

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN HATTERAS

JULES VERNE



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The Adventures of Captain Hatteras by Jules Verne.

First published in 1864. This is an 1876 translation by Ward, Lock & Co..

This ebook edition was published by Global Grey on the 4th November 2024.

This book can be found on the site here:

<https://www.globalgreybooks.com/adventures-of-captain-hatteras-ebook.html>

Global Grey 2024

globalgreybooks.com

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I. The English At The North Pole

I. The “Forward”

“To-morrow, at low tide, the brig *Forward*, Captain K. Z——, Richard Shandon mate, will start from New Prince’s Docks for an unknown destination.”

The foregoing might have been read in the *Liverpool Herald* of April 5th, 1860. The departure of a brig is an event of little importance for the most commercial port in England. Who would notice it in the midst of vessels of all sorts of tonnage and nationality that six miles of docks can hardly contain? However, from daybreak on the 6th of April a considerable crowd covered the wharfs of New Prince’s Docks—the innumerable companies of sailors of the town seemed to have met there. Workmen from the neighbouring wharfs had left their work, merchants their dark counting-houses, tradesmen their shops. The different-coloured omnibuses that ran along the exterior wall of the docks brought cargoes of spectators at every moment; the town seemed to have but one pre-occupation, and that was to see the *Forward* go out.

The *Forward* was a vessel of a hundred and seventy tons, charged with a screw and steam-engine of a hundred and twenty horse-power. It might easily have been confounded with the other brigs in the port. But though it offered nothing curious to the eyes of the public, connoisseurs remarked certain peculiarities in it that a sailor cannot mistake. On board the *Nautilus*, anchored at a little distance, a group of sailors were hazarding a thousand conjectures about the destination of the *Forward*.

“I don’t know what to think about its masting,” said one; “it isn’t usual for steamboats to have so much sail.”

“That ship,” said a quartermaster with a big red face—“that ship will have to depend more on her masts than her engine, and the topsails are the biggest because the others will be often useless. I haven’t got the slightest doubt that the *Forward* is destined for the Arctic or Antarctic seas, where the icebergs stop the wind more than is good for a brave and solid ship.”

“You must be right, Mr. Cornhill,” said a third sailor. “Have you noticed her stern, how straight it falls into the sea?”

“Yes,” said the quartermaster, “and it is furnished with a steel cutter as sharp as a razor and capable of cutting a three-decker in two if the *Forward* were thrown across her at top speed.”

“That’s certain,” said a Mersey pilot; “for that ‘ere vessel runs her fourteen knots an hour with her screw. It was marvellous to see her cutting the tide when she made her trial trip. I believe you, she’s a quick un.”

“The canvas isn’t intricate either,” answered Mr. Cornhill; “it goes straight before the wind, and can be managed by hand. That ship is going to try the Polar seas, or my name isn’t what it is. There’s something else—do you see the wide helm-port that the head of her helm goes through?”

“It’s there, sure enough,” answered one; “but what does that prove?”

“That proves, my boys,” said Mr. Cornhill with disdainful satisfaction, “that you don’t know how to put two and two together and make it four; it proves that they want to be able to take off the helm when they like, and you know it’s a manoeuvre that’s often necessary when you have ice to deal with.”

“That’s certain,” answered the crew of the *Nautilus*.

“Besides,” said one of them, “the way she’s loaded confirms Mr. Cornhill’s opinion. Clifton told me. The *Forward* is victualled and carries coal enough for five or six years. Coals and victuals are all its cargo, with a stock of woollen garments and sealskins.”

“Then,” said the quartermaster, “there is no more doubt on the matter; but you, who know Clifton, didn’t he tell you anything about her destination?”

“He couldn’t tell me; he doesn’t know; the crew was engaged without knowing. He’ll only know where he’s going when he gets there.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if they were going to the devil,” said an unbeliever: “it looks like it.”

“And such pay,” said Clifton’s friend, getting warm—“five times more than the ordinary pay. If it hadn’t been for that, Richard Shandon wouldn’t have found a soul to go with him. A ship with a queer shape, going nobody knows where, and looking more like not coming back than anything else, it wouldn’t have suited this child.”

“Whether it would have suited you or not,” answered Cornhill, “you couldn’t have been one of the crew of the *Forward*.”

“And why, pray?”

“Because you don’t fulfil the required conditions. I read that all married men were excluded, and you are in the category, so you needn’t talk. Even the very name of the ship is a bold one. The *Forward*—where is it to be forwarded to? Besides, nobody knows who the captain is.”

“Yes, they do,” said a simple-faced young sailor.

“Why, you don’t mean to say that you think Shandon is the captain of the *Forward*?” said Cornhill.

“But——” answered the young sailor—

“Why, Shandon is commander, and nothing else; he’s a brave and bold sailor, an experienced whaler, and a jolly fellow worthy in every respect to be the captain, but he isn’t any more captain than you or I. As to who is going to command after God on board he doesn’t know any more than we do. When the moment has come the true captain will appear, no one knows how nor where, for Richard Shandon has not said and hasn’t been allowed to say to what quarter of the globe he is going to direct his ship.”

“But, Mr. Cornhill,” continued the young sailor, “I assure you that there is someone on board who was announced in the letter, and that Mr. Shandon was offered the place of second to.”

“What!” said Cornhill, frowning, “do you mean to maintain that the *Forward* has a captain on board?”

“Yes, Mr. Cornhill.”

“Where did you get your precious information from?”

“From Johnson, the boatswain.”

“From Johnson?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Johnson told you so?”

“He not only told me so, but he showed me the captain.”

“He showed him to you!” said Cornhill, stupefied. “And who is it, pray?”

“A dog.”

“What do you mean by a dog?”

“A dog on four legs.”

Stupefaction reigned amongst the crew of the *Nautilus*. Under any other circumstances they would have burst out laughing. A dog captain of a vessel of a hundred and seventy tons burden! It was enough to make them laugh. But really the *Forward* was such an extraordinary ship that they felt it might be no laughing matter, and they must be sure before they denied it. Besides, Cornhill himself didn't laugh.

“So Johnson showed you the new sort of captain, did he?” added he, addressing the young sailor, “and you saw him?”

“Yes, sir, as plainly as I see you now.”

“Well, and what do you think about it?” asked the sailors of the quartermaster.

“I don't think anything,” he answered shortly. “I don't think anything, except that the *Forward* is a ship belonging to the devil, or madmen fit for nothing but Bedlam.”

The sailors continued silently watching the *Forward*, whose preparations for departure were drawing to an end; there was not one of them who pretended that Johnson had only been laughing at the young sailor. The history of the dog had already made the round of the town, and amongst the crowd of spectators many a one looked out for the dog-captain and believed him to be a supernatural animal. Besides, the *Forward* had been attracting public attention for some months past. Everything about her was marvellous; her peculiar shape, the mystery which surrounded her, the incognito kept by the captain, the way Richard Shandon had received the proposition to direct her, the careful selection of the crew, her unknown destination, suspected only by a few—all about her was strange.

To a thinker, dreamer, or philosopher nothing is more affecting than the departure of a ship; his imagination plays round the sails, sees her struggles with the sea and the wind in the adventurous journey which does not always end in port; when in addition to the ordinary incidents of departure there are extraordinary ones, even minds little given to credulity let their imagination run wild.

So it was with the *Forward*, and though the generality of people could not make the knowing remarks of Quartermaster Cornhill, it did not prevent the ship forming the subject of Liverpool gossip for three long months. The ship had been put in dock at Birkenhead, on the opposite side of the Mersey. The builders, Scott and Co., amongst the first in England, had received an estimate and detailed plan from Richard Shandon; it informed them of the exact tonnage, dimensions, and store room that the brig was to have. They saw by the details given that they had to do with a consummate seaman. As Shandon had considerable funds at his disposal, the work advanced rapidly, according to the recommendation of the owner. The brig was constructed of a solidity to withstand all tests; it was evident that she was destined to resist enormous pressure, for her ribs were built of teak-wood, a sort of Indian oak, remarkable for its extreme hardness, and were, besides, plated with iron. Sailors asked why the hull of a vessel made so evidently for resistance was not built of sheet-iron like other steamboats, and were told it was because the mysterious engineer had his own reasons for what he did.

Little by little the brig grew on the stocks, and her qualities of strength and delicacy struck connoisseurs. As the sailors of the *Nautilus* had remarked, her stern formed a right angle with her keel; her steel prow, cast in the workshop of R. Hawthorn, of Newcastle, shone in the sun

and gave a peculiar look to the brig, though otherwise she had nothing particularly warlike about her. However, a 16-pounder cannon was installed on the forecastle; it was mounted on a pivot, so that it might easily be turned in any direction; but neither the cannon nor the stern, steel-clad as they were, succeeded in looking warlike.

On the 5th of February, 1860, this strange vessel was launched in the midst of an immense concourse of spectators, and the trial trip was perfectly successful. But if the brig was neither a man-of-war, a merchant vessel, nor a pleasure yacht—for a pleasure trip is not made with six years' provisions in the hold—what was it? Was it a vessel destined for another Franklin expedition? It could not be, because in 1859, the preceding year, Captain McClintock had returned from the Arctic seas, bringing the certain proof of the loss of the unfortunate expedition. Was the *Forward* going to attempt the famous North-West passage? What would be the use? Captain McClure had discovered it in 1853, and his lieutenant, Creswell, was the first who had the honour of rounding the American continent from Behring's Straits to Davis's Straits. Still it was certain to competent judges that the *Forward* was prepared to face the ice regions. Was it going to the South Pole, farther than the whaler Weddell or Captain James Ross? But, if so, what for?

The day after the brig was floated her engine was sent from Hawthorn's foundry at Newcastle. It was of a hundred and twenty horse-power, with oscillating cylinders, taking up little room; its power was considerable for a hundred-and-seventy-ton brig, with so much sail, too, and of such fleetness. Her trial trips had left no doubt on that subject, and even the boatswain, Johnson, had thought right to express his opinion to Clifton's friend—

“When the *Forward* uses her engine and sails at the same time, her sails will make her go the quickest.”

Clifton's friend did not understand him, but he thought anything possible of a ship commanded by a dog. After the engine was installed on board, the stowage of provisions began. This was no slight work, for the vessel was to carry enough for six years. They consisted of dry and salted meat, smoked fish, biscuit, and flour; mountains of tea and coffee were thrown down the shafts in perfect avalanches. Richard Shandon presided over the management of this precious cargo like a man who knows what he is about; all was stowed away, ticketed, and numbered in perfect order; a very large provision of the Indian preparation called pemmican, which contains many nutritive elements in a small volume, was also embarked. The nature of the provisions left no doubt about the length of the cruise, and the sight of the barrels of lime-juice, lime-drops, packets of mustard, grains of sorrel and *cochlearia*, all antiscorbutic, confirmed the opinion on the destination of the brig for the ice regions; their influence is so necessary in Polar navigation. Shandon had doubtless received particular instructions about this part of the cargo, which, along with the medicine-chest, he attended to particularly.

Although arms were not numerous on board, the powder-magazine overflowed. The one cannon could not pretend to use the contents. That gave people more to think about. There were also gigantic saws and powerful instruments, such as levers, leaden maces, handsaws, enormous axes, etc., without counting a considerable quantity of blasting cylinders, enough to blow up the Liverpool Customs—all that was strange, not to say fearful, without mentioning rockets, signals, powder-chests, and beacons of a thousand different sorts. The numerous spectators on the wharfs of Prince's Docks admired likewise a long mahogany whaler, a tin *piroque* covered with gutta-percha, and a certain quantity of halkett-boats, a sort of indiarubber cloaks that can be transformed into canoes by blowing in their lining. Expectation was on the *qui vive*, for the *Forward* was going out with the tide.

II. An Unexpected Letter

The letter received by Richard Shandon, eight months before, ran as follows:

“ABERDEEN,

“August 2nd, 1859.

“To Mr. Richard Shandon,

“Liverpool.

“SIR,—I beg to advise you that the sum of sixteen thousand pounds sterling has been placed in the hands of Messrs. Marcuart and Co., bankers, of Liverpool. I join herewith a series of cheques, signed by me, which will allow you to draw upon the said Messrs. Marcuart for the above-mentioned sum. You do not know me, but that is of no consequence. I know you: that is sufficient. I offer you the place of second on board the brig *Forward* for a voyage that may be long and perilous. If you agree to my conditions you will receive a salary of £500, and all through the voyage it will be augmented one-tenth at the end of each year. The *Forward* is not yet in existence. You must have it built so as to be ready for sea at the beginning of April, 1860, at the latest. Herewith is a detailed plan and estimate. You will take care that it is scrupulously followed. The ship is to be built by Messrs. Scott and Co., who will settle with you. I particularly recommend you the choice of the *Forward's* crew; it will be composed of a captain, myself, of a second, you, of a third officer, a boatswain, two engineers, an ice pilot, eight sailors, and two others, eighteen men in all, comprising Dr. Clawbonny, of this town, who will introduce himself to you when necessary. The *Forward's* crew must be composed of Englishmen without incumbrance; they should be all bachelors and sober—for no spirits, nor even beer, will be allowed on board—ready to undertake anything, and to bear with anything. You will give the preference to men of a sanguine constitution, as they carry a greater amount of animal heat. Offer them five times the usual pay, with an increase of one-tenth for each year of service. At the end of the voyage five hundred pounds will be placed at the disposition of each, and two thousand at yours. These funds will be placed with Messrs. Marcuart and Co. The voyage will be long and difficult, but honourable, so you need not hesitate to accept my conditions. Be good enough to send your answer to K. Z., Poste Restante, Goteborg, Sweden.

“P.S.—On the 15th of February next you will receive a large Danish dog, with hanging lips, and tawny coat with black stripes. You will take it on board and have it fed with oaten bread, mixed with tallow grease. You will acknowledge the reception of the said dog to me under the same initials as above, Poste Restante, Leghorn, Italy.

“The captain of the *Forward* will introduce himself to you when necessary. When you are ready to start you will receive further instructions.

“THE CAPTAIN OF THE 'FORWARD,'

“K. Z.”

III. Dr. Clawbonny

Richard Shandon was a good sailor; he had been commander of whalers in the Arctic seas for many years, and had a wide reputation for skill. He might well be astonished at such a letter, and so he was, but astonished like a man used to astonishments. He fulfilled, too, all the required conditions: he had no wife, children, or relations; he was as free as a man could be. Having no one to consult, he went straight to Messrs. Marcuart's bank.

"If the money is there," he said to himself, "I'll undertake the rest."

He was received by the firm with all the attention due to a man with sixteen thousand pounds in their safes. Sure of that fact, Shandon asked for a sheet of letter-paper, and sent his acceptance in a large sailor's hand to the address indicated. The same day he put himself in communication with the Birkenhead shipbuilders, and twenty-four hours later the keel of the *Forward* lay on the stocks in the dockyard.

Richard Shandon was a bachelor of forty, robust, energetic, and brave, three sailor-like qualities, giving their possessor confidence, vigour, and *sang-froid*. He was reputed jealous and hard to be pleased, so he was more feared than loved by his sailors. But this reputation did not increase the difficulty of finding a crew, for he was known to be a clever commander. He was afraid that the mystery of the enterprise would embarrass his movements, and he said to himself, "The best thing I can do is to say nothing at all; there are sea-dogs who will want to know the why and the wherefore of the business, and as I know nothing myself, I can't tell them. K. Z. is a queer fish, but after all he knows me, and has confidence in me; that's enough. As to the ship, she will be a handsome lass, and my name isn't Richard Shandon if she is not destined for the Frozen Seas. But I shall keep that to myself and my officers."

Upon which Richard Shandon set about recruiting his crew upon the conditions of family and health exacted by the captain. He knew a brave fellow and capital sailor, named James Wall. Wall was about thirty, and had made more than one trip to the North Seas. Shandon offered him the post of third officer, and he accepted blindly; all he cared for was to sail, as he was devoted to his profession. Shandon told him and Johnson (whom he engaged as boatswain) all he knew about the business.

"Just as soon go there as anywhere else," answered Wall. "If it's to seek the North-West passage, many have been and come back."

"Been, yes; but come back I don't answer for," said Johnson; "but that's no reason for not going."

"Besides, if we are not mistaken in our conjectures," said Shandon, "the voyage will be undertaken under good conditions. The *Forward's* a bonny lass, with a good engine, and will stand wear and tear. Eighteen men are all the crew we want."

"Eighteen men?" said Johnson. "That's just the number that the American, Kane, had on board when he made his famous voyage towards the North Pole."

"It's a singular fact that there's always some private individual trying to cross the sea from Davis's Straits to Behring's Straits. The Franklin expeditions have already cost England more than seven hundred and sixty thousand pounds without producing any practical result. Who the devil means to risk his fortune in such an enterprise?"

“We are reasoning now on a simple hypothesis,” said Shandon. “I don’t know if we are really going to the Northern or Southern Seas. Perhaps we are going on a voyage of discovery. We shall know more when Dr. Clawbonny comes; I daresay he will tell us all about it.”

“There’s nothing for it but to wait,” answered Johnson; “I’ll go and hunt up some solid subjects, captain; and as to their animal heat, I guarantee beforehand you can trust me for that.”

Johnson was a valuable acquisition; he understood the navigation of these high latitudes. He was quartermaster on board the *Phoenix*, one of the vessels of the Franklin expedition of 1853. He was witness of the death of the French lieutenant Bellot, whom he had accompanied in his expedition across the ice. Johnson knew the maritime population of Liverpool, and started at once on his recruiting expedition. Shandon, Wall, and he did their work so well that the crew was complete in the beginning of December. It had been a difficult task; many, tempted by the high pay, felt frightened at the risk, and more than one enlisted boldly who came afterwards to take back his word and enlistment money, dissuaded by his friends from undertaking such an enterprise. All of them tried to pierce the mystery, and worried Shandon with questions; he sent them to Johnson.

“I can’t tell you what I don’t know,” he answered invariably; “you’ll be in good company, that’s all I can tell you. You can take it or leave it alone.”

And the greater number took it.

