the volcano, but Altamont and Dick were there! The man and the dog had seized him as he was disappearing into the abyss. Hatteras was saved, saved in spite of himself, and half an hour later the captain of the Forward, deprived of all sentiment, reposed in the arms of his companions. When he came to himself the doctor looked at his eyes in mute agony. But he met those of a blind man who looks without seeing.

"Good God!" said Johnson, "he is blind!"

"No!" answered Clawbonny. "No, my poor friends, we have only saved his body! His spirit has remained at the top of the volcano! His reason is dead!"

"Mad!" cried Johnson and Altamont in consternation.

"Mad!" answered the doctor; and he wept.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RETURN SOUTHWARD.

THREE hours after the sad ending to the adventures of Captain Hatteras, Clawbonny, Altamont, and the two sailors were together in the grotto at the foot of the volcano. There Clawbonny was begged to give his opinion on what would be best to do.

"We cannot stay any longer in Queen's Island; the sea is open before us; we have plenty of provisions; we must hasten to Fort Providence, and winter there till next summer."

"That is my opinion too," answered Altamont; "the wind is fair, and we will put to sea again to-morrow."

The day was passed sadly. The captain's madness seemed a fatal warning, and when Johnson, Bell, and Altamont thought of the return journey, they were frightened at the prospect. They missed the intrepid spirit of Hatteras; but being energetic men, they got ready another struggle with the elements and with themselves. The next day, Saturday, July 13, the camping materials were embarked, and everything was soon ready for departure; but before leaving the rock they were never to see again the doctor caused a cairn to be made, according to the instructions of Hatteras,

on the very point where the captain had landed. On one of its lateral stones Bell engraved with his chisel this simple inscription:—

"JOHN HATTERAS
"1861."

The official report was placed in a tin box, hermetically closed, and was deposited in the interior of the cairn; thus the proof of the great discovery was left on the deserted rocks.

Then the four men and the captain—a poor body without a spirit—and his faithful Dick, sad and plaintive, embarked for their return voyage. It was ten in the morning. Another sail was got up with the tent-cloth, and the boat, running before the wind, left Queen's Island. In the evening the doctor stood on his seat and looked for the last time at Mount Hatteras, flaming on the horizon. The passage was very rapid; the sea was quite open, and navigation was easy; it seemed much easier to fly from the Pole than to approach it. But Hatteras was not in a state to understand what was passing around him; he lay in the boat, quite mute with a dim, dull look, his arms crossed on his chest, and Dick lying at his feet. The doctor spoke to him in vain. Hatteras did not hear. During forty-eight hours the breeze was favourable, and the sea nearly calm. On July 15th they sighted Altamont Harbour in the south; but as the Polar Ocean was open all along the coast, instead of crossing New America with the sledge they resolved to go round it, and to reach Victoria Bay by sea. The passage was quicker and easier. The distance that had taken them a fortnight to traverse with their sledge they accomplished in a week with the boat, and after having followed the

sinuosities of a coast with numerous inlets, and thus learned its configuration, they arrived at Victoria Bay on the 23rd of July.

The boat was solidly anchored to the shore, and they all rushed to Fort Providence. But there a scene of devastation met their gaze! Doctor's House, the stores, and the fortifications had melted under the action of the solar rays, and their provisions had been ransacked by wild animals. The travellers had almost come to the end of their provisions, and had counted upon renewing them at Fort Providence. The impossibility of passing the winter there became evident. Like people accustomed to take rapid decisions, they decided to take the shortest route to Baffin's Bay.

"It is the only thing we can do," said the doctor. "Baffin's Bay is only six hundred miles away; we can sail till the water fails, get to Jones's Strait, and from thence reach the Danish settlements."

"Yes," answered Altamont, "we must get together all the provisions that are left and set out at once."

On looking well they found a few cases of pemmican scattered here and there, and two barrels of preserved meat, which had escaped destruction—in all, provisions for six weeks and a sufficient quantity of powder. All that was rapidly got together; they profited by that day to caulk the boat, and on the following, the 24th of July, they set out again.