“I have only to choose,” added the boatswain; “such salary has never been heard of in the memory of sailors, and then the certainty of finding a handsome capital when we come back. Only think: it’s tempting enough.”

“The fact is,” answered the sailor, “it is tempting; enough to live on till the end of one’s days.”

“I don’t hide from you,” continued Johnson, “that the cruise will be long, painful, and perilous; that is formally stated in our instructions, and you ought to know what you undertake; you will very likely be required to attempt all that it is possible for human beings to do, and perhaps more. If you are the least bit frightened, if you don’t think you may just as well finish yonder as here, you’d better not enlist, but give way to a bolder man.”

“But, Mr. Johnson,” continued the sailor, for the want of something better to say, “at least you know the captain?”

“The captain is Richard Shandon till another comes.”

Richard Shandon, in his secret heart, hoped that the command would remain with him, and that at the last moment he should receive precise instructions as to the destination of the *Forward*. He did all he could to spread the report in his conversations with his officers, or when following the construction of the brig as it grew in the Birkenhead dockyard, looking like the ribs of a whale turned upside down. Shandon and Johnson kept strictly to their instructions touching the health of the sailors who were to form the crew; they all looked hale and hearty, and had enough heat in their bodies to suffice for the engine of the *Forward*; their supple limbs, their clear and florid complexions were fit to react against the action of intense cold. They were confident and resolute men, energetically and solidly constituted. Of course they were not all equally vigorous; Shandon had even hesitated about taking some of them, such as the sailors Gripper and Garry, and the harpooner Simpson, because they looked rather thin; but, on the whole, their build was good; they were a warm-hearted lot, and their engagement was signed.

All the crew belonged to the same sect of the Protestant religion; during these long campaigns prayer in common and the reading of the Bible have a good influence over the men and sustain them in the hour of discouragement; it was therefore important that they should be all of the same way of thinking. Shandon knew by experience the utility of these practices, and their influence on the mind of the crew; they are always employed on board ships that are intended to winter in the Polar Seas. The crew once got together, Shandon and his two officers set about the provisions; they strictly followed the instructions of the captain; these instructions were clear, precise, and detailed, and the least articles were put down with their quality and quantity. Thanks to the cheques at the commander's disposition, every article was paid for at once with a discount of 8 per cent, which Richard carefully placed to the credit of K. Z.

Crew, provisions, and cargo were ready by January, 1860; the *Forward* began to look shipshape, and Shandon went daily to Birkenhead. On the morning of the 23rd of January he was, as usual, on board one of the Mersey ferry-boats with a helm at either end to prevent having to turn it; there was a thick fog, and the sailors of the river were obliged to direct their course by means of the compass, though the passage lasts scarcely ten minutes. But the thickness of the fog did not prevent Shandon seeing a man of short stature, rather fat, with an intelligent and merry face and an amiable look, who came up to him, took him by the two hands, and shook them with an ardour, a petulance, and a familiarity "quite meridional," as a Frenchman would have said. But if this person did not come from the South, he had got his temperament there; he talked and gesticulated with volubility; his thought must come out or the machine would burst. His eyes, small as those of witty men generally are, his mouth, large and mobile, were safety-pipes which allowed him to give passage to his overflowing thoughts; he talked, and talked, and talked so much and so fast that Shandon couldn't understand a word he said. However, this did not prevent the *Forward's* mate from recognising the little man he had never seen before; a lightning flash traversed his mind, and when the other paused to take breath, Shandon made haste to get out the words, "Doctor Clawbonny!"

"Himself in person, commander! I've been at least half a quarter of an hour looking for you, asking everybody everywhere! Just think how impatient I got; five minutes more and I should have lost my head! And so you are the commander Richard? You really exist? You are not a myth? Your hand, your hand! I want to shake it again. It is Richard Shandon's hand, and if there is a commander Shandon, there's a brig *Forward* to command; and if he commands he will start, and if he starts he'll take Dr. Clawbonny on board."

"Well, yes, doctor, I am Richard Shandon; there is a brig *Forward*, and it will start."

"That's logic," answered the doctor, after taking in a large provision of breathing air—"that's logic. And I am ready to jump for joy at having my dearest wishes gratified. I've wanted to undertake such a voyage. Now with you, commander——"

"I don't——" began Shandon.

"With you," continued Clawbonny, without hearing him, "we are sure to go far and not to draw back for a trifle."

"But——" began Shandon again.

"For you have shown what you are made of, commander; I know your deeds of service. You are a fine sailor!"

"If you will allow me——"

“No, I won’t have your bravery, audacity, and skill put an instant in doubt, even by you! The captain who chose you for his mate is a man who knows what he’s about, I can tell you.”

“But that’s nothing to do with it,” said Shandon, impatient.

“What is it, then? Don’t keep me in suspense another minute.”

“You don’t give me time to speak. Tell me, if you please, doctor, how it comes that you are to take part in the expedition of the *Forward*.”

“Read this letter, this worthy letter, the letter of a brave captain—very laconic, but quite sufficient.”

Saying which the doctor held out the following letter to Shandon:—

“INVERNESS,

“Jan. 22nd, 1860.

“To Dr. Clawbonny.

“If Dr. Clawbonny wishes to embark on board the *Forward* for a long cruise, he may introduce himself to the commander, Richard Shandon, who has received orders concerning him.

“THE CAPTAIN OF THE ’FORWARD,’

“K. Z.”

“This letter reached me this morning, and here I am, ready to embark.”

“But, doctor, do you know where we are going to?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea, and I do not care so that it is somewhere. They pretend that I am learned; they are mistaken, commander. I know nothing, and if I have published a few books that don’t sell badly, I ought not to have done it; the public is silly for buying them. I know nothing, I tell you. I am only an ignorant man. When I have the offer of completing, or rather of going over again, my knowledge of medicine, surgery, history, geography, botany, mineralogy, conchology, geodesy, chemistry, natural philosophy, mechanics, and hydrography, why I accept, of course.”

“Then,” said Shandon, disappointed, “you do not know where the *Forward* is bound for?”

“Yes, I do; it is bound for where there is something to learn, to discover, and to compare—where we shall meet with other customs, other countries, other nations, to study in the exercise of their functions; it is going, in short, where I have never been.”

“But I want to know something more definite than that,” cried Shandon.

“Well, I have heard that we are bound for the Northern Seas.”

“At least,” asked Shandon, “you know the captain?”

“Not the least bit in the world! But he is an honest fellow, you may believe me.”

The commander and the doctor disembarked at Birkenhead; the former told the doctor all he knew about the situation of things, and the mystery inflamed the imagination of the doctor. The sight of the brig caused him transports of joy. From that day he stopped with Shandon, and went every day to pay a visit to the shell of the *Forward*. Besides, he was specially appointed to overlook the installation of the ship’s medicine-chest. For Dr. Clawbonny was a doctor, and a good one, though practising little. At the age of twenty-five he was an ordinary

practitioner; at the age of forty he was a *savant*, well known in the town; he was an influential member of all the literary and scientific institutions of Liverpool. His fortune allowed him to distribute counsels which were none the worse for being gratuitous; beloved as a man eminently lovable must always be, he had never wronged any one, not even himself; lively and talkative, he carried his heart in his hand, and put his hand into that of everybody. When it was known in Liverpool that he was going to embark on board the *Forward* his friends did all they could to dissuade him, and only fixed him more completely in his determination, and when the doctor was determined to do anything no one could prevent him. From that time the suppositions and apprehensions increased, but did not prevent the *Forward* being launched on the 5th of February, 1860. Two months later she was ready to put to sea. On the 15th of March, as the letter of the captain had announced, a dog of Danish breed was sent by railway from Edinburgh to Liverpool, addressed to Richard Shandon. The animal seemed surly, peevish, and even sinister, with quite a singular look in his eyes. The name of the *Forward* was engraved on his brass collar. The commander installed it on board the same day, and acknowledged its reception to K. Z. at Leghorn. Thus, with the exception of the captain, the crew was complete. It was composed as follows:—

1. K. Z., captain; 2. Richard Shandon, commander; 3. James Wall, third officer; 4. Dr. Clawbonny; 5. Johnson, boatswain; 6. Simpson, harpooner; 7. Bell, carpenter; 8. Brunton, chief engineer; 9. Plover, second engineer; 10. Strong (negro), cook; 11. Foker, ice-master; 12. Wolsten, smith; 13. Bolton, sailor; 14. Garry, sailor; 15. Clifton, sailor; 16. Gripper, sailor; 17. Pen, sailor; 18. Warren, stoker.

IV. Dog-Captain

The day of departure arrived with the 5th of April. The admission of the doctor on board had given the crew more confidence. They knew that where the worthy doctor went they could follow. However, the sailors were still uneasy, and Shandon, fearing that some of them would desert, wished to be off. With the coast out of sight, they would make up their mind to the inevitable.

Dr. Clawbonny's cabin was situated at the end of the poop, and occupied all the stern of the vessel. The captain's and mate's cabins gave upon deck. The captain's remained hermetically closed, after being furnished with different instruments, furniture, travelling garments, books, clothes for changing, and utensils, indicated in a detailed list. According to the wish of the captain, the key of the cabin was sent to Lubeck; he alone could enter his room.

This detail vexed Shandon, and took away all chance of the chief command. As to his own cabin, he had perfectly appropriated it to the needs of the presumed voyage, for he thoroughly understood the needs of a Polar expedition. The room of the third officer was placed under the lower deck, which formed a vast sleeping-room for the sailors' use; the men were very comfortably lodged, and would not have found anything like the same convenience on board any other ship; they were cared for like the most priceless cargo: a vast stove occupied all the centre of the common room. Dr. Clawbonny was in his element; he had taken possession of his cabin on the 6th of February, the day after the *Forward* was launched.

"The happiest of animals," he used to say, "is a snail, for it can make a shell exactly to fit it; I shall try to be an intelligent snail."

And considering that the shell was to be his lodging for a considerable time, the cabin began to look like home; the doctor had a *savant's* or a child's pleasure in arranging his scientific traps. His books, his herbals, his set of pigeon-holes, his instruments of precision, his chemical apparatus, his collection of thermometers, barometers, hygrometers, rain-gauges, spectacles, compasses, sextants, maps, plans, flasks, powders, bottles for medicine-chest, were all classed in an order that would have shamed the British Museum. The space of six square feet contained incalculable riches: the doctor had only to stretch out his hand without moving to become instantaneously a doctor, a mathematician, an astronomer, a geographer, a botanist, or a conchologist. It must be acknowledged that he was proud of his management and happy in his floating sanctuary, which three of his thinnest friends would have sufficed to fill. His friends came to it in such numbers that even a man as easy-going as the doctor might have said with Socrates, "My house is small, but may it please Heaven never to fill it with friends!"

To complete the description of the *Forward* it is sufficient to say that the kennel of the large Danish dog was constructed under the window of the mysterious cabin but its savage inhabitant preferred wandering between decks and in the hold; it seemed impossible to tame him, and no one had been able to become his master; during the night he howled lamentably, making the hollows of the ship ring in a sinister fashion. Was it regret for his absent master? Was it the instinct of knowing that he was starting for a perilous voyage? Was it a presentiment of dangers to come? The sailors decided that it was for the latter reason, and more than one pretended to joke who believed seriously that the dog was of a diabolical kind. Pen, who was a brutal man, was going to strike him once, when he fell, unfortunately, against the angle of the capstan, and made a frightful wound in his head. Of course this accident was placed to the account of the fantastic animal. Clifton, the most superstitious of the crew, made

the singular observation that when the dog was on the poop he always walked on the windward side, and afterwards, when the brig was out at sea, and altered its tack, the surprising animal changed its direction with the wind the same as the captain of the *Forward* would have done in his place. Dr. Clawbonny, whose kindness and caresses would have tamed a tiger, tried in vain to win the good graces of the dog; he lost his time and his pains. The animal did not answer to any name ever written in the dog calendar, and the crew ended by calling him Captain, for he appeared perfectly conversant with ship customs; it was evident that it was not his first trip. From such facts it is easy to understand the boatswain's answer to Clifton's friend, and the credulity of those who heard it; more than one repeated jokingly that he expected one day to see the dog take human shape and command the manoeuvres with a resounding voice.

If Richard Shandon did not feel the same apprehensions he was not without anxiety, and the day before the departure, in the evening of April 5th, he had a conversation on the subject with the doctor, Wall, and Johnson in the poop cabin. These four persons were tasting their tenth grog, and probably their last, for the letter from Aberdeen had ordered that all the crew, from the captain to the stoker, should be teetotallers, and that there should be no wine, beer, nor spirits on board except those given by the doctor's orders. The conversation had been going on about the departure for the last hour. If the instructions of the captain were realised to the end, Shandon would receive his last instructions the next day.

"If the letter," said the commander, "does not tell me the captain's name, it must at least tell me the destination of the brig, or I shall not know where to take her to."

"If I were you," said the impatient doctor, "I should start whether I get a letter or no; they'll know how to send after you, you may depend."

"You are ready for anything, doctor; but if so, to what quarter of the globe should you set sail?"

"To the North Pole, of course; there's not the slightest doubt about that."

"Why should it not be the South Pole?" asked Wall.

"The South Pole is out of the question. No one with any sense would send a brig across the whole of the Atlantic. Just reflect a minute, and you'll see the impossibility."

"The doctor has an answer to everything," said Wall.

"Well, we'll say north," continued Shandon. "But where north? To Spitzbergen or Greenland? Labrador or Hudson's Bay? Although all directions end in insuperable icebergs, I am not less puzzled as to which to take. Have you an answer to that, doctor?"

"No," he answered, vexed at having nothing to say; "but if you don't get a letter what shall you do?"

"I shall do nothing; I shall wait."

"Do you mean to say you won't start?" cried Dr. Clawbonny, agitating his glass in despair.

"Certainly I do."

"And that would be the wisest plan," said Johnson tranquilly, while the doctor began marching round the table, for he could not keep still; "but still, if we wait too long, the consequences may be deplorable; the season is good now if we are really going north, as we ought to profit by the breaking up of the ice to cross Davis's Straits; besides, the crew gets more and more uneasy; the friends and companions of our men do all they can to persuade them to leave the *Forward*, and their influence may be pernicious for us."

“Besides,” added Wall, “if one of them deserted they all would, and then I don’t know how you would get another crew together.”

“But what can I do?” cried Shandon.

“What you said you would do,” replied the doctor; “wait and wait till to-morrow before you despair. The captain’s promises have all been fulfilled up to now with the greatest regularity, and there’s no reason to believe we shan’t be made acquainted with our destination when the proper time comes. I haven’t the slightest doubt that to-morrow we shall be sailing in the Irish Channel, and I propose we drink a last grog to our pleasant voyage. It begins in an unaccountable fashion, but with sailors like you there are a thousand chances that it will end well.”

And all four drank to their safe return.

“Now, commander,” continued Johnson, “if you will allow me to advise you, you will prepare everything to start; the crew must think that you know what you are about. If you don’t get a letter to-morrow, set sail; do not get up the steam, the wind looks like holding out, and it will be easy enough to sail; let the pilot come on board; go out of the docks with the tide, and anchor below Birkenhead; our men won’t be able to communicate with land, and if the devil of a letter comes it will find us as easily there as elsewhere.”

“By heavens! you are right, Johnson!” cried the doctor, holding out his hand to the old sailor.

“So be it,” answered Shandon.

Then each one entered his cabin, and waited in feverish sleep for the rising of the sun. The next day the first distribution of letters took place in the town, and not one bore the address of the commander, Richard Shandon. Nevertheless, he made his preparations for departure, and the news spread at once all over Liverpool, and, as we have already seen, an extraordinary affluence of spectators crowded the wharfs of New Prince’s Docks. Many of them came on board to shake hands for the last time with a comrade, or to try and dissuade a friend, or to take a look at the brig, and to know its destination; they were disappointed at finding the commander more taciturn and reserved than ever. He had his reasons for that.

Ten o’clock struck. Eleven followed. The tide began to go out that day at about one o’clock in the afternoon. Shandon from the top of the poop was looking at the crowd with uneasy eyes, trying to read the secret of his destiny on one of the faces. But in vain. The sailors of the *Forward* executed his orders in silence, looking at him all the time, waiting for orders which did not come. Johnson went on preparing for departure. The weather was cloudy and the sea rough; a south-easter blew with violence, but it was easy to get out of the Mersey.

At twelve o’clock nothing had yet been received. Dr. Clawbonny marched up and down in agitation, looking through his telescope, gesticulating, impatient for the sea, as he said. He felt moved, though he struggled against it. Shandon bit his lips till the blood came. Johnson came up to him and said—

“Commander, if we want to profit by the tide, there is no time to be lost; we shall not be clear of the docks for at least an hour.”

Shandon looked round him once more and consulted his watch. The twelve o’clock letters had been distributed. In despair he told Johnson to start. The boatswain ordered the deck to be cleared of spectators, and the crowd made a general movement to regain the wharves while the last moorings were unloosed. Amidst the confusion a dog’s bark was distinctly heard, and all at once the animal broke through the compact mass, jumped on to the poop, and, as a thousand spectators can testify, dropped a letter at Shandon’s feet.

“A letter!” cried Shandon. “*He* is on board, then?”

“He was, that’s certain, but he isn’t now,” said Johnson, pointing to the deserted deck.

Shandon held the letter without opening it in his astonishment.

“But read it, read it, I say,” said the doctor.

Shandon looked at it. The envelope had no postmark or date; it was addressed simply to:

“RICHARD SHANDON,

“Commander on board the brig

“*Forward*.”

Shandon opened the letter and read as follows:—

“Sail for Cape Farewell. You will reach it by the 20th of April. If the captain does not appear on board, cross Davis’s Straits, and sail up Baffin’s Sea to Melville Bay.

“THE CAPTAIN OF THE ‘FORWARD,’

“K. Z.”

Shandon carefully folded this laconic epistle, put it in his pocket, and gave the order for departure. His voice, which rang above the east wind, had something solemn in it.