Towards the 83rd degree of latitude the continent extended eastwards. It was possible that it was part of the land known as Grinnell Land, Ellesmer, and North Lincoln, which forms the coast-line of Baffin's Bay. It was, therefore, certain, that Jones's Strait opened into inland seas like Lancaster Strait.

The boat then sailed along without great difficulty. The doctor, foreseeing possible delays, put his companions on half-rations, but as they had not much to do, their health continued good. Besides, they were able to use their guns a little; they killed ducks and geese, which furnished them with fresh and wholesome food. They renewed their stock of water at the fresh-water icebergs they met with, for they took care not to go far from the coast, as their boat was not sufficient for the open sea.

At that season of the year the thermometer kept constantly above freezing point; the weather from being rainy took to snowing, and became dark; the sun already began to graze the horizon, and a larger portion of its disc disappeared every day. On July 30th the travellers lost sight of it for the first time—that is, they had a night of a few minutes.

Sometimes the boat made from sixty to sixty-five miles in twenty-four hours; they did not stop an instant; they knew what fatigues and obstacles they would have if they had to take to the land, and the sea would soon be impassable; some young ice was already formed. Winter soon succeeds summer in these high latitudes; there is no spring nor autumn; the intermediate seasons are wanting, so they were obliged to lose no time.

On the 31st of July, the sky being clear at sunset, they perceived the first stars in the constellations of the zenith. From that day a fog reigned without ceasing, and made navigation difficult. The doctor became very uneasy at seeing the symptoms of winter multiply; he knew what difficulties Sir John Ross had met with to reach Baffin's Bay after he had abandoned

his ship; the first time he attempted to cross the ice he was obliged to come back to his ship, and winter a fourth year; and he had a shelter for the bad season, provisions, and fuel.

If such a misfortune were to happen to the survivors of the Forward, if they were obliged to stop or go back, they were lost men; the doctor did not speak of his anxiety to his companions, but he pressed them to hurry on eastward. At last, on the 15th of August, after having struggled for forty-eight hours with the ice which accumulated in the passes, after having risked their fragile boat a hundred times, the travellers were quite stopped, unable to go any farther; the sea was frozen all round, and the thermometer was 15° above zero. On all the northern and eastern coasts it is easy to recognise the proximity of land by the little round or flat stones which the waves wear on the shores; fresh-water ice is also frequently met with. Altamont took their position with scrupulous exactitude. They were in latitude 77° 15′ by longitude 85° 02′.

"We know exactly where we are now," said the doctor; "we have reached North Lincoln, and are precisely at Cape Eden. We are going to enter Jones's Strait; had we been a little more fortunate we should have found it free to Baffin's Bay. But we must not complain. If poor Hatteras had met at first with so good a sea he would have reached the Pole rapidly. His companions would not have abandoned him, and his head would not have been turned by such terrible anxieties."

"Then there is only one thing for us to do," answered Altamont—"to abandon the boat, and reach with the sledge the east coast of Lincoln."

"Yes, we must abandon the boat and take to the sledge," said the doctor; "but instead of crossing Lincoln I propose that we descend Jones's Strait and reach North Devon."

"Why?" asked Altamont.

"Because the nearer we get to Lancaster Strait the more chance we get of meeting with whalers."

"You are right, doctor, but I am afraid the ice is not united enough to offer a practicable passage."

"We will try it," said Clawbonny.

The boat was unloaded; Bell and Johnson put the sledge together; all the pieces were perfect. The next day the dogs were harnessed to it, and they took the coast to arrive at the ice-field.

Then began the fatiguing and slow journey described so often. Altamont was right about the state of the ice. They could not get through Jones's Strait, and were obliged to follow the Lincoln coast.

On the 21st of August the travellers, by cutting across country, arrived at the entrance to the Glacier Strait. There they ventured on the ice-field, and the next day reached Cobourg Island, which they crossed in less than two days amidst violent snowstorms. They were then able to take the easier route across the ice-fields, and at last, on the 24th of August, they set foot on North Devon.

"Now," said the doctor, "we have only to cross this land to Cape Warrender at the entrance to Lancaster Strait."