Soon the *Forward* had passed the docks, and directed by a Liverpool pilot whose little cutter followed, went down the Mersey with the current. The crowd precipitated itself on to the exterior wharf along the Victoria Docks in order to get a last glimpse of the strange brig. The two topsails, the foresail and the brigantine sail were rapidly set up, and the *Forward*, worthy of its name, after having rounded Birkenhead Point, sailed with extraordinary fleetness into the Irish Sea.

V. Out At Sea

The wind was favourable, though it blew in April gales. The *Forward* cut through the waves, and towards three o'clock crossed the mail steamer between Liverpool and the Isle of Man. The captain hailed from his deck the last adieu that the *Forward* was destined to hear.

At five o'clock the pilot left the command in the hands of Richard Shandon, the commander of the brig, and regained his cutter, which, turning round, soon disappeared on the south-west. Towards evening the brig doubled the Calf of Man at the southern extremity of the island. During the night the sea was very rough, but the *Forward* behaved well, left the point of Ayr to the north-west, and directed its course for the Northern Channel. Johnson was right; once out at sea the maritime instinct of the sailors gained the upper hand. Life on board went on with regularity.

The doctor breathed in the sea air with delight; he walked about vigorously in the squalls, and for a *savant* he was not a bad sailor.

"The sea is splendid," said he to Johnson, coming up on deck after breakfast. "I have made its acquaintance rather late, but I shall make up for lost time."

"You are right, Mr. Clawbonny. I would give all the continents of the world for a corner of the ocean. They pretend that sailors soon get tired of their profession, but I've been forty years on the sea and I love it as much as the first day."

"It is a great pleasure to feel a good ship under one's feet, and if I'm not a bad judge the *Forward* behaves herself well."

"You judge rightly, doctor," answered Shandon, who had joined the talkers; "she is a good ship, and I acknowledge that a vessel destined for navigation amongst ice has never been better equipped. That reminds me that thirty years ago Captain James Ross, sailing for the North-West passage——"

"In the *Victory*," added the doctor quickly, "a brig about the same tonnage as ours, with a steam-engine too."

"What! you know about that?"

"Judge if I do," answered the doctor. "Machines were then in their infancy, and the *Victory's* kept her back; the captain, James Ross, after having vainly repaired it bit by bit, finished by taking it down, and abandoned it at his first winter quarters."

"The devil!" said Shandon. "You know all about it, I see."

"Yes. I've read the works of Parry, Ross, and Franklin, and the reports of McClure, Kennedy, Kane, and McClintock, and I remember something of what I've read. I can tell you, too, that this same McClintock, on board the *Fox*, a screw brig in the style of ours, went easier to his destination than any of the men who preceded him."

"That's perfectly true," answered Shandon; "he was a bold sailor was McClintock; I saw him at work. You may add that, like him, we shall find ourselves in Davis's Straits in April, and if we succeed in passing the ice our voyage will be considerably advanced."

"Unless," added the doctor, "it happens to us like it did to the *Fox* in 1857, to be caught the very first year by the ice in Baffin's Sea, and have to winter in the midst of the icebergs."

“We must hope for better luck,” answered Johnson. “If a ship like the *Forward* can’t take us where we want to go, we must renounce all hope for ever.”

“Besides,” said the doctor, “if the captain is on board he will know better than we do what must be done. We know nothing as yet; his letter says nothing about what our voyage is for.”

“It is a good deal to know which way to go,” answered Shandon quickly. “We can do without the captain and his instructions for another month at least. Besides, you know what I think about it.”

“A short time ago,” said the doctor, “I thought like you that the captain would never appear, and that you would remain commander of the ship; but now——”

“Now what?” replied Shandon in an impatient tone.

“Since the arrival of the second letter I have modified that opinion.”

“Why, doctor?”

“Because the letter tells you the route to follow, but leaves you ignorant of the *Forward’s* destination; and we must know where we are going to. How the deuce are you to get a letter now we are out at sea? On the coast of Greenland the service of the post must leave much to wish for. I believe that our gentleman is waiting for us in some Danish settlement—at Holsteinborg or Uppernawik; he has evidently gone there to complete his cargo of sealskins, buy his sledges and dog, and, in short, get together all the tackle wanted for a voyage in the Arctic Seas. I shouldn’t be at all surprised to see him come out of his cabin one of these fine mornings and begin commanding the ship in anything but a supernatural way.”

“It’s possible,” answered Shandon drily; “but in the meantime the wind is getting up, and I can’t risk my gallant sails in such weather.”

Shandon left the doctor and gave the order to reef the topsails.

“He takes it to heart,” said the doctor to the boatswain.

“Yes,” answered the latter, “and it’s a great pity, for you may be right, Mr. Clawbonny.”

In the evening of Saturday the *Forward* doubled the Mull of Galloway, whose lighthouse shone to the north-east; during the night they left the Mull of Cantyre to the north, and Cape Fair, on the coast of Ireland, to the east. Towards three o’clock in the morning, the brig, leaving Rathlin Island on her starboard side, disembogued by the Northern Channel into the ocean. It was Sunday, the 8th of April, and the doctor read some chapters of the Bible to the assembled seamen. The wind then became a perfect hurricane, and tended to throw the brig on to the Irish coast; she pitched, and rolled, and tossed, and if the doctor was not seasick it was because he would not be, for nothing was easier. At noon Cape Malinhead disappeared towards the south; it was the last European ground that these bold sailors were to perceive, and more than one watched it out of sight, destined never to see it again. They were then in 55° 57’ latitude and 7° 40’ longitude by the Greenwich meridian.

The storm spent itself out about nine o’clock in the evening; the *Forward*, like a good sailor, maintained her route north-west. She showed by her behaviour during the day what her sailing capacities were, and as the Liverpool connoisseurs had remarked, she was above all, a sailing vessel. During the following days the *Forward* gained the north-west with rapidity; the wind veered round south, and the sea had a tremendous swell on; the brig was then going along under full sail. Some petrels and puffins came sailing over the poop; the doctor

skilfully shot one of the latter, and it fell, fortunately, on the deck. The harpooner, Simpson, picked it up and brought it to its owner.

“Nasty game that, Mr. Clawbonny,” he said.

“It will make an excellent meal, on the contrary,” said the doctor.

“You don’t mean to say you are going to eat that thing?”

“And so are you, old fellow,” said the doctor, laughing.

“Poh!” replied Simpson, “but it’s oily and rancid, like all other sea birds.”

“Never mind!” answered the doctor, “I have a peculiar way of cooking that game, and if you recognise it for a sea bird I’ll consent never to kill another in my life.”

“Do you know how to cook, then?”

“A *savant* ought to know how to do a little of everything.”

“You’d better take care, Simpson,” said the boatswain; “the doctor’s a clever man, and he’ll make you take this puffin for a grouse.”

The fact is that the doctor was quite right about his fowl; he took off all the fat, which all lies under the skin, principally on the thighs, and with it disappeared the rancidity and taste of fish which is so disagreeable in a sea bird. Thus prepared the puffin was declared excellent, and Simpson acknowledged it the first.

During the late storm Richard Shandon had been able to judge of the qualities of his crew; he had watched each man narrowly, and knew how much each was to be depended upon.

James Wall was devoted to Richard, understood quickly and executed well, but he might fail in initiative; he placed him in the third rank. Johnson was used to struggle with the sea; he was an old stager in the Arctic Ocean, and had nothing to learn either in audacity or *sang-froid*. The harpooner, Simpson, and the carpenter, Bell, were sure men, faithful to duty and discipline. The ice-master, Foker, was an experienced sailor, and, like Johnson, was capable of rendering important service. Of the other sailors Garry and Bolton seemed to be the best; Bolton was a gay and talkative fellow; Garry was thirty-five, with an energetic face, but rather pale and sad-looking. The three sailors, Clifton, Gripper, and Pen, seemed less ardent and resolute; they easily grumbled. Gripper wanted to break his engagement even before the departure of the *Forward*; a sort of shame kept him on board. If things went on all right, if there were not too many risks to run, no dangers to encounter, these three men might be depended upon; but they must be well fed, for it might be said that they were led by their stomachs. Although warned beforehand, they grumbled at having to be teetotallers; at their meals they regretted the brandy and gin; it did not, however, make them spare the tea and coffee, which was prodigally given out on board. As to the two engineers, Brunton and Plover, and the stoker, Warren, there had been nothing for them to do as yet, and Shandon could not tell anything about their capabilities.

On the 14th of April the *Forward* got into the grand current of the Gulf Stream, which, after ascending the eastern coast of America to Newfoundland, inclines to the north-east along the coast of Norway. They were then in 57° 37’ latitude by 22° 58’ longitude, at two hundred miles from the point of Greenland. The weather grew colder, and the thermometer descended to thirty-two degrees, that is to say to freezing point.

The doctor had not yet begun to wear the garments he destined for the Arctic Seas, but he had donned a sailor’s dress like the rest; he was a queer sight with his top-boots, in which his legs disappeared, his vast oilcloth hat, his jacket and trousers of the same; when drenched with

heavy rains or enormous waves the doctor looked like a sort of sea-animal, and was proud of the comparison.

During two days the sea was extremely rough; the wind veered round to the north-west, and delayed the progress of the *Forward*. From the 14th to the 16th of April the swell was great, but on the Monday there came such a torrent of rain that the sea became calm immediately. Shandon spoke to the doctor about this phenomenon.

“It confirms the curious observations of the whaler Scoresby, who laid it before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, of which I have the honour to be an honorary member. You see that when it rains the waves are not very high, even under the influence of a violent wind, and when the weather is dry the sea is more agitated, even when there is less wind.”

“But how is this phenomenon accounted for?”

“Very simply; it is not accounted for at all.”

Just then the ice-master, who was keeping watch on the crossbars of the topsails, signalled a floating mass on the starboard, at about fifteen miles distance before the wind.

“An iceberg here!” cried the doctor.

Shandon pointed his telescope in the direction indicated, and confirmed the pilot’s announcement.

“That is curious!” said the doctor.

“What! you are astonished at last!” said the commander, laughing.

“I am surprised, but not astonished,” answered the doctor, laughing; “for the brig *Ann*, of Poole, from Greenspond, was caught in 1813 in perfect ice-fields, in the forty-fourth degree of north latitude, and her captain, Dayernent, counted them by hundreds!”

“I see you can teach us something, even upon that subject.”

“Very little,” answered Clawbonny modestly; “it is only that ice has been met with in even lower latitudes.”

“I knew that already, doctor, for when I was cabinboy on board the war-sloop *Fly*——”

“In 1818,” continued the doctor, “at the end of March, almost in April, you passed between two large islands of floating ice under the forty-second degree of latitude.”

“Well, I declare you astonish me!” cried Shandon.

“But the iceberg doesn’t astonish me, as we are two degrees further north.”

“You are a well, doctor,” answered the commander, “and all we have to do is to be water-buckets.”

“You will draw me dry sooner than you think for; and now, Shandon, if we could get a nearer look at this phenomenon, I should be the happiest of doctors.”

“Just so, Johnson,” said Shandon, calling his boatswain. “It seems to me that the breeze is getting up.”

“Yes, commander,” answered Johnson; “we are making very little way, and the currents of Davis’s Straits will soon be against us.”

“You are right, Johnson, and if we wish to be in sight of Cape Farewell on the 20th of April we must put the steam on, or we shall be thrown on the coasts of Labrador. Mr. Wall, will you give orders to light the fires?”

The commander's orders were executed, an hour afterwards the steam was up, the sails were furled, and the screw cutting the waves sent the *Forward* against the north-west wind.

VI. The Great Polar Current

A short time after the flights of birds became more and more numerous. Petrels, puffins, and mates, inhabitants of those desolate quarters, signalled the approach of Greenland. The *Forward* was rapidly nearing the north, leaving to her leeward a long line of black smoke.

On Tuesday the 17th of April, about eleven o'clock in the morning, the ice-master signalled the first sight of the ice-blink; it was about twenty miles to the N.N.W. This glaring white strip was brilliantly lighted up, in spite of the presence of thick clouds in the neighbouring parts of the sky. Experienced people on board could make no mistake about this phenomenon, and declared, from its whiteness, that the blink was owing to a large ice-field, situated at about thirty miles out of sight, and that it proceeded from the reflection of luminous rays. Towards evening the wind turned round to the south, and became favourable; Shandon put on all sail, and for economy's sake caused the fires to be put out. The *Forward*, under her topsails and foresails, glided on towards Cape Farewell.

At three o'clock on the 18th they came across the ice-stream, and a white thick line of a glaring colour cut brilliantly the lines of the sea and sky. It was evidently drifting from the eastern coast of Greenland more than from Davis's Straits, for ice generally keeps to the west coast of Baffin's Sea. An hour afterwards the *Forward* passed in the midst of isolated portions of the ice-stream, and in the most compact parts, the icebergs, though welded together, obeyed the movements of the swell. The next day the man at the masthead signalled a vessel. It was the *Valkirien*, a Danish corvette, running alongside the *Forward*, and making for the bank of Newfoundland. The current of the Strait began to make itself felt, and Shandon had to put on sail to go up it. At this moment the commander, the doctor, James Wall, and Johnson were assembled on the poop examining the direction and strength of the current. The doctor wanted to know if the current existed also in Baffin's Sea.

"Without the least doubt," answered Shandon, "and the sailing vessels have much trouble to stem it."

"Besides there," added Wall, "you meet with it on the eastern coast of America, as well as on the western coast of Greenland."

"There," said the doctor, "that is what gives very singular reason to the seekers of the North-West passage! That current runs about five miles an hour, and it is a little difficult to suppose that it springs from the bottom of a gulf."

"It is so much the more probable, doctor," replied Shandon, "that if this current runs from north to south we find in Behring's Straits a contrary current which runs from south to north, and which must be the origin of this one."

"According to that," replied the doctor, "we must admit that America is totally unconnected with the Polar lands, and that the waters of the Pacific run round the coasts of America into the Atlantic. On the other hand, the greater elevation of the waters of the Pacific gives reason to the supposition that they fall into the European seas."

"But," sharply replied Shandon, "there must be facts to establish that theory, and if there are any," added he with irony, "our universally well-informed doctor ought to know them."

“Well,” replied the above-mentioned, with amiable satisfaction, “if it interests you, I can tell you that whales, wounded in Davis’s Straits, are caught some time afterwards in the neighbourhood of Tartary with the European harpoon still in their flanks.”

“And unless they have been able to double Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope,” replied Shandon, “they must necessarily have rounded the septentrional coasts of America—that’s what I call indisputable, doctor.”

“However, if you were not convinced, my dear fellow,” said the doctor, smiling, “I could still produce other facts, such as drift-wood, of which Davis’s Straits are full, larch, aspen, and other tropical trees. Now we know that the Gulf Stream hinders those woods from entering the Straits. If, then, they come out of it they can only get in from Behring’s Straits.”

“I am convinced, doctor, and I avow that it would be difficult to remain incredulous with you.”

“Upon my honour,” said Johnson, “there’s something that comes just in time to help our discussion. I perceive in the distance a lump of wood of certain dimensions; if the commander permits it we’ll haul it in, and ask it the name of its country.”

“That’s it,” said the doctor, “the example after the rule.”

Shandon gave the necessary orders; the brig was directed towards the piece of wood signalled, and soon afterwards, not without trouble, the crew hoisted it on deck. It was the trunk of a mahogany tree, gnawed right into the centre by worms, but for which circumstance it would not have floated.

“This is glorious,” said the doctor enthusiastically, “for as the currents of the Atlantic could not carry it to Davis’s Straits, and as it has not been driven into the Polar basin by the streams of septentrional America, seeing that this tree grew under the Equator, it is evident that it comes in a straight line from Behring; and look here, you see those sea-worms which have eaten it, they belong to a hot-country species.”

“It is evident,” replied Wall, “that the people who do not believe in the famous passage are wrong.”

“Why, this circumstance alone ought to convince them,” said the doctor; “I will just trace you out the itinerary of that mahogany; it has been floated towards the Pacific by some river of the Isthmus of Panama or Guatemala, from thence the current has dragged it along the American coast as far as Behring’s Straits, and in spite of everything it was obliged to enter the Polar Seas. It is neither so old nor so soaked that we need fear to assign a recent date to its setting out; it has had the good luck to get clear of the obstacles in that long suite of straits which lead out of Baffin’s Bay, and quickly seized by the boreal current came by Davis’s Straits to be made prisoner by the *Forward* to the great joy of Dr. Clawbonny, who asks the commander’s permission to keep a sample of it.”

“Do so,” said Shandon, “but allow me to tell you that you will not be the only proprietor of such a wreck. The Danish governor of the Isle of Disko——”

“On the coast of Greenland,” continued the doctor, “possesses a mahogany table made from a trunk fished up under the same circumstances. I know it, but I don’t envy him his table, for if it were not for the bother, I should have enough there for a whole bedroom.”

During the night, from Wednesday to Thursday, the wind blew with extreme violence, and driftwood was seen more frequently. Nearing the coast offered many dangers at an epoch in which icebergs were so numerous; the commander caused some of the sails to be furled, and the *Forward* glided away under her foresail and foremast only. The thermometer sank below

freezing-point. Shandon distributed suitable clothing to the crew, a woollen jacket and trousers, a flannel shirt, wadmél stockings, the same as those the Norwegian country-people wear, and a pair of perfectly waterproof sea-boots. As to the captain, he contented himself with his natural fur, and appeared little sensible to the change in the temperature; he had, no doubt, gone through more than one trial of this kind, and besides, a Dane had no right to be difficult. He was seen very little, as he kept himself concealed in the darkest parts of the vessel.

Towards evening the coast of Greenland peeped out through an opening in the fog. The doctor, armed with his glass, could distinguish for an instant a line of peaks, ridged with large blocks of ice; but the fog closed rapidly on this vision, like the curtain of a theatre falling in the most interesting moment of the piece.