But the weather became frightful and very cold; the snowstorms began again their winter violence. The travellers began to feel that they were at the end of their strength. The provisions were getting exhausted,

and they each had to put up with third rations in order that their dogs might have enough food to go on with their work. The nature of the ground added much to the fatigues of the voyage. North Devon is extremely undulated; they were obliged to cross the Trauter Mountains by impracticable passes whilst they struggled against the unchained elements. Despair often took possession of this little troop, notwithstanding that they were accustomed to the fatigues of a Polar expedition. But, without knowing it, the poor fellows were worn out, physically and morally. Eighteen months of incessant fatigue and an emotional life, alternating between hope and despair, are not to be borne with impunity. Besides, the energy that pushes forward to a goal fails when that goal has been reached. The poor fellows dragged themselves along, marching from habit with a remainder of animal energy independent of their will.

It was not till the 30th of August that they escaped from this chaos of mountains, of which the orography of the lower zones can give no idea; but they escaped half-frozen and wounded. The doctor could hardly sustain the courage of his companions; he felt faltering himself. They had come into a sort of plain, bearing traces of the convulsion that had caused the primitive rising of the mountain. There they were positively obliged to take a few days' rest. The travellers could no longer put one foot before the other. Two of the Greenland dogs were dead from exhaustion. They sheltered, therefore, behind an ice-mount, the thermometer at 2° below zero; no one had the courage to raise the tent. Their provisions were much reduced, and, notwithstanding the extreme parsimony observed for their rations, they could not last more than another week. The game had become

rare; it had gone for the winter to climates less rude. Death by hunger threatened its exhausted victims.

Altamont, who had all along shown great abnegation and self-devotion, gathered together his remaining strength, and resolved to find his companions food. He took his gun, called Dick, and penetrated into the plains to the North. The doctor, Johnson, and Bell watched him go almost with indifference. For an hour they did not hear a single shot, and they saw him come running back like a man scared.

"What is the matter?" asked the doctor.

"Yonder, under the snow," answered Altamont, with an accent of dismay, pointing to a spot on the horizon.

"What?"

"A whole troop of men."

"Living?"

"Dead! frozen! and even——"

The American dare not finish his sentence, but his face expressed the most unutterable horror. The doctor, Johnson, and Bell, roused by this incident, got up and dragged themselves after Altamont. They soon arrived at a narrow spot at the bottom of a deep ravine, and they saw a frightful spectacle. Corpses already stiff, half buried in their white shroud; here an arm, there a leg, at some distance clasped hands, and faces still keeping their threatening and desperate expression. The doctor approached, and then recoiled pale and horror-struck.

"Oh, horror!" said he.

"What?" asked the boatswain.

"Have you not recognised them?" asked the doctor.

"What do you mean?"

"Look!"

This ravine had been the theatre of a last struggle of man with the climate, with despair and hunger, for by certain horrible remains they saw that the unfortunate men had eaten human flesh, and amongst them the doctor had recognised Shandon, Pen, the wretched crew of the Forward; their strength and provisions had failed; their boat was probably broken by the avalanches or precipitated into a gulf, and they had not been able to take advantage of the open sea. It may be supposed also that they lost their way on these unknown continents. Besides, men who had set out under the excitement of revolt could not be long united in that union which alone makes the accomplishment of great things possible. A leader of revolt never has any but a doubtful power, and it is probable that Shandon was soon overcome. However that may be, the crew had evidently suffered a thousand tortures before reaching that frightful catastrophe; but the secret of their miseries is for ever buried in the snows of the Pole.

"Let us fly from hence," cried the doctor.

He dragged his companions from the scene of disaster. Horror gave them a momentary energy. They set out again.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

It is of no use to dwell on the misfortunes that the survivors of the expedition endured. They never could themselves remember in detail the events of the week following their horrible discovery. However, on the 9th of September, by a miracle of energy, they reached Cape Horsburb, at the extremity of North Devon.

They were dying of hunger, not having eaten for forty-eight hours. Their last meal had been made from the flesh of their last Esquimaux dog. Bell could go no farther, and old Johnson felt himself dying. They were on the banks of Baffin's Bay, then partly frozen—that is to say, on the road to Europe. At three miles from the coast the waves dashed against the ice-field. There they must await the probable passage of a whaler, and for how many more days? But Heaven took compassion on the unfortunate men, for the next day Altamont distinctly perceived a sail on the horizon.

They experienced all the anguish that accompanies these apparitions. The vessel seemed to approach and go farther away by turns. These are horrible alternations of hope and despair; and too often, just when the shipwrecked men think themselves saved, the sail

disappears slowly on the horizon. The doctor and his companions experienced all these trials; they arrived at the western limit of the ice-fields, half carrying, half pushing one another, only to see the ship gradually disappear without remarking their presence. They called and shouted, but in vain.

It was then that the doctor had a last inspiration. An iceberg drifted against the ice-field.

"Let us embark on this iceberg," said he.

They were all electrified. Johnson kissed the doctor's hands, while Bell and Altamont ran to the sledge; they brought back one of its props, planted it on the iceberg for a mast, and fastened it with cords. The tent was torn up to make a sail. The wind was favourable, and the men took to their frail raft and put to sea.

Two hours later, after unheard-of efforts, the last men of the Forward were received on board the Hans Christien, a Danish whaler, which was making for Davis's Strait. The captain hospitably received these spectres, who had almost lost the look of human beings. At the sight of their sufferings they understood their history, nursed them with the greatest care, and succeeded in saving their lives.

Ten days after, Clawbonny, Johnson, Bell, Altamont, and Captain Hatteras landed at Korsœur, in Danish Seeland; a steamboat took them to Kiel; from thence, by Altona and Hamburg, they reached London, where they arrived on the 13th of the same month, scarcely restored to health. The doctor's first care was to ask the Royal Geographical Society to allow him to make a communication to them; he was admitted to the next sitting.

The astonishment of the learned assembly, and their enthusiastic reception of Hatteras's document, can be well imagined.

This voyage, unique of its sort, without precedent in history, summed up all the anterior discoveries made in the circumpolar regions; it gave more precise information about the discoveries of Parry, Ross, Franklin, and M'Clure; it completed between the hundredth and hundred and fifteenth meridian the map of the hyperborean countries, and at last it ended in that before inaccessible point, the Pole itself.

Never had such unexpected news burst upon astonished England. England felt proud from the lord to the cockney, from the merchant prince to a workman at the docks.

The news of the great discovery ran along all the telegraph wires of the United Kingdom with the rapidity of lightning. The newspapers inscribed the name of Hatteras at the head of their columns as that of a martyr, and England trembled with pride.

The doctor and his companions were presented to the Queen, and feasted and fêted by the City of London. The Government confirmed the names of Queen's Island to the rock at the Pole, Mount Hatteras to the volcano, and Altamont Harbour given to the port of New America.

Altamont did not leave his companions in misery and glory, now his friends; he followed the doctor, Bell, and Johnson to Liverpool, which received them as friends risen from the dead.

Doctor Clawbonny always gave all the glory of the expedition to the man who above all deserved it. In the relation of his voyage called "The English at the

North Pole," published the next year by the Royal Geographical Society, he made John Hatteras the equal of the greatest navigators, the rival of the daring men who sacrifice their all to the progress of science.

In the meanwhile the sad victim of a sublime passion lived peacefully in the asylum of Sten Cottage, near Liverpool, where his friend the doctor had placed him himself. His madness was harmless, but he did not speak or understand, and his speech seemed to have left him with his reason. One sentiment only connected him with the exterior world, and that was his friendship for Dick, whom they would not separate from him. His malady, which might be called "Polar madness," had shown no particular symptom, when one day Doctor Clawbonny, who often visited the poor invalid, was struck with what he was doing.

Hatteras, followed by his faithful dog, who watched him with sad and affectionate eyes, walked about for long hours every day; but his walk always extended in one direction, that of a certain alley of Sten Cottage. When he had arrived at the extremity of the alley he walked back along it backwards. If any one stopped him he pointed to a certain spot in the sky. If they tried to get him away he got irritated, and Dick, who partook of his anger, barked with fury.

The doctor attentively examined so strange a mania, and he soon saw the reason of it; he guessed why the walk was always in the same direction, and under a sort of magnetic attraction.

Captain John Hatteras was still marching northwards!

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