On the morning of the 20th of April the *Forward* was in sight of an iceberg a hundred and fifty feet high, stranded there from time immemorial; the thaws had taken no effect on it, and had respected its strange forms. Snow saw it; James Ross took an exact sketch of it in 1829; and in 1851 the French lieutenant Bellot saw it from the deck of the *Prince Albert*. Of course the doctor wished to keep a memento of the celebrated mountain, and made a clever sketch of it. It is not surprising that such masses should be stranded and adhere to the land, for to each foot above water they have two feet below, giving, therefore, to this one about eighty fathoms of depth.

At last, under a temperature which at noon was only 12°, under a snowy and foggy sky, Cape Farewell was perceived. The *Forward* arrived on the day fixed; if it pleased the unknown captain to come and occupy his position in such diabolical weather he would have no cause to complain.

“There you are, then,” said the doctor to himself, “cape so celebrated and so well named! Many have cleared it like us who were destined never to see it again. Is it, then, an eternal adieu said to one’s European friends? You have all passed it. Frobisher, Knight, Barlow, Vaughan, Scroggs, Barentz, Hudson, Blossville, Franklin, Crozier, Bellot, never to come back to your domestic hearth, and that cape has been really for you the cape of adieus.”

It was about the year 970 that some navigators left Iceland and discovered Greenland. Sebastian Cabot forced his way as far as latitude 56° in 1498. Gaspard and Michel Cotreal, in 1500 and 1502, went as far north as 60°; and Martin Frobisher, in 1576, arrived as far as the bay that bears his name. To John Davis belongs the honour of having discovered the Straits in 1585; and two years later, in a third voyage, that bold navigator and great whaler reached the sixty-third parallel, twenty-seven degrees from the Pole.

Barentz in 1596, Weymouth in 1602, James Hall in 1605 and 1607, Hudson, whose name was given to that vast bay which hollows out so profoundly the continent of America, James Poole, in 1611, advanced far into the Strait in search of that North-West passage the discovery of which would have considerably shortened the track of communication between the two worlds. Baffin, in 1616, found the Straits of Lancaster in the sea that bears his own name; he was followed, in 1619, by James Munk, and in 1719 by Knight, Barlow, Vaughan, and Scroggs, of whom no news has ever been heard. In 1776 Lieutenant Pickersgill, sent out to meet Captain Cook, who tried to go up Behring’s Straits, reached the sixty-eighth degree; the following year Young, for the same purpose, went as far north as Woman’s Island.

Afterwards came Captain James Ross, who, in 1818, rounded the coasts of Baffin’s Sea, and corrected the hydrographic errors of his predecessors. Lastly, in 1819 and 1820, the celebrated Parry passed through Lancaster Straits, and penetrated, in spite of unnumbered difficulties, as far as Melville Island, and won the prize of £5,000 promised by Act of

Parliament to the English sailors who would reach the hundred and seventeenth meridian by a higher latitude than the seventy-seventh parallel.

In 1826 Beechey touched Chamisso Island; James Ross wintered from 1829 to 1833 in Prince Regent Straits, and amongst other important works discovered the magnetic pole. During this time Franklin, by an overland route, traversed the septentrional coasts of America from the River Mackenzie to Turnagain Point. Captain Back followed in his steps from 1823 to 1835, and these explorations were completed in 1839 by Messrs. Dease and Simpson and Dr. Rae.

Lastly, Sir John Franklin, wishing to discover the North-West passage, left England in 1845 on board the *Erebus* and the *Terror*; he penetrated into Baffin's Sea, and since his passage across Disko Island no news had been heard of his expedition.

That disappearance determined the numerous investigations which have brought about the discovery of the passage, and the survey of these Polar continents, with such indented coast lines. The most daring English, French, and American sailors made voyages towards these terrible countries, and, thanks to their efforts, the maps of that country, so difficult to make, figured in the list of the Royal Geographical Society of London. The curious history of these countries was thus presented to the doctor's imagination as he leaned on the rail, and followed with his eyes the long track left by the brig. Thoughts of the bold navigators weighed upon his mind, and he fancied he could perceive under the frozen arches of the icebergs the pale ghosts of those who were no more.

VII. Davis's Straits

During that day the *Forward* cut out an easy road amongst the half-broken ice; the wind was good, but the temperature very low; the currents of air blowing across the ice-fields brought with them their penetrating cold. The night required the severest attention; the floating icebergs drew together in that narrow pass; a hundred at once were often counted on the horizon; they broke off from the elevated coasts under the teeth of the grinding waves and the influence of the spring season, in order to go and melt or to be swallowed up in the depths of the ocean. Long rafts of wood, with which it was necessary to escape collision, kept the crew on the alert; the crow's nest was put in its place on the mizenmast; it consisted of a cask, in which the ice-master was partly hidden to protect him from the cold winds while he kept watch over the sea and the icebergs in view, and from which he signalled danger and sometimes gave orders to the crew. The nights were short; the sun had reappeared since the 31st of January in consequence of the refraction, and seemed to get higher and higher above the horizon. But the snow impeded the view, and if it did not cause complete obscurity it rendered navigation laborious.

On the 21st of April Desolation Cape appeared in the midst of thick mists; the crew were tired out with the constant strain on their energies rendered necessary ever since they had got amongst the icebergs; the sailors had not had a minute's rest; it was soon necessary to have recourse to steam to cut a way through the heaped-up blocks. The doctor and Johnson were talking together on the stern, whilst Shandon was snatching a few hours' sleep in his cabin. Clawbonny was getting information from the old sailor, whose numerous voyages had given him an interesting and sensible education. The doctor felt much friendship for him, and the boatswain repaid it with interest.

"You see, Mr. Clawbonny," Johnson used to say, "this country is not like all others; they call it *Greenland*, but there are very few weeks in the year when it justifies its name."

"Who knows if in the tenth century this land did not justify its name?" added the doctor.

"More than one revolution of this kind has been produced upon our globe, and I daresay I should astonish you if I were to tell you that according to Icelandic chronicles two thousand villages flourished upon this continent about eight or nine hundred years ago."

"You would so much astonish me, Mr. Clawbonny, that I should have some difficulty in believing you, for it is a miserable country."

"However miserable it may be, it still offers a sufficient retreat to its inhabitants, and even to civilised Europeans."

"Without doubt! We met men at Disko and Uppernawik who consented to live in such climates; but my ideas upon the matter were that they lived there by compulsion and not by choice."

"I daresay you are right, though men get accustomed to everything, and the Greenlanders do not appear to me so unfortunate as the workmen of our large towns; they may be unfortunate, but they are certainly not unhappy. I say unhappy, but the word does not translate my thought, for if these people have not the comforts of temperate countries, they are formed for a rude climate, and find pleasures in it which we are not able to conceive."

"I suppose we must think so, as Heaven is just. Many, many voyages have brought me upon these coasts, and my heart always shrinks at the sight of these wretched solitudes; but they

ought to have cheered up these capes, promontories, and bays with more engaging names, for Farewell Cape and Desolation Cape are not names made to attract navigators.”

“I have also remarked that,” replied the doctor, “but these names have a geographical interest that we must not overlook. They describe the adventures of those who gave them those names. Next to the names of Davis, Baffin, Hudson, Ross, Parry, Franklin, and Bellot, if I meet with Cape Desolation I soon find Mercy Bay; Cape Providence is a companion to Port Anxiety; Repulsion Bay brings me back to Cape Eden, and leaving Turnagain Point I take refuge in Refuge Bay. I have there under my eyes an unceasing succession of perils, misfortunes, obstacles, successes, despairs, and issues, mixed with great names of my country, and, like a series of old-fashioned medals, that nomenclature retraces in my mind the whole history of these seas.”

“You are quite right, Mr. Clawbonny, and I hope we shall meet with more Success Bays than Despair Capes in our voyage.”

“I hope so too, Johnson; but, I say, is the crew come round a little from its terrors?”

“Yes, a little; but since we got into the Straits they have begun to talk about the fantastic captain; more than one of them expected to see him appear at the extremity of Greenland; but between you and me, doctor, doesn’t it astonish you a little too?”

“It does indeed, Johnson.”

“Do you believe in the captain’s existence?”

“Of course I do.”

“But what can be his reasons for acting in that manner?”

“If I really must tell you the whole of my thoughts, Johnson, I believe that the captain wished to entice the crew far enough out to prevent them being able to come back. Now if he had been on board when we started they would all have wanted to know our destination, and he might have been embarrassed.”

“But why so?”

“Suppose he should wish to attempt some superhuman enterprise, and to penetrate where others have never been able to reach, do you believe if the crew knew it they would ever have enlisted? As it is, having got so far, going farther becomes a necessity.”

“That’s very probable, Mr. Clawbonny. I have known more than one intrepid adventurer whose name alone was a terror, and who would never have found any one to accompany him in his perilous expeditions——”

“Excepting me,” ventured the doctor.

“And me, after you,” answered Johnson, “and to follow you; I can venture to affirm that our captain is amongst the number of such adventurers. No matter, we shall soon see; I suppose the unknown will come as captain on board from the coast of Uppernawik or Melville Bay, and will tell us at last where it is his good pleasure to conduct the ship.”

“I am of your opinion, Johnson, but the difficulty will be to get as far as Melville Bay. See how the icebergs encircle us from every point! They scarcely leave a passage for the *Forward*. Just examine that immense plain over there.”

“The whalers call that in our language an ice-field, that is to say a continued surface of ice the limits of which cannot be perceived.”

“And on that side, that broken field, those long pieces of ice more or less joined at their edges?”

“That is a pack; if it was of a circular form we should call it a patch; and, if the form was longer, a stream.”

“And there, those floating icebergs?”

“Those are drift-ice; if they were a little higher they would be icebergs or hills; their contact with vessels is dangerous, and must be carefully avoided. Here, look over there: on that ice-field there is a protuberance produced by the pressure of the icebergs; we call that a hummock; if that protuberance was submerged to its base we should call it a calf. It was very necessary to give names to all those forms in order to recognise them.”

“It is truly a marvellous spectacle!” exclaimed the doctor, contemplating the wonders of the Boreal Seas; “there is a field for the imagination in such pictures!”

“Yes,” answered Johnson, “ice often takes fantastic shapes, and our men are not behindhand in explaining them according to their own notions.”

“Isn’t that assemblage of ice-blocks admirable? Doesn’t it look like a foreign town, an Eastern town, with its minarets and mosques under the pale glare of the moon? Further on there is a long series of Gothic vaults, reminding one of Henry the Seventh’s chapel or the Houses of Parliament.”

“They would be houses and towns very dangerous to inhabit, and we must not sail too close to them. Some of those minarets yonder totter on their base, and the least of them would crush a vessel like the *Forward*.”

“And yet sailors dared to venture into these seas before they had steam at their command! How ever could a sailing vessel be steered amongst these moving rocks?”

“Nevertheless, it has been accomplished, Mr. Clawbonny. When the wind became contrary—and that has happened to me more than once—we quietly anchored to one of those blocks, and we drifted more or less with it and waited for a favourable moment to set sail again. I must acknowledge that such a manner of voyaging required months, whilst with a little good fortune we shall only want a few days.”

“It seems to me,” said the doctor, “that the temperature has a tendency to get lower.”

“That would be a pity,” answered Johnson, “for a thaw is necessary to break up these masses and drive them away into the Atlantic; besides, they are more numerous in Davis’s Straits, for the sea gets narrower between Capes Walsingham and Holsteinborg; but on the other side of the 67th degree we shall find the seas more navigable during the months of May and June.”

“Yes; but first of all we must get to the other side.”

“Yes, we must get there, Mr. Clawbonny. In June and July we should have found an open passage, like the whalers do, but our orders were precise; we were to be here in April. I am very much mistaken if our captain has not his reasons for getting us out here so early.”

The doctor was right in stating that the temperature was lowering; the thermometer at noon only indicated 6 degrees, and a north-west breeze was getting up, which, although it cleared the sky, assisted the current in precipitating the floating masses of ice into the path of the *Forward*. All of them did not obey the same impulsion, and it was not uncommon to encounter some of the highest masses drifting in an opposite direction, seized at their base by an undercurrent.

It is easy to understand the difficulties of this kind of navigation; the engineers had not a minute's rest; the engines were worked from the deck by means of levers, which opened, stopped, and reversed them according to the orders of the officers on watch. Sometimes the brig had to hasten through an opening in the ice-fields, sometimes to struggle against the swiftness of an iceberg which threatened to close the only practicable issue, or, again, some block, suddenly overthrown, compelled the brig to back quickly so as not to be crushed to pieces. This mass of ice, carried along, broken up and amalgamated by the northern current, crushed up the passage, and if seized by the frost would oppose an impassable barrier to the passage of the *Forward*.

Birds were found in innumerable quantities on these coasts, petrels and other sea-birds fluttered about here and there with deafening cries, a great number of big-headed, short-necked sea-gulls were amongst them; they spread out their long wings and braved in their play the snow whipped by the hurricane. This animation of the winged tribe made the landscape more lively.

Numerous pieces of wood were floating to leeward, clashing with noise; a few enormous, bloated-headed sharks approached the vessel, but there was no question of chasing them, although Simpson, the harpooner, was longing to have a hit at them. Towards evening several seals made their appearance, nose above water, swimming between the blocks.

On the 22nd the temperature again lowered; the *Forward* put on all steam to catch the favourable passes: the wind was decidedly fixed in the north-west; all sails were furled.

During that day, which was Sunday, the sailors had little to do. After the reading of Divine service, which was conducted by Shandon, the crew gave chase to sea-birds, of which they caught a great number. They were suitably prepared according to the doctor's method, and furnished an agreeable increase of provisions to the tables of the officers and crew.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the *Forward* had attained Thin de Sael, Sukkertop Mountain; the sea was very rough; from time to time a vast and inopportune fog fell from the grey sky; however, at noon an exact observation could be taken. The vessel was in 65° 20' latitude by 54° 22' longitude. It was necessary to attain two degrees more in order to meet with freer and more favourable navigation.

During the three following days, the 24th, 25th, and 26th of April, the *Forward* had a continual struggle with the ice; the working of the machines became very fatiguing. The steam was turned off quickly or got up again at a moment's notice, and escaped whistling from its valves. During the thick mist the nearing of icebergs was only known by dull thundering produced by the avalanches; the brig was instantly veered; it ran the risk of being crushed against the heaps of fresh-water ice, remarkable for its crystal transparency, and as hard as a rock.

Richard Shandon never missed completing his provision of water by embarking several tons of ice every day. The doctor could not accustom himself to the optical delusions that refraction produces on these coasts. An iceberg sometimes appeared to him like a small white lump within reach, when it was at least at ten or twelve miles' distance. He endeavoured to accustom his eyesight to this singular phenomenon, so that he might be able to correct its errors rapidly.

At last the crew were completely worn out by their labours in hauling the vessel alongside of the ice-fields and by keeping it free from the most menacing blocks by the aid of long perches. Nevertheless, the *Forward* was still held back in the impassable limits of the Polar Circle on Friday, the 27th of April.

VIII. Gossip Of The Crew

However, the *Forward* managed, by cunningly slipping into narrow passages, to gain a few more minutes north; but instead of avoiding the enemy, it was soon necessary to attack it. The ice-fields, several miles in extent, were getting nearer, and as these moving heaps often represent a pressure of more than ten millions of tons, it was necessary to give a wide berth to their embraces. The ice-saws were at once installed in the interior of the vessel, in such a manner as to facilitate immediate use of them. Part of the crew philosophically accepted their hard work, but the other complained of it, if it did not refuse to obey. At the same time that they assisted in the installation of the instruments, Garry, Bolton, Pen and Gripper exchanged their opinions.

“By Jingo!” said Bolton gaily, “I don’t know why the thought strikes me that there’s a very jolly tavern in Water-street where it’s comfortable to be between a glass of gin and a bottle of porter. Can’t you imagine it, Gripper?”

“To tell you the truth,” quickly answered the questioned sailor, who generally professed to be in a bad temper, “I don’t imagine it here.”

“It’s for the sake of talking, Gripper; it’s evident that the snow towns Dr. Clawbonny admires so don’t contain the least public where a poor sailor can get a half-pint of brandy.”

“That’s sure enough, Bolton; and you may as well add that there’s nothing worth drinking here. It’s a nice idea to deprive men of their grog when they are in the Northern Seas.”

“But you know,” said Garry, “that the doctor told us it was to prevent us getting the scurvy. It’s the only way to make us go far.”

“But I don’t want to go far, Garry; it’s pretty well to have come this far without trying to go where the devil is determined we shan’t.”

“Well, we shan’t go, that’s all,” replied Pen. “I declare I’ve almost forgotten the taste of gin.”

“But remember what the doctor says,” replied Bolton.

“It’s all very fine for them to talk. It remains to be seen if it isn’t an excuse for being skinny with the drink.”

“Pen may be right, after all,” said Gripper.

“His nose is too red for that,” answered Bolton. “Pen needn’t grumble if it loses a little of its colour in the voyage.”

“What’s my nose got to do with you?” sharply replied the sailor, attacked in the most sensitive place. “My nose doesn’t need any of your remarks; take care of your own.”

“Now, then, don’t get angry, Pen; I didn’t know your nose was so touchy. I like a glass of whisky as well as anybody, especially in such a temperature; but if I know it’ll do me more harm than good, I go without.”

“You go without,” said Warren, the stoker; “but everyone don’t go without.”

“What do you mean, Warren?” asked Garry, looking fixedly at him.

“I mean that for some reason or other there are spirits on board, and I know they don’t go without in the stern.”

“And how do you know that?” asked Garry.

Warren did not know what to say: he talked for the sake of talking.

“You see Warren don’t know anything about it, Garry,” said Bolton.

“Well,” said Pen, “we’ll ask the commander for a ration of gin; we’ve earned it well and we’ll see what he says.”

“I wouldn’t if I were you,” answered Garry.

“Why?” cried Pen and Gripper.

“Because he’ll refuse. You knew you weren’t to have any when you enlisted; you should have thought of it then.”

“Besides,” replied Bolton, who took Garry’s part because he liked his character, “Richard Shandon isn’t master on board; he obeys, like us.”

“Who is master if he isn’t?”

“The captain.”

“Always that unfortunate captain!” exclaimed Pen. “Don’t you see that on these ice-banks there’s no more a captain than there is a public? It’s a polite way of refusing us what we’ve a right to claim.”

“But if there’s a captain,” replied Bolton, “I’ll bet two months’ pay we shall see him before long.”

“I should like to tell the captain a bit of my mind,” said Pen.

“Who’s talking about the captain?” said a new-comer. It was Clifton, the sailor, a superstitious and envious man. “Is anything new known about the captain?” he asked.

“No,” they all answered at once.

“Well, I believe we shall find him one fine morning installed in his cabin, and no one will know how he got there.”

“Get along, do!” replied Bolton. “Why, Clifton, you imagine that he’s a hobgoblin—a sort of wild child of the Highlands.”

“Laugh as much as you like, Bolton, you won’t change my opinion. Every day as I pass his cabin I look through the keyhole. One of these fine mornings I shall come and tell you what he’s like.”

“Why, he’ll be like everyone else,” said Pen, “and if he thinks he’ll be able to do what he likes with us, he’ll find himself mistaken, that’s all!”

“Pen don’t know him yet,” said Bolton, “and he’s beginning to quarrel with him already.”

“Who doesn’t know him?” said Clifton, looking knowing; “I don’t know that he don’t!”

“What the devil do you mean?” asked Gripper.

“I know very well what I mean.”

“But we don’t.”

“Well, Pen has quarrelled with him before.”

“With the captain?”

“Yes, the dog-captain—it’s all one.”

The sailors looked at one another, afraid to say anything.

“Man or dog,” muttered Pen, “I declare that that animal will have his account one of these days.”

“Come, Clifton,” asked Bolton seriously, “you don’t mean to say that you believe the dog is the real captain?”

“Indeed I do,” answered Clifton with conviction. “If you noticed things like I do, you would have noticed what a queer beast it is.”

“Well, tell us what you’ve noticed.”

“Haven’t you noticed the way he walks on the poop with such an air of authority, looking up at the sails as if he were on watch?”

“That’s true enough,” added Gripper, “and one evening I actually found him with his paws on the paddle-wheel.”

“You don’t mean it!” said Bolton.

“And now what do you think he does but go for a walk on the ice-fields, minding neither the bears nor the cold?”

“That’s true enough,” said Bolton.

“Do you ever see that ‘ere animal, like an honest dog, seek men’s company, sneak about the kitchen, and set his eyes on Mr. Strong when’s he taking something good to the commander? Don’t you hear him in the night when he goes away two or three miles from the vessel, howling fit to make your blood run cold, as if it weren’t easy enough to feel that sensation in such a temperature as this? Again, have you ever seen him feed? He takes nothing from any one. His food is always untouched and unless a secret hand feeds him on board, I may say that he lives without eating, and if he’s not unearthly, I’m a fool!”

“Upon my word,” said Bell, the carpenter, who had heard all Clifton’s reasoning, “I shouldn’t be surprised if such was the case.” The other sailors were silenced.

“Well, at any rate, where’s the *Forward* going to?”

“I don’t know anything about it,” replied Bell. “Richard Shandon will receive the rest of his instructions in due time.”

“But from whom?”

“From whom?”

“Yes, how?” asked Bolton, becoming pressing.

“Now then, answer, Bell!” chimed in all the other sailors.

“By whom? how? Why, I don’t know,” said the carpenter, embarrassed in his turn.

“Why, by the dog-captain,” exclaimed Clifton. “He has written once already; why shouldn’t he again? If I only knew half of what that ‘ere animal knows, I shouldn’t be embarrassed at being First Lord of the Admiralty!”

“So then you stick to your opinion that the dog is the captain?”

“Yes.”

“Well,” said Pen in a hoarse voice, “if that ‘ere animal don’t want to turn up his toes in a dog’s skin, he’s only got to make haste and become a man, or I’m hanged if I don’t settle him.”

“What for?” asked Garry.

“Because I choose,” replied Pen brutally; “besides, it’s no business of any one.”

“Enough talking, my boys,” called out Mr. Johnson, interfering just in time, for the conversation was getting hot. “Get on with your work, and set up your saws quicker than that. We must clear the iceberg.”

“What! on a Friday?” replied Clifton, shrugging his shoulders. “You’ll see she won’t get over the Polar circle as easily as you think.”

The efforts of the crew were almost powerless during the whole day. The *Forward* could not separate the ice-fields even by going against them full speed, and they were obliged to anchor for the night. On Saturday the temperature lowered again under the influence of an easterly wind. The weather cleared up, and the eye could sweep over the white plains in the distance, which the reflection of the sun’s rays rendered dazzling. At seven in the morning the thermometer marked eight degrees below zero. The doctor was tempted to stay quietly in his cabin, and read the Arctic voyages over again; but, according to his custom, he asked himself what would be the most disagreeable thing he could do, which he settled was to go on deck and assist the men to work in such a temperature. Faithful to the line of conduct he had traced out for himself, he left his well-warmed cabin and came to help in hauling the vessel. His was a pleasant face, in spite of the green spectacles by which he preserved his eyes from the biting of the reflected rays; in his future observations he was always careful in making use of his snow spectacles, in order to avoid ophthalmia, very frequent in these high latitudes.

Towards evening the *Forward* had made several miles further north, thanks to the activity of the men and Shandon’s skill, which made him take advantage of every favourable circumstance; at midnight he had got beyond the sixty-sixth parallel, and the fathom line declared twenty-three fathoms of water; Shandon discovered that he was on the shoal where Her Majesty’s ship *Victoria* struck, and that land was drawing near, thirty miles to the east. But now the heaps of ice, which up till now had been motionless, divided and began to move; icebergs seemed coming from every point of the horizon; the brig was entangled in a series of moving rocks, the crushing force of which it was impossible to resist. Moving became so difficult that Garry, the best helmsman, took the wheel; the mountains had a tendency to close up behind the brig; it then became essential to cut through the floating ice, and prudence as well as duty ordered them to go ahead. Difficulties became greater from the impossibility that Shandon found in establishing the direction of the vessel amongst such changing points, which kept moving without offering one firm perspective. The crew was divided into two tacks, larboard and starboard; each one, armed with a long perch with an iron point, drove back the two threatening blocks. Soon the *Forward* entered into a pass so narrow, between two high blocks, that the extremity of her yards struck against the walls, hard as rock; by degrees she entangled herself in the midst of a winding valley, filled up with eddies of snow, whilst the floating ice was crashing and splitting with sinister cracklings. But it soon became certain that there was no egress from this gullet. An enormous block, caught in the channel, was driving rapidly on to the *Forward*! It seemed impossible to avoid it, and equally impossible to back out along a road already obstructed.

Shandon and Johnson, standing on the prow, were contemplating the position. Shandon was pointing with his right hand at the direction the helmsman was to take, and with his left was conveying to James Wall, posted near the engineer, his orders for the working of the machine.

“How will this end?” asked the doctor of Johnson.

“As it may please God,” replied the boatswain.

The block of ice, at least a hundred feet high, was only about a cable's length from the *Forward*, and threatened to pound her under it.

"Cursed luck!" exclaimed Pen, swearing frightfully.

"Silence!" exclaimed a voice which it was impossible to recognise in the midst of the storm.

The block seemed to be precipitating itself upon the brig; there was a moment of undefinable anguish; the men forsook their poles and flocked to the stern in spite of Shandon's orders.

Suddenly a frightful sound was heard; a genuine waterspout fell upon deck, heaved up by an enormous wave. A cry of terror rang out from the crew whilst Garry, at the helm, held the *Forward* in a straight line in spite of the frightful incumbrance. When their frightened looks were drawn towards the mountain of ice it had disappeared; the pass was free, and further on a long channel, illuminated by the oblique rays of the sun, allowed the brig to pursue her track.

"Well, Mr. Clawbonny," said Johnson, "can you explain to me the cause of that phenomenon?"

"It is a very simple one," answered the doctor, "and happens very often. When those floating bodies are disengaged from each other by the thaw, they sail away separately, maintaining their balance; but by degrees, as they near the south, where the water is relatively warmer, their base, shaken by the collision with other icebergs, begins to melt and weaken; it then happens that their centre of gravity is displaced, and, naturally, they overturn. Only, if that one had turned over two minutes later, it would have crushed our vessel to pieces."

IX. News

The Polar circle was cleared at last. On the 30th of April, at midday, the *Forward* passed abreast of Holsteinborg; picturesque mountains rose up on the eastern horizon. The sea appeared almost free from icebergs, and the few there were could easily be avoided. The wind veered round to the south-east, and the brig, under her mizensail, brigantine, topsails, and her topgallant sail, sailed up Baffin's Sea. It had been a particularly calm day, and the crew were able to take a little rest. Numerous birds were swimming and fluttering about round the vessel; amongst others, the doctor observed some *alca-alla*, very much like the teal, with black neck, wings and back, and white breast; they plunged with vivacity, and their immersion often lasted forty seconds.

The day would not have been remarkable if the following fact, however extraordinary it may appear, had not occurred on board. At six o'clock in the morning Richard Shandon, re-entering his cabin after having been relieved, found upon the table a letter with this address:

"To the Commander,

"RICHARD SHANDON,

"On board the 'FORWARD,'

"Baffin's Sea."

Shandon could not believe his own eyes, and before reading such a strange epistle he caused the doctor, James Wall and Johnson to be called, and showed them the letter.

"That grows very strange," said Johnson.

"It's delightful!" thought the doctor.

"At last," cried Shandon, "we shall know the secret."

With a quick hand he tore the envelope and read as follows:

"COMMANDER,—The captain of the *Forward* is pleased with the coolness, skill, and courage that your men, your officers, and yourself have shown on the late occasions, and begs you to give evidence of his gratitude to the crew.

"Have the goodness to take a northerly direction towards Melville Bay, and from thence try and penetrate into Smith's Straits.

"THE CAPTAIN OF THE *Forward*,

"K. Z."

"Monday, April 30th,

"Abreast of Cape Walsingham."

"Is that all?" cried the doctor.

"That's all," replied Shandon, and the letter fell from his hands.

"Well," said Wall, "this chimerical captain doesn't even mention coming on board, so I conclude that he never will come."

"But how did this letter get here?" said Johnson.

Shandon was silent.

“Mr. Wall is right,” replied the doctor, after picking up the letter and turning it over in every direction; “the captain won’t come on board for an excellent reason——”

“And what’s that?” asked Shandon quickly.

“Because he is here already,” replied the doctor simply.

“Already!” said Shandon. “What do you mean?”

“How do you explain the arrival of this letter if such is not the case?”

Johnson nodded his head in sign of approbation.

“It is not possible!” said Shandon energetically. “I know every man of the crew. We should have to believe, in that case, that the captain has been with us ever since we set sail. It is not possible, I tell you. There isn’t one of them that I haven’t seen for more than two years in Liverpool; doctor, your supposition is inadmissible.”

“Then what do you admit, Shandon?”

“Everything but that! I admit that the captain, or one of his men, has profited by the darkness, the fog, or anything you like, in order to slip on board; we are not very far from land; there are Esquimaux kâiaks that pass unperceived between the icebergs; someone may have come on board and left the letter; the fog was intense enough to favour their design.”

“And to hinder them from seeing the brig,” replied the doctor; “if we were not able to perceive an intruder slip on board, how could *he* have discovered the *Forward* in the midst of a fog?”

“That is evident,” exclaimed Johnson.

“I come back, then,” said the doctor, “to my first hypothesis. What do you think about it, Shandon?”

“I think what you please,” replied Shandon fiercely, “with the exception of supposing that this man is on board my vessel.”

“Perhaps,” added Wall, “there may be amongst the crew a man of his who has received instructions from him.”

“That’s very likely,” added the doctor.

“But which man?” asked Shandon. “I tell you I have known all my men a long time.”

“Anyhow,” replied Johnson, “if this captain shows himself, let him be man or devil, we’ll receive him; but we have another piece of information to draw from this letter.”

“What’s that?” asked Shandon.

“Why, that we are to direct our path not only towards Melville Bay, but again into Smith’s Straits.”

“You are right,” answered the doctor.

“Smith’s Straits?” echoed Shandon mechanically.

“It is evident,” replied Johnson, “that the destination of the *Forward* is not to seek a North-West passage, as we shall leave to our left the only track that leads to it—that is to say, Lancaster Straits; that’s what forebodes us difficult navigation in unknown seas.”

“Yes, Smith’s Straits,” replied Shandon, “that’s the route the American Kane followed in 1853, and at the price of what dangers! For a long time he was thought to be lost in those dreadful latitudes! However, as we must go, go we must. But where? how far? To the Pole?”

“And why not?” cried the doctor.

The idea of such an insane attempt made the boatswain shrug his shoulders.

“After all,” resumed James Wall, “to come back to the captain, if he exists, I see nowhere on the coast of Greenland except Disko or Uppernawik where he can be waiting for us; in a few days we shall know what we may depend upon.”

“But,” asked the doctor of Shandon, “aren’t you going to make known the contents of that letter to the crew?”

“With the commander’s permission,” replied Johnson, “I should do nothing of the kind.”

“And why so?” asked Shandon.

“Because all that mystery tends to discourage the men: they are already very anxious about the fate of our expedition, and if the supernatural side of it is increased it may produce very serious results, and in a critical moment we could not rely upon them. What do you say about it, commander?”

“And you, doctor—what do you think?” asked Shandon.

“I think Johnson’s reasoning is just.”

“And you, Wall?”

“Unless there’s better advice forthcoming, I shall stick to the opinion of these gentlemen.”

Shandon reflected seriously during a few minutes, and read the letter over again carefully.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “your opinion on this subject is certainly excellent, but I cannot adopt it.”

“Why not, Shandon?” asked the doctor.

“Because the instructions of this letter are formal: they command me to give the captain’s congratulations to the crew, and up till to-day I have always blindly obeyed his orders in whatever manner they have been transmitted to me, and I cannot——”

“But——” said Johnson, who rightly dreaded the effect of such a communication upon the minds of the sailors.

“My dear Johnson,” answered Shandon, “your reasons are excellent, but read—he begs you to give evidence of his gratitude to the crew.”

“Act as you think best,” replied Johnson, who was besides a very strict observer of discipline.

“Are we to muster the crew on deck?”

“Do so,” replied Shandon.

The news of a communication having been received from the captain spread like wildfire on deck; the sailors quickly arrived at their post, and the commander read out the contents of the mysterious letter. The reading of it was received in a dead silence; the crew dispersed, a prey to a thousand suppositions. Clifton had heard enough to give himself up to all the wanderings of his superstitious imagination; he attributed a considerable share in this incident to the dog-captain, and when by chance he met him in his passage he never failed to salute him. “I told you the animal could write,” he used to say to the sailors. No one said anything in answer to this observation, and even Bell, the carpenter himself, would not have known what to answer.

Nevertheless it was certain to all that, in default of the captain, his spirit or his shadow watched on board; and henceforward the wisest of the crew abstained from exchanging their opinions about him.

On the 1st of May, at noon, they were in 68° latitude and 56° 32' longitude. The temperature was higher and the thermometer marked twenty-five degrees above zero. The doctor was amusing himself with watching the antics of a white bear and two cubs on the brink of a pack that lengthened out the land. Accompanied by Wall and Simpson, he tried to give chase to them by means of the canoe; but the animal, of a rather warlike disposition, rapidly led away its offspring, and consequently the doctor was compelled to renounce following them up.

Chilly Cape was doubled during the night under the influence of a favourable wind, and soon the high mountains of Disko rose in the horizon. Godhavn Bay, the residence of the Governor-General of the Danish Settlements, was left to the right. Shandon did not consider it worth while to stop, and soon outran the Esquimaux pirogues who were endeavouring to reach his ship.

The Island of Disko is also called Whale Island. It was from this point that on the 12th of July, 1845, Sir John Franklin wrote to the Admiralty for the last time. It was also on that island on the 27th of August, 1859, that Captain McClintock set foot on his return, bringing back, alas! proofs too complete of the loss of the expedition. The coincidence of these two facts were noted by the doctor; that melancholy conjunction was prolific in memories, but soon the heights of Disko disappeared from his view.

There were, at that time, numerous icebergs on the coasts, some of those which the strongest thaws are unable to detach; the continual series of ridges showed themselves under the strangest forms.

The next day, towards three o'clock, they were bearing on to Sanderson Hope to the north-east. Land was left on the starboard at a distance of about fifteen miles; the mountains seemed tinged with a red-coloured bistre. During the evening, several whales of the finners species, which have fins on their backs, came playing about in the midst of the ice-trails, throwing out air and water from their blow-holes. It was during the night between the 3rd and 4th of May that the doctor saw for the first time the sun graze the horizon without dipping his luminous disc into it. Since the 31st of January the days had been getting longer and longer till the sun went down no more. To strangers not accustomed to the persistence of this perpetual light it was a constant subject of astonishment, and even of fatigue; it is almost impossible to understand to what extent obscurity is requisite for the well-being of our eyes. The doctor experienced real pain in getting accustomed to this light, rendered still more acute by the reflection of the sun's rays upon the plains of ice.

On May 5th the *Forward* headed the seventy-second parallel; two months later they would have met with numerous whalers under these high latitudes, but at present the straits were not sufficiently open to allow them to penetrate into Baffin's Bay. The following day the brig, after having headed Woman's Island, came in sight of Uppernawik, the most northerly settlement that Denmark possesses on these coasts.

X. Dangerous Navigation

Shandon, Dr. Clawbonny, Johnson, Foker, and Strong, the cook, went on shore in the small boat. The governor, his wife, and five children, all of the Esquimaux race, came politely to meet the visitors. The doctor knew enough Danish to enable him to establish a very agreeable acquaintance with them; besides, Foker, who was interpreter of the expedition, as well as ice-master, knew about twenty words of the Greenland language, and if not ambitious, twenty words will carry you far. The governor was born on the island, and had never left his native country. He did the honours of the town, which is composed of three wooden huts, for himself and the Lutheran minister, of a school, and magazines stored with the produce of wrecks. The remainder consists of snow-huts, the entrance to which is attained by creeping through a hole.

The greater part of the population came down to greet the *Forward*, and more than one native advanced as far as the middle of the bay in his kaïak, fifteen feet long and scarcely two wide. The doctor knew that the word Esquimaux signified raw-fish-eater, and he likewise knew that the name was considered an insult in the country, for which reason he did not fail to address them by the title of Greenlanders, and nevertheless only by the look of their oily sealskin clothing, their boots of the same material, and all their greasy tainted appearance, it was easy to discover their accustomed food. Like all Ichthyophagans, they were half-eaten up with leprosy; and yet, for all that, were in no worse health.

The Lutheran minister and his wife, with whom the doctor promised himself a private chat, were on a journey towards Proven on the south of Uppernawik; he was therefore reduced to getting information out of the governor. This chief magistrate did not seem to be very learned; a little less and he would have been an ass, a little more and he would have known how to read. The doctor, however, questioned him upon the commercial affairs, the customs and manners of the Esquimaux, and learnt by signs that seals were worth about £40 delivered in Copenhagen, a bearskin forty Danish dollars, a blue foxskin four, and a white one two or three dollars. The doctor also wished, with an eye to completing his personal education, to visit one of the Esquimaux huts; it is almost impossible to imagine of what a learned man who is desirous of knowledge is capable. Happily the opening of those hovels was too narrow, and the enthusiastic fellow was not able to crawl in; it was very lucky for him, for there is nothing more repulsive than that accumulation of things living and dead, seal flesh or Esquimaux flesh, rotten fish and infectious wearing apparel, which constitute a Greenland hovel; no window to revive the unbreathable air, only a hole at the top of the hut, which gives free passage to the smoke, but does not allow the stench to go out.

Foker gave these details to the doctor, who did not curse his corpulence the less for that. He wished to judge for himself about these emanations, *sui generis*.

“I am sure,” said he, “one gets used to it in the long run.”

In the long run depicts Dr. Clawbonny in a single phrase. During the ethnographical studies of the worthy doctor, Shandon, according to his instructions, was occupied in procuring means of transport to cross the ice. He had to pay £4 for a sledge and six dogs, and even then he had great difficulty in persuading the natives to part with them. Shandon wanted also to engage Hans Christian, the clever dog-driver, who made one of the party of Captain McClintock’s expedition; but, unfortunately, Hans was at that time in Southern Greenland. Then came the grand question, the topic of the day, was there in Uppernawik a European waiting for the passage of the *Forward*? Did the governor know if any foreigner, an

Englishman probably, had settled in those countries? To what epoch could he trace his last relations with whale or other ships? To these questions the governor replied that not one single foreigner had landed on that side of the coast for more than ten months.

Shandon asked for the names of the last whalers seen there; he knew none of them. He was in despair.

“You must acknowledge, doctor, that all this is quite inconceivable. Nothing at Cape Farewell, nothing at Disko Island, nothing at Uppernawik.”

“If when we get there you repeat ‘Nothing in Melville Bay,’ I shall greet you as the only captain of the *Forward*.”

The small boat came back to the brig towards evening, bringing back the visitors. Strong, in order to change the food a little, had procured several dozens of eider-duck eggs, twice as big as hens’ eggs, and of greenish colour. It was not much, but the change was refreshing to a crew fed on salted meat. The wind became favourable the next day, but, however, Shandon did not command them to get under sail; he still wished to stay another day, and for conscience’ sake to give any human being time to join the *Forward*. He even caused the 16-pounder to be fired from hour to hour; it thundered out with a great crash amidst the icebergs, but the noise only frightened the swarms of molly-mokes and rotches. During the night several rockets were sent up, but in vain. And thus they were obliged to set sail.

On the 8th of May, at six o’clock in the morning, the *Forward* under her topsails, foresails, and topgallant, lost sight of the Uppernawik settlement, and the hideous stakes to which were hung seal-guts and deer-paunches. The wind was blowing from the south-east, and the temperature went up to thirty-two degrees. The sun pierced through the fog, and the ice was getting a little loosened under its dissolving action. But the reflection of the white rays produced a sad effect on the eyesight of several of the crew. Wolsten, the gunsmith, Gripper, Clifton, and Bell were struck with snow blindness, a kind of weakness in the eyes very frequent in spring, and which determines, amongst the Esquimaux, numerous cases of blindness. The doctor advised those who were so afflicted and their companions in general to cover their faces with green gauze, and he was the first to put his own prescription into execution.

The dogs bought by Shandon at Uppernawik were of a rather savage nature, but in the end they became accustomed to the ship; the captain did not take the arrival of these new comrades too much to heart, and he seemed to know their habits. Clifton was not the last to remark the fact that the captain must already have been in communication with his Greenland brethren, as on land they were always famished and reduced by incomplete nourishment; they only thought of recruiting themselves by the diet on board.

On the 9th of May the *Forward* touched within a few cables’ length the most westerly of the Baffin Isles. The doctor noticed several rocks in the bay between the islands and the continent, those called Crimson Cliffs; they were covered over with snow as red as carmine, to which Dr. Kane gives a purely vegetable origin. Clawbonny wanted to consider this phenomenon nearer, but the ice prevented them approaching the coast; although the temperature had a tendency to rise, it was easy enough to see that the icebergs and ice-streams were accumulating to the north of Baffin’s Sea. The land offered a very different aspect from that of Uppernawik; immense glaciers were outlined on the horizon against a greyish sky. On the 10th the *Forward* left Hingston Bay on the right, near to the seventy-fourth degree of latitude. Several hundred miles westward the Lancaster Channel opened out into the sea.

But afterwards that immense extent of water disappeared under enormous fields of ice, upon which hummocks rose up as regularly as a crystallisation of the same substance. Shandon had the steam put on, and up to the 11th of May the *Forward* wound amongst the sinuous rocks, leaving the print of a track on the sky, caused by the black smoke from her funnels. But new obstacles were soon encountered; the paths were getting closed up in consequence of the incessant displacement of the floating masses; at every minute a failure of water in front of the *Forward's* prow became imminent, and if she had been nipped it would have been difficult to extricate her. They all knew it, and thought about it.

On board this vessel, without aim or known destination, foolishly seeking to advance towards the north, some symptoms of hesitation were manifested amongst those men, accustomed to an existence of danger; many, forgetting the advantages offered, regretted having ventured so far, and already a certain demoralisation prevailed in their minds, still more increased by Clifton's fears, and the idle talk of two or three of the leaders, such as Pen, Gripper, Warren, and Wolston.

To the uneasiness of the crew were joined overwhelming fatigues, for on the 12th of May the brig was closed in on every side; her steam was powerless, and it was necessary to force a road through the ice-fields. The working of the saws was very difficult in the floes, which measured from six to seven feet in thickness. When two parallel grooves divided the ice for the length of a hundred feet, they had to break the interior part with hatchets or handspikes; then took place the elongation of the anchors, fixed in a hole by means of a thick auger; afterwards the working of the capstan began, and in this way the vessel was hauled over. The greatest difficulty consisted in driving the smashed pieces under the floes in order to open up a free passage for the ship, and to thrust them away they were compelled to use long iron-spiked poles.

At last, what with the working of the saws, the hauling, the capstan and poles, incessant, dangerous, and forced work, in the midst of fogs or thick snow, the temperature relatively low, ophthalmic suffering and moral uneasiness, all contributed to discourage the crew, and react on the men's imagination. When sailors have an energetic, audacious, and convinced man to do with, who knows what he wants, where he is bound for, and what end he has in view, confidence sustains them in spite of everything. They make one with their chief, feeling strong in his strength, and quiet in his tranquillity; but on the brig it was felt that the commander was not sure of himself, that he hesitated before his unknown end and destination. In spite of his energetic nature, his weakness showed itself in his changing orders, incomplete manoeuvres, stormy reflections, and a thousand details which could not escape the notice of the crew.

Besides, Shandon was not captain of the ship, a sufficient reason for argument about his orders; from argument to a refusal to obey the step is easy. The discontented soon added to their number the first engineer, who up to now had remained a slave to his duty.

On May 16th, six days after the *Forward's* arrival at the icebergs, Shandon had not gained two miles northward, and the ice threatened to freeze in the brig till the following season. This was becoming dangerous. Towards eight in the evening Shandon and the doctor, accompanied by Garry, went on a voyage of discovery in the midst of the immense plains; they took care not to go too far away from the vessel, as it was difficult to fix any landmarks in those white solitudes, the aspects of which changed constantly.

The refraction produced strange effects; they still astonished the doctor; where he thought he had only one foot to leap he found it was five or six, or the contrary; and in both cases the result was a fall, if not dangerous, at least painful, on the frozen ice as hard as glass.

Shandon and his two companions went in search of a practicable passage. Three miles from the ship they succeeded, not without trouble, in climbing the iceberg, which was perhaps three hundred feet high.

From this point their view extended over that desolated mass which looked like the ruins of a gigantic town with its beaten-down obelisks, its overthrown steeples and palaces turned upside down all in a lump—in fact, a genuine chaos. The sun threw long oblique rays of a light without warmth, as if heat-absorbing substances were placed between it and that gloomy country. The sea seemed to be frozen to the remotest limits of view.

“How shall we get through?” exclaimed the doctor.

“I have not the least idea,” replied Shandon; “but we will get through, even if we are obliged to employ powder to blow up those mountains, for I certainly won’t let that ice shut me up till next spring.”

“Nevertheless, such was the fate of the *Fox*, almost in these same quarters. Never mind,” continued the doctor, “we shall get through with a little philosophy. Believe me, that is worth all the engines in the world.”

“You must acknowledge,” replied Shandon, “that the year doesn’t begin under very favourable auspices.”

“That is incontestable, and I notice that Baffin’s Sea has a tendency to return to the same state in which it was before 1817.”

“Then you think, doctor, that the present state of things has not always existed?”

“Yes; from time to time there are vast breakings up which scientific men can scarcely explain; thus, up to 1817 this sea was constantly obstructed, when suddenly an immense cataclysm took place which drove back these icebergs into the ocean, the great part of which were stranded on Newfoundland Bank. From that time Baffin’s Bay has been almost free, and has become the haunt of numerous whalers.”

“Then, since that epoch, voyages to the north have been easier?”

“Incomparably so; but for the last few years it has been observed that the bay has a tendency to be closed up again, and according to investigations made by navigators, it may probably be so for a long time—a still greater reason for us to go on as far as possible. Just now we look like people who get into unknown galleries, the doors of which are always shut behind them.”

“Do you advise me to back out?” asked Shandon, endeavouring to read the answer in the doctor’s eyes.

“I! I have never known how to take a step backward, and should we never return, I say ‘Go ahead.’ However, I should like to make known to you that if we do anything imprudent, we know very well what we are exposed to.”

“Well, Garry, what do you think about it?” asked Shandon of the sailor.

“I? Commander, I should go on; I’m of the same opinion as Mr. Clawbonny; but you do as you please; command, and we will obey.”

“They don’t all speak like you, Garry,” replied Shandon. “They aren’t all in an obedient humour! Suppose they were to refuse to execute my orders?”

“Commander,” replied Garry coldly, “I have given you my advice because you asked me for it; but you are not obliged to act upon it.”

Shandon did not reply; he attentively examined the horizon, and descended with his two companions on to the ice-field.

XI. The Devil's Thumb

During the commander's absence the men had gone through divers works in order to make the ship fit to avoid the pressure of the ice-fields. Pen, Clifton, Gripper, Bolton, and Simpson were occupied in this laborious work; the stoker and the two engineers were even obliged to come to the aid of their comrades, for, from the instant they were not wanted at the engine, they again became sailors, and, as such, they could be employed in all kinds of work on board. But this was not accomplished without a great deal of grumbling.

"I'll tell you what," said Pen, "I've had enough of it, and if in three days the breaking up isn't come, I'll swear to God that I'll chuck up!"

"You'll chuck up?" replied Gripper; "you'd do better to help us to back out. Do you think we are in the humour to winter here till next year?"

"To tell you the truth, it would be a dreary winter," said Plover, "for the ship is exposed from every quarter."

"And who knows," added Brunton, "if even next spring we should find the sea freer than it is now?"

"We aren't talking about next spring," said Pen; "to-day's Thursday; if next Sunday morning the road ain't clear, we'll back out south."

"That's the ticket!" cried Clifton.

"Are you all agreed?" said Pen.

"Yes," answered all his comrades.

"That's right enough," answered Warren, "for if we are obliged to work like this, hauling the ship by the strength of our arms, my advice is to backwater."

"We'll see about that on Sunday," answered Wolsten.

"As soon as I get the order," said Brunton, "I'll soon get my steam up."

"Or we'd manage to get it up ourselves," said Clifton.

"If any of the officers," said Pen, "wants to have the pleasure of wintering here, we'll let him. He can build himself a snow-hut like the Esquimaux."

"Nothing of the kind, Pen," replied Brunton; "we won't leave anybody. You understand that, you others. Besides, I don't think it would be difficult to persuade the commander; he already seems very uncertain, and if we were quietly to propose it——"

"I don't know that," said Plover; "Richard Shandon is a hard, headstrong man, and we should have to sound him carefully."

"When I think," replied Bolton, with a covetous sigh, "that in a month we might be back in Liverpool; we could soon clear the southern ice-line. The pass in Davis's Straits will be open in the beginning of June, and we shall only have to let ourselves drift into the Atlantic."

"Besides," said the prudent Clifton, "if we bring back the commander with us, acting under his responsibility, our pay and bounty money will be sure; whilst if we return alone it won't be so certain."

“That’s certain!” said Plover; “that devil of a Clifton speaks like a book. Let us try to have nothing to explain to the Admiralty; it’s much safer to leave no one behind us.”

“But if the officers refuse to follow us?” replied Pen, who wished to push his comrades to an extremity.

To such a question they were puzzled to reply.

“We shall see about it when the time comes,” replied Bolton; “besides, it would be enough to win Richard Shandon over to our side. We shall have no difficulty about that.”

“Anyhow,” said Pen, swearing, “there’s something I’ll leave here if I get an arm eaten in the attempt.”

“Ah! you mean the dog,” said Plover.

“Yes, the dog; and before long I’ll settle his hash!”

“The more so,” replied Clifton, coming back to his favourite theme, “that the dog is the cause of all our misfortunes.”

“He’s cast an evil spell over us,” said Plover.

“It’s through him we’re in an iceberg,” said Gripper.

“He’s the cause that we’ve had more ice against us than has ever been seen at this time of year,” said Wolsten.

“He’s the cause of my bad eyes,” said Brunton.

“He’s cut off the gin and brandy,” added Pen.

“He’s the cause of everything,” said the assembly, getting excited.

“And he’s captain into the bargain!” cried Clifton.

“Well, captain of ill-luck,” said Pen, whose unreasonable fury grew stronger at every word; “you wanted to come here, and here you’ll stay.”

“But how are we to nap him?” said Plover.

“We’ve a good opportunity,” replied Clifton; “the commander isn’t on deck, the lieutenant is asleep in his cabin, and the fog’s thick enough to stop Johnson seeing us.”

“But where’s the dog?” cried Pen.

“He’s asleep near the coalhole,” replied Clifton, “and if anybody wants——”

“I’ll take charge of him,” answered Pen furiously.

“Look out, Pen, he’s got teeth that could snap an iron bar in two.”

“If he moves I’ll cut him open,” cried Pen, taking his knife in one hand. He bounced in between decks, followed by Warren, who wanted to help him in his undertaking. They quickly came back, carrying the animal in their arms, strongly muzzled, with his paws bound tightly together. They had taken him by surprise whilst he slept, so that the unfortunate dog could not escape them.

“Hurrah for Pen!” cried Plover.

“What do you mean to do with him now you’ve got him?” asked Clifton.

“Why, drown him, and if ever he gets over it——” replied Pen, with a fearful smile of satisfaction.

About two hundred steps from the vessel there was a seal-hole, a kind of circular crevice cut out by the teeth of that amphibious animal, hollowed out from underneath, and through which the seal comes up to breathe on to the surface of the ice. To keep this aperture from closing up he has to be very careful because the formation of his jaws would not enable him to bore through the hole again from the outside, and in a moment of danger he would fall a prey to his enemies. Pen and Warren directed their steps towards this crevice, and there, in spite of the dog's energetic efforts, he was unmercifully precipitated into the sea. An enormous lump of ice was then placed over the opening, thus closing all possible issue to the poor animal, walled up in a watery prison.

“Good luck to you, captain,” cried the brutal sailor.

Shortly afterwards Pen and Warren returned on deck. Johnson had seen nothing of this performance. The fog thickened round about the ship, and snow began to fall with violence. An hour later, Richard Shandon, the doctor, and Garry rejoined the *Forward*. Shandon had noticed a pass in a north-eastern direction of which he was resolved to take advantage, and gave his orders in consequence. The crew obeyed with a certain activity, not without hinting to Shandon that it was impossible to go further on, and that they only gave him three more days' obedience. During a part of the night and the following day the working of the saws and the hauling were actively kept up; the *Forward* gained about two miles further north. On the 18th she was in sight of land, and at five or six cable-lengths from a peculiar peak, called from its strange shape the Devil's Thumb.

It was there that the *Prince Albert* in 1851, and the *Advance* with Kane, in 1853, were kept prisoners by the ice for several weeks. The odd form of the Devil's Thumb, the dreary deserts in its vicinity, the vast circus of icebergs—some of them more than three hundred feet high—the cracking of the ice, reproduced by the echo in so sinister a manner, rendered the position of the *Forward* horribly dreary. Shandon understood the necessity of getting out of it and going further ahead. Twenty-four hours later, according to his estimation, he had been able to clear the fatal coast for about two miles, but this was not enough. Shandon, overwhelmed with fear, and the false situation in which he was placed, lost both courage and energy; in order to obey his instructions and get further north, he had thrown his vessel into an excessively perilous situation. The men were worn out by the hauling; it required more than three hours to hollow out a channel twenty feet long, through ice that was usually from four to five feet thick. The health of the crew threatened to break down. Shandon was astonished at the silence of his men and their unaccustomed obedience, but he feared that it was the calm before the storm. Who can judge, then, of his painful disappointment, surprise, and despair when he perceived that in consequence of an insensible movement of the ice-field the *Forward* had, during the night from the 18th to the 19th, lost all the advantage she had gained with so much toil? On the Saturday morning they were once more opposite the ever-threatening Devil's Thumb, and in a still more critical position. The icebergs became more numerous, and drifted by in the fog like phantoms. Shandon was in a state of complete demoralisation, for fright had taken possession of the dauntless man and his crew. Shandon had heard the dog's disappearance spoken about, but dared not punish those who were guilty of it. He feared that a rebellion might be the consequence. The weather was fearful during the whole day; the snow rose up in thick whirlpools, wrapping up the *Forward* in an impenetrable cloak. Sometimes, under the action of the storm, the fog was torn asunder, and displayed towards land, raised up like a spectre, the Devil's Thumb.

The *Forward* was anchored to an immense block of ice; it was all that could be done; there was nothing more to attempt; the obscurity became denser, and the man at the helm could not see James Wall, who was on duty in the bow. Shandon withdrew to his cabin, a prey to

unremitting uneasiness; the doctor was putting his voyage notes in order; one half the crew remained on deck, the other half stayed in the common cabin. At one moment, when the storm increased in fury, the Devil's Thumb seemed to rise up out of all proportion in the midst of the fog.

“Good God!” cried Simpson, drawing back with fright.

“What the devil's that?” said Foker, and exclamations rose up in every direction.

“It is going to smash us!”

“We are lost!”

“Mr. Wall! Mr. Wall!”

“It's all over with us!”

“Commander! Commander!”

These cries were simultaneously uttered by the men on watch. Wall fled to the quarter-deck, and Shandon, followed by the doctor, rushed on deck to look. In the midst of the fog the Devil's Thumb seemed to have suddenly neared the brig, and seemed to have grown in a most fantastic manner. At its summit rose up a second cone, turned upside down and spindled on its point; its enormous mass threatened to crush the ship, as it was oscillating and ready to fall. It was a most fearful sight; every one instinctively drew back, and several sailors, leaping on to the ice, abandoned the ship.

“Let no one move!” cried the commander in a severe voice. “Every one to his post!”

“How now, my friends? There's nothing to be frightened at!” said the doctor. “There's no danger! Look, commander, look ahead, Mr. Wall; it's only an effect of the mirage, nothing else.”

“You are quite right, Mr. Clawbonny,” answered Johnson; “those fools were frightened at a shadow.”

After the doctor had spoken most of the sailors drew near, and their fear changed to admiration at the wonderful phenomenon, which shortly disappeared from sight.

“They call that a mirage?” said Clifton. “Well, you may believe me that the devil has something to do with it.”

“That's certain!” replied Gripper.

But when the fog cleared away it disclosed to the eyes of the commander an immense free and unexpected passage; it seemed to run away from the coast, and he therefore determined to seize such a favourable hazard. Men were placed on each side of the creek, hawsers were lowered down to them, and they began to tow the vessel in a northerly direction. During long hours this work was actively executed in silence. Shandon caused the steam to be got up, in order to take advantage of the fortunate discovery of this channel.

“This,” said he to Johnson, “is a most providential hazard, and if we can only get a few miles ahead, we shall probably get to the end of our misfortunes.”

“Brunton! stir up the fires, and as soon as there's enough pressure let me know. In the meantime our men will pluck up their courage—that will be so much gained. They are in a hurry to run away from the Devil's Thumb; we'll take advantage of their good inclinations!”

All at once the progress of the *Forward* was abruptly arrested.

“What's up?” cried Shandon. “I say, Wall! have we broken our tow-ropes?”

“Not at all, commander,” answered Wall, looking over the side. “Hallo! Here are the men coming back again. They are climbing the ship’s side as if the devil was at their heels.”

“What the deuce can it be?” cried Shandon, rushing forward.

“On board! On board!” cried the terrified sailors.

Shandon looked in a northerly direction, and shuddered in spite of himself. A strange animal, with appalling movements, whose foaming tongue emerged from enormous jaws, was leaping about at a cable’s length from the ship. In appearance he seemed to be about twenty feet high, with hair like bristles; he was following up the sailors, whilst his formidable tail, ten feet long, was sweeping the snow and throwing it up in thick whirlwinds. The sight of such a monster riveted the most daring to the spot.

“It’s a bear!” said one.

“It’s the Gevaudan beast!”

“It’s the lion of the Apocalypse!”

Shandon ran to his cabin for a gun he always kept loaded. The doctor armed himself, and held himself in readiness to fire upon an animal which, by its dimensions, recalled the antediluvian quadrupeds. He neared the ship in immense leaps; Shandon and the doctor fired at the same time, when, suddenly, the report of their firearms, shaking the atmospheric stratum, produced an unexpected effect. The doctor looked attentively, and burst out laughing.

“It’s the refraction!” he exclaimed.

“Only the refraction!” repeated Shandon. But a fearful exclamation from the crew interrupted them.

“The dog!” said Clifton.

“The dog, captain!” repeated all his comrades.

“Himself!” cried Pen; “always that cursed brute.”

They were not mistaken—it was the dog. Having got loose from his shackles, he had regained the surface by another crevice. At that instant the refraction, through a phenomenon common to these latitudes, caused him to appear under formidable dimensions, which the shaking of the air had dispersed; but the vexatious effect was none the less produced upon the minds of the sailors, who were very little disposed to admit an explanation of the fact by purely physical reasons. The adventure of the Devil’s Thumb, the reappearance of the dog under such fantastic circumstances, gave the finishing touch to their mental faculties, and murmurs broke out on all sides.

XII. Captain Hatteras

The *Forward*, under steam, rapidly made its way between the ice-mountains and the icebergs. Johnson was at the wheel. Shandon, with his snow spectacles, was examining the horizon, but his joy was of short duration, for he soon discovered that the passage ended in a circus of mountains. However, he preferred going on, in spite of the difficulty, to going back. The dog followed the brig at a long distance, running along the plain, but if he lagged too far behind a singular whistle could be distinguished, which he immediately obeyed. The first time this whistle was heard the sailors looked round about them; they were alone on deck all together, and no stranger was to be seen; and yet the whistle was again heard from time to time. Clifton was the first alarmed.

“Do you hear?” said he. “Just look how that animal answers when he hears the whistle.”

“I can scarcely believe my eyes,” answered Gripper.

“It’s all over!” cried Pen. “I don’t go any further.”

“Pen’s right!” replied Brunton; “it’s tempting God!”

“Tempting the devil!” replied Clifton. “I’d sooner lose my bounty money than go a step further.”

“We shall never get back!” said Bolton in despair.

The crew had arrived at the highest pitch of insubordination.

“Not a step further!” cried Wolsten. “Are you all of the same mind?”

“Ay! ay!” answered all the sailors.

“Come on, then,” said Bolton; “let’s go and find the commander; I’ll undertake the talking.”

The sailors in a tight group swayed away towards the poop. The *Forward* at the time was penetrating into a vast circus, which measured perhaps 800 feet in diameter, and with the exception of one entrance—that by which the vessel had come—was entirely closed up.

Shandon said that he had just imprisoned himself; but what was he to do? How were they to retrace their steps? He felt his responsibility, and his hand grasped the telescope. The doctor, with folded arms, kept silent; he was contemplating the walls of ice, the medium altitude of which was over 300 feet. A foggy dome remained suspended above the gulf. It was at this instant that Bolton addressed his speech to the commander.

“Commander!” said he in a trembling voice, “we can’t go any further.”

“What do you say?” replied Shandon, whose consciousness of disregarded authority made the blood rise to the roots of his hair.

“Commander,” replied Bolton, “we say that we’ve done enough for that invisible captain, and we are decided to go no further ahead.”

“You are decided?” cried Shandon. “You talk thus, Bolton? Take care!”

“Your threats are all the same to us,” brutally replied Pen; “we won’t go an inch further.”

Shandon advanced towards the mutineers; at the same time the mate came up and said in a whisper: “Commander, if you wish to get out of here we haven’t a minute to lose; there’s an iceberg drifting up the pass, and it is very likely to cork up all issue and keep us prisoners.”

Shandon examined the situation.

“You will give an account of your conduct later on, you fellows,” said he. “Now heave aboard!”

The sailors rushed to their posts, and the *Forward* quickly veered round; the fires were stuffed with coals; the great question was to outrun the floating mountain. It was a struggle between the brig and the iceberg. The former, in order to get through, was running south; the latter was drifting north, ready to close up every passage.

“Steam up! steam up!” cried Shandon. “Do you hear, Brunton?”

The *Forward* glided like a bird amidst the struggling icebergs, which her prow sent to the right-about; the brig’s hull shivered under the action of the screw, and the manometer indicated a prodigious tension of steam, for it whistled with a deafening noise.

“Load the valves!” cried Shandon, and the engineer obeyed at the risk of blowing up the ship; but his despairing efforts were in vain. The iceberg, caught up by an undercurrent, rapidly approached the pass. The brig was still about three cables’ length from it, when the mountain, entering like a corner-stone into the open space, strongly adhered to its neighbours and closed up all issue.

“We are lost!” cried Shandon, who could not retain the imprudent words.

“Lost!” repeated the crew.

“Let them escape who can!” said some.

“Lower the shore boats!” said others.

“To the steward’s room!” cried Pen and several of his band, “and if we are to be drowned, let’s drown ourselves in gin!”

Disorder among the men was at its height. Shandon felt himself overcome; when he wished to command, he stammered and hesitated. His thought was unable to make way through his words. The doctor was walking about in agitation. Johnson stoically folded his arms and said nothing. All at once a strong, imperious, and energetic voice was heard to pronounce these words:

“Every man to his post and tack about!”

Johnson started, and, hardly knowing what he did, turned the wheel rapidly. He was just in time, for the brig, launched at full speed, was about to crush herself against her prison walls. But while Johnson was instinctively obeying, Shandon, Clawbonny, the crew, and all down to the stoker Warren, who had abandoned his fires, even black Strong, who had left his cooking, were all mustered on deck, and saw emerge from that cabin the only man who was in possession of the key, and that man was Garry, the sailor.

“Sir!” cried Shandon, becoming pale. “Garry—you—by what right do you command here?”

“Dick,” called out Garry, reproducing that whistle which had so much surprised the crew. The dog, at the sound of his right name, jumped with one bound on to the poop and lay quietly down at his master’s feet. The crew did not say a word. The key which the captain of the *Forward* alone possessed, the dog sent by him, and who came thus to verify his identity, that commanding accent which it was impossible to mistake—all this acted strongly on the minds of the sailors, and was sufficient to establish Garry’s authority.

Besides, Garry was no longer recognisable; he had cut off the long whiskers which had covered his face, which made it look more energetic and imperious than ever; dressed in the

clothes of his rank which had been deposited in the cabin, he appeared in the insignia of commander.

Then immediately, with that mobility which characterised them, the crew of the *Forward* cried out—"Three cheers for the captain!"

"Shandon!" said the latter to his second, "muster the crew; I am going to inspect it!"

Shandon obeyed and gave orders with an altered voice. The captain advanced to meet his officers and men, saying something suitable to each, and treating each according to his past conduct. When he had finished the inspection, he returned on to the poop, and with a calm voice pronounced the following words:

"Officers and sailors, like you, I am English, and my motto is that of Nelson, 'England expects that every man will do his duty.' As an Englishman I am resolved, we are resolved, that no bolder men shall go further than we have been. As an Englishman I will not allow, we will not allow, other people to have the glory of pushing further north themselves. If ever human foot can step upon the land of the North Pole, it shall be the foot of an Englishman. Here is our country's flag. I have equipped this vessel, and consecrated my fortune to this enterprise, and, if necessary, I shall consecrate to it my life and yours; for I am determined that these colours shall float on the North Pole. Take courage. From this day, for every degree we can gain northwards the sum of a thousand pounds will be awarded to you. There are ninety, for we are now in the seventy-second. Count them. Besides, my name is enough. It means energy and patriotism. I am Captain Hatteras!"

"Captain Hatteras!" exclaimed Shandon, and that name, well known to English sailors, was whispered amongst the crew.

"Now," continued Hatteras, "anchor the brig to the ice, put out the fires, and each of you return to your usual work. Shandon, I wish to hold a council with you relative to affairs on board. Join me with the doctor, Wall, and the boatswain in my cabin. Johnson, disperse the men."

Hatteras, calm and haughty, quietly left the poop. In the meantime Shandon was anchoring the brig.

Who, then, was this Hatteras, and for what reason did his name make such a profound impression upon the crew? John Hatteras was the only son of a London brewer, who died in 1852 worth six millions of money. Still young, he embraced the maritime career in spite of the splendid fortune awaiting him. Not that he felt any vocation for commerce, but the instinct of geographical discoveries was dear to him. He had always dreamt of placing his foot where no mortal foot had yet soiled the ground.

At the age of twenty he was already in possession of the vigorous constitution of a thin and sanguine man; an energetic face, with lines geometrically traced; a high and perpendicular forehead; cold but handsome eyes; thin lips, which set off a mouth from which words rarely issued; a middle stature; solidly-jointed limbs, put in motion by iron muscles; the whole forming a man endowed with a temperament fit for anything. When you saw him you felt he was daring; when you heard him you knew he was coldly determined; his was a character that never drew back, ready to stake the lives of others as well as his own. It was well to think twice before following him in his expeditions.

John Hatteras was proud of being an Englishman. A Frenchman once said to him, with what he thought was refined politeness and amiability:

"If I were not a Frenchman I should like to be an Englishman."

“And if I were not an Englishman,” answered Hatteras, “I should like to be an Englishman.”

That answer revealed the character of the man. It was a great grief to him that Englishmen had not the monopoly of geographical discoveries, and were, in fact, rather behind other nations in that field.

Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of America, was a Genoese; Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese, discovered India; another Portuguese, Fernando de Andrada, China; and a third, Magellan, the Terra del Fuego. Canada was discovered by Jacques Cartier, a Frenchman; Labrador, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, the Azores, Madeira, Newfoundland, Guinea, Congo, Mexico, Cape Blanco, Greenland, Iceland, the South Seas, California, Japan, Cambodia, Peru, Kamtchatka, the Philippines, Spitzbergen, Cape Horn, Behring’s Straits, Tasmania, New Zealand, New Brittany, New Holland, Louisiana, Jean Mayen Island, were discovered by Icelanders, Scandinavians, French, Russians, Portuguese, Danes, Spaniards, Genoese, and Dutch, but not one by an Englishman. Captain Hatteras could not reconcile himself to the fact that Englishmen were excluded from the glorious list of navigators who made the great discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Hatteras consoled himself a little when he turned to more modern times. Then Englishmen had the best of it with Sturt, Burke, Wills, King, and Grey in Australia; with Palliser in America; with Cyril Graham, Wadington, and Cummingham in India; with Burton, Speke, Grant, and Livingstone in Africa.

But for a man like Hatteras this was not enough; from his point of view these bold travellers were *improvers* rather than *inventors*; and he was determined to do something better, and he would have invented a country if he could, only to have the honour of discovering it. Now he had noticed that, although Englishmen did not form a majority amongst ancient discoverers, and that he had to go back to Cook in 1774 to obtain New Caledonia and the Sandwich Isles, where the unfortunate captain perished in 1778, yet there existed, nevertheless, a corner of the globe where they seemed to have united all their efforts. This corner was precisely the boreal lands and seas of North America. The list of Polar discoveries may be thus written:

Nova Zembla, discovered by Willoughby, in 1553; Weigatz Island, by Barrough, in 1556; the West Coast of Greenland, by Davis, in 1585; Davis’s Straits, by Davis, in 1587; Spitzbergen, by Willoughby, in 1596; Hudson’s Bay, by Hudson, in 1610; Baffin’s Bay, by Baffin, in 1616.

In more modern times, Hearne, Mackenzie, John Ross, Parry, Franklin, Richardson, Beechey, James Ross, Back, Dease, Simpson, Rae, Inglefield, Belcher, Austin, Kellett, Moore, McClure, Kennedy, and McClintock have continually searched those unknown lands.

The limits of the northern coasts of America had been fixed, and the North-West passage almost discovered, but this was not enough; there was something better still to be done, and John Hatteras had twice attempted it by equipping two ships at his own expense. He wanted to reach the North Pole, and thus crown the series of English discoveries by one of the most illustrious attempts. To attain the Pole was the aim of his life.

After a few successful cruises in the Southern seas, Hatteras endeavoured for the first time, in 1846, to go north by Baffin’s Sea; but he could not get beyond the seventy-fourth degree of latitude; he was then commanding the sloop *Halifax*. His crew suffered atrocious torments, and John Hatteras pushed his adventurous rashness so far, that, afterwards, sailors were little tempted to re-commence similar expeditions under such a chief.

However, in 1850 Hatteras succeeded in enrolling on the schooner *Farewell* about twenty determined men, tempted principally by the high prize offered for their audacity. It was upon

that occasion that Dr. Clawbonny entered into correspondence with John Hatteras, whom he did not know, requesting to join the expedition, but happily for the doctor the post was already filled up. The *Farewell*, following the track taken in 1817 by the *Neptune* from Aberdeen, got up to the north of Spitzbergen as far as the seventy-sixth degree of latitude. There the expedition was compelled to winter. But the sufferings of the crew from the intense cold were so great that not a single man saw England again, with the exception of Hatteras himself, who was brought back to his own country by a Danish whaler after a walk of more than two hundred miles across the ice.

The sensation produced by the return of this one man was immense. Who in future would dare to follow Hatteras in his mad attempts? However, he did not despair of beginning again. His father, the brewer, died, and he became possessor of a nabob's fortune. Soon after a geographical fact bitterly stirred up John Hatteras. A brig, the *Advance*, manned by seventeen men, equipped by a merchant named Grinnell, under the command of Dr. Kane, and sent in search of Sir John Franklin, advanced in 1853 through Baffin's Sea and Smith's Strait, beyond the eighty-second degree of boreal latitude, much nearer the Pole than any of his predecessors. Now, this vessel was American, Grinnell was American, and Kane was American. The Englishman's disdain for the Yankee will be easily understood; in the heart of Hatteras it changed to hatred; he was resolved to outdo his audacious competitor and reach the Pole itself.

For two years he had been living incognito in Liverpool, passing himself off as a sailor; he recognised in Richard Shandon the man he wanted; he sent him an offer by an anonymous letter, and one to Dr. Clawbonny at the same time. The *Forward* was built, armed, and equipped. Hatteras took great care to conceal his name, for had it been known he would not have found a single man to accompany him. He was determined not to take the command of the brig except in a moment of danger, and when his crew had gone too far to draw back. He had in reserve, as we have seen, such offers of money to make to the men that not one of them would refuse to follow him to the other end of the world; and, in fact, it was right to the other end of the world that he meant to go. Circumstances had become critical, and John Hatteras had made himself known. His dog, the faithful Dick, the companion of his voyages, was the first to recognise him. Luckily for the brave and unfortunately for the timid, it was well and duly established that John Hatteras was the captain of the *Forward*.

XIII. The Projects Of Hatteras

The appearance of this bold personage was appreciated in different ways by the crew; part of them completely rallied round him, either from love of money or daring; others submitted because they could not help themselves, reserving their right to protest later on; besides, resistance to such a man seemed, for the present, difficult. Each man went back to his post. The 20th of May fell on a Sunday, and was consequently a day of rest for the crew. A council was held by the captain, composed of the officers, Shandon, Wall, Johnson, and the doctor.

“Gentlemen,” said the captain in that voice at the same time soft and imperious which characterised him, “you are aware that I intend to go as far as the Pole. I wish to know your opinion about this enterprise. Shandon, what do you think about it?”

“It is not for me to think, captain,” coldly replied Shandon; “I have only to obey.”

Hatteras was not surprised at the answer.

“Richard Shandon,” continued he, not less coldly, “I beg you will say what you think about our chance of success.”

“Very well, captain,” answered Shandon, “facts are there, and answer for me; attempts of the same kind up till now have always failed; I hope we shall be more fortunate.”

“We shall be. What do you think, gentlemen?”

“As far as I am concerned,” replied the doctor, “I consider your plan practicable, as it is certain that some day navigators will attain the boreal Pole. I don’t see why the honour should not fall to our lot.”

“There are many things in our favour,” answered Hatteras; “our measures are taken in consequence, and we shall profit by the experience of those who have gone before us. And thereupon, Shandon, accept my thanks for the care you have taken in fitting out this ship; there are a few evil-disposed fellows amongst the crew that I shall have to bring to reason, but on the whole I have only praises to give you.”

Shandon bowed coldly. His position on the *Forward*, which he thought to command, was a false one. Hatteras understood this, and did not insist further.

“As to you, gentlemen,” he continued, turning to Wall and Johnson, “I could not have secured officers more distinguished for courage and experience.”

“Well, captain, I’m your man,” answered Johnson, “and although your enterprise seems to me rather daring, you may rely upon me till the end.”

“And on me too,” said James Wall.

“As to you, doctor, I know what you are worth.”

“You know more than I do, then,” quickly replied the doctor.

“Now, gentlemen,” continued Hatteras, “it is well you should learn upon what undeniable facts my pretension to arrive at the Pole is founded. In 1817 the *Neptune* got up to the north of Spitzbergen, as far as the eighty-second degree. In 1826 the celebrated Parry, after his third voyage to the Polar Seas, started also from Spitzbergen Point, and by the aid of sledge-boats went a hundred and fifty miles northward. In 1852 Captain Inglefield penetrated into Smith’s Inlet as far as seventy-eight degrees thirty-five minutes latitude. All these vessels were English, and Englishmen, our countrymen, commanded them.” Here Hatteras paused. “I

ought to add," he continued, with a constrained look, and as though the words were unable to leave his lips—"I must add that, in 1854, Kane, the American, commanding the brig *Advance*, went still higher, and that his lieutenant, Morton, going across the ice-fields, hoisted the United States standard on the other side of the eighty-second degree. This said, I shall not return to the subject. Now what remains to be known is this, that the captains of the *Neptune*, the *Enterprise*, the *Isabel*, and the *Advance* ascertained that proceeding from the highest latitudes there existed a Polar basin entirely free from ice."

"Free from ice!" exclaimed Shandon, interrupting the captain, "that is impossible!"

"You will notice, Shandon," quietly replied Hatteras, whose eye shone for an instant, "that I quote names and facts as a proof. I may even add that during Captain Parry's station on the border of Wellington Channel, in 1851, his lieutenant, Stewart, also found himself in the presence of open sea, and this peculiarity was confirmed during Sir Edward Beecher's wintering in 1853, in Northumberland Bay, in 76° 52' N. latitude, and 99° 20' longitude. The reports are incontestable, and it would be most unjust not to admit them."

"However, captain," continued Shandon, "those reports are so contradictory."

"You are mistaken, Shandon," cried Dr. Clawbonny. "These reports do not contradict any scientific assertion, the captain will allow me to tell you."

"Go on, doctor," answered Hatteras.

"Well, listen, Shandon; it evidently follows from geographical facts, and from the study of isotherm lines, that the coldest point of the globe is not at the Pole itself; like the magnetic point, it deviates several degrees from the Pole. The calculations of Brewster, Bergham, and several other natural philosophers show us that in our hemisphere there are two cold Poles; one is situated in Asia at 79° 30' N. latitude, and by 120° E. longitude, and the other in America at 78° N. latitude, and 97° W. longitude. It is with the latter that we have to do, and you see, Shandon, we have met with it at more than twelve degrees below the Pole. Well, why should not the Polar Sea be as equally disengaged from ice as the sixty-sixth parallel is in summer—that is to say, the south of Baffin's Bay?"

"That's what I call well pleaded," replied Johnson. "Mr. Clawbonny speaks upon these matters like a professional man."

"It appears very probable," chimed in James Wall.

"All guess-work," answered Shandon obstinately.

"Well, Shandon," said Hatteras, "let us take into consideration either case; either the sea is free from ice or it is not so, and neither of these suppositions can hinder us from attaining the Pole. If the sea is free the *Forward* will take us there without trouble; if it is frozen we will attempt the adventure upon our sledges. This, you will allow, is not impracticable. When once our brig has attained the eighty-third degree we shall only have six hundred miles to traverse before reaching the Pole."

"And what are six hundred miles?" quickly answered the doctor, "when it is known that a Cossack, Alexis Markoff, went over the ice sea along the northern coast of the Russian Empire, in sledges drawn by dogs, for the space of eight hundred miles in twenty-four days?"

"Do you hear that, Shandon?" said Hatteras; "can't Englishmen do as much as a Cossack?"

"Of course they can," cried the impetuous doctor.

"Of course," added the boatswain.

"Well, Shandon?" said the captain.

“I can only repeat what I said before, captain,” said Shandon—“I will obey.”

“Very good. And now,” continued Hatteras, “let us consider our present situation. We are caught by the ice, and it seems to me impossible, for this year at least, to get into Smith’s Strait. Well, here, then, this is what I propose.”

Hatteras laid open upon the table one of the excellent maps published in 1859 by the order of the Admiralty.

“Be kind enough to follow me. If Smith’s Strait is closed up from us, Lancaster Strait, on the west coast of Baffin’s Sea, is not. I think we ought to ascend that strait as far as Barrow Strait, and from there sail to Beechey Island; the same track has been gone over a hundred times by sailing vessels; consequently with a screw we can do it easily. Once at Beechey Island we will go north as far as possible, by Wellington Channel, up to the outlet of the creek which joins Wellington’s and Queen’s Channels, at the very point where the open sea was perceived. It is now only the 20th of May; in a month, if circumstances favour us, we shall have attained that point, and from there we’ll drive forward towards the Pole. What do you think about it, gentlemen?”

“It is evidently the only track to follow,” replied Johnson.

“Very well, we will take it from to-morrow. I shall let them rest to-day as it is Sunday. Shandon, you will take care that religious service be attended to; it has a beneficial effect on the minds of men, and a sailor above all needs to place confidence in the Almighty.”

“It shall be attended to, captain,” answered Shandon, who went out with the lieutenant and the boatswain.

“Doctor!” said Hatteras, pointing towards Shandon, “there’s a man whose pride is wounded; I can no longer rely upon him.”

Early the following day the captain caused the pirogue to be lowered in order to reconnoitre the icebergs in the vicinity, the breadth of which did not exceed 200 yards. He remarked that through a slow pressure of the ice the basin threatened to become narrower. It became urgent, therefore, to make an aperture to prevent the ship being crushed in a vice of the mountains. By the means employed by John Hatteras, it is easy to observe that he was an energetic man.

He first had steps cut out in the walls of ice, and by their means climbed to the summit of an iceberg. From that point he saw that it was easy for him to cut out a road towards the south-west. By his orders a blasting furnace was hollowed nearly in the heart of the mountain. This work, rapidly put into execution, was terminated by noon on Monday. Hatteras could not rely on his eight or ten pound blasting cylinders, which would have had no effect on such masses as those. They were only sufficient to shatter ice-fields. He therefore had a thousand pounds of powder placed in the blasting furnace, of which the diffusive direction was carefully calculated. This mine was provided with a long wick, bound in gutta-percha, the end of which was outside. The gallery conducting to the mine was filled up with snow and lumps of ice, which the cold of the following night made as hard as granite. The temperature, under the influence of an easterly wind, came down to twelve degrees.

At seven the next morning the *Forward* was held under steam, ready to profit by the smallest issue. Johnson was charged with setting fire to the wick, which, according to calculation, would burn for half an hour before setting fire to the mine. Johnson had, therefore, plenty of time to regain the brig; ten minutes after having executed Hatteras’s order he was again at his post. The crew remained on deck, for the weather was dry and bright; it had left off snowing.

Hatteras was on the poop, chronometer in hand, counting the minutes; Shandon and the doctor were with him. At eight thirty-five a dull explosion was heard, much less loud than any one would have supposed. The outline of the mountains was changed all at once as if by an earthquake; thick white smoke rose up to a considerable height in the sky, leaving long crevices in the iceberg, the top part of which fell in pieces all round the *Forward*. But the path was not yet free; large blocks of ice remained suspended above the pass on the adjacent mountains, and there was every reason to fear that they would fall and close up the passage. Hatteras took in the situation at one glance.

“Wolsten!” cried he.

The gunsmith hastened up.

“Yes, captain?” cried he.

“Load the gun in the bow with a triple charge,” said Hatteras, “and wad it as hard as possible.”

“Are we going to attack the mountain with cannon-balls?” asked the doctor.

“No,” answered Hatteras, “that would be useless. No bullet, Wolsten, but a triple charge of powder. Look sharp!”

A few minutes after the gun was loaded.

“What does he mean to do without a bullet?” muttered Shandon between his teeth.

“We shall soon see,” answered the doctor.

“Ready, captain!” called out Wolsten.

“All right!” replied Hatteras.

“Brunton!” he called out to the engineer, “a few turns ahead.”

Brunton opened the sliders, and the screw being put in movement, the *Forward* neared the mined mountain.

“Aim at the pass!” cried the captain to the gunsmith. The latter obeyed, and when the brig was only half a cable’s length from it, Hatteras called out:

“Fire!”

A formidable report followed his order, and the blocks, shaken by the atmospheric commotion, were suddenly precipitated into the sea; the disturbance amongst the strata of the air had been sufficient to accomplish this.

“All steam on, Brunton! Straight for the pass, Johnson!”

The latter was at the helm; the brig, driven along by her screw, which turned in the foaming waves, dashed into the middle of the then opened pass; it was time, for scarcely had the *Forward* cleared the opening than her prison closed up again behind her. It was a thrilling moment, and on board there was only one stout and undisturbed heart—that of the captain. The crew, astonished at the manoeuvre, cried out:

“Hurrah for the captain!”

XIV. Expedition In Search Of Franklin

On Wednesday, the 23rd of May, the *Forward* had again taken up her adventurous navigation, cleverly tacking amongst the packs and icebergs. Thanks to steam, that obedient force which so many of our Polar sea navigators have had to do without, she appeared to be playing in the midst of the moving rocks. She seemed to recognise the hand of an experienced master, and like a horse under an able rider, she obeyed the thought of her captain. The temperature rose. At six o'clock in the morning the thermometer marked twenty-six degrees, at six in the evening twenty-nine degrees, and at midnight twenty-five degrees; the wind was lightly blowing from the south-east.

On Thursday, towards three in the morning, the *Forward* was in sight of Possession Bay, on the coast of America. At the entrance to Lancaster Strait, shortly after, the crew caught a glimpse of Burney Cape. A few Esquimaux pulled off towards the vessel, but Hatteras did not take the trouble to wait for them. The Byam-Martin peaks, which overlook Cape Liverpool, were sighted to the left, and soon disappeared in the evening mists, which also prevented any observation being taken from Cape Hay. This cape is so low that it gets confounded with the ice on the coast, a circumstance which often renders the hydrographic determination of the Polar seas extremely difficult.

Puffins, ducks, and white sea-gulls showed up in very great numbers. The *Forward* was then in latitude $74^{\circ} 1'$, and in longitude $77^{\circ} 15'$. The snowy hoods of the two mountains, Catherine and Elizabeth, rose up above the clouds.

On Friday, at six o'clock, Cape Warender was passed on the right side of the strait, and on the left Admiralty Inlet, a bay that has been little explored by navigators, who are generally in a hurry to sail away west. The sea became rather rough, and the waves often swept the deck of the brig, throwing up pieces of ice. The land on the north coast, with its high table lands almost level, and which reverberated the sun's rays, offered a very curious appearance.

Hatteras wanted to run along the north coast, in order to reach Beechey Island and the entrance to Wellington Channel sooner; but continual icebergs compelled him, to his great annoyance, to follow the southern passes. That was why, on the 26th of May, the *Forward* was abreast of Cape York in a thick fog interspersed with snow; a very high mountain, almost perpendicular, caused it to be recognised. The weather cleared up a little, and the sun, towards noon, appeared for an instant, allowing a tolerably good observation to be taken; $74^{\circ} 4'$ latitude and $84^{\circ} 23'$ longitude. The *Forward* was then at the extremity of Lancaster Strait.

Hatteras pointed out to the doctor on his map the route already taken, and the one he meant to follow. The position of the brig at the time was very interesting.

"I should like to have been further north," said he, "but no one can do the impossible; see, this is our exact situation."

And the captain pricked his map at a short distance from Cape York.

"We are in the centre of this four-road way, open to every wind, fenced by the outlets of Lancaster Strait, Barrow Strait, Wellington Channel, and Regent's Passage; it is a point that all navigators in these seas have been obliged to come to."

"Well," replied the doctor, "it must have puzzled them greatly; four cross-roads with no sign-posts to tell them which to take. How did Parry, Ross, and Franklin manage?"

“They did not manage at all, they were managed; they had no choice, I can assure you; sometimes Barrow Strait was closed to one of them, and the next year another found it open; sometimes the vessel was irresistibly drawn towards Regent’s Passage, so that we have ended by becoming acquainted with these inextricable seas.”

“What a singular country!” said the doctor, examining the map. “It is all in pieces, and they seem to have no logical connection. It seems as if the land in the vicinity of the North Pole had been cut up like this on purpose to make access to it more difficult, whilst that in the other hemisphere quietly terminates in tapered-out points like those of Cape Horn, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Indian Peninsula. Is it the greater rapidity of the equator which has thus modified matters, whilst the land at the extremities, yet fluid from the creation, has not been able to get condensed or agglomerated together, for want of a sufficiently rapid rotation?”

“That must be the case, for everything on earth is logical, and ‘nothing is that errs from law,’ and God often allows men to discover His laws; make use of His permission, doctor.”

“Unfortunately, I shall not be able to take much advantage of it,” said the doctor, “but the wind here is something dreadful,” added he, muffling himself up as well as he could.

“Yes, we are quite exposed to the north wind, and it is turning us out of our road.”

“Anyhow it ought to drive the ice down south, and level a clear road.”

“It ought to do so, doctor, but the wind does not always do what it ought. Look, that ice-bank seems impenetrable. Never mind, we will try to reach Griffith Island, sail round Cornwallis Island, and get into Queen’s Channel without going by Wellington Channel. Nevertheless I positively desire to touch at Beechey Island in order to renew my coal provision.”

“What do you mean?” asked the astonished doctor.

“I mean that, according to orders from the Admiralty, large provisions have been deposited on that island in order to provide for future expeditions, and although Captain McClintock took some in 1859, I assure you that there will be some left for us.”

“By-the-bye,” said the doctor, “these parts have been explored for the last fifteen years, and since the day when the proof of the loss of Franklin was acquired, the Admiralty has always kept five or six cruisers in these seas. If I am not mistaken, Griffith Island, which I see there on the map, almost in the middle of the cross-roads, has become a general meeting-place for navigators.”

“It is so, doctor; and Franklin’s unfortunate expedition resulted in making known these distant countries to us.”

“That is true, captain, for since 1845 expeditions have been very numerous. It was not until 1848 that we began to be uneasy about the disappearance of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, Franklin’s two vessels. It was then that we saw the admiral’s old friend, Dr. Richardson, at the age of seventy, go to Canada, and ascend Coppermine River as far as the Polar Sea; and James Ross, commanding the *Enterprise* and *Investigation*, set out from Uppernawik in 1848 and arrived at Cape York, where we now are. Every day he threw a tub containing papers into the sea, for the purpose of making known his whereabouts. During the mists he caused the cannon to be fired, and had sky-rockets sent up at night along with Bengal lights, and kept under sail continually. He wintered in Port Leopold from 1848 to 1849, where he took possession of a great number of white foxes, and caused brass collars, upon which was engraved the indication of the whereabouts of ships and the store depots, to be riveted on their necks. Afterwards they were dispersed in all directions; in the following spring he began

to search the coasts of North Somerset on sledges in the midst of dangers and privations from which almost all his men fell ill or lame. He built up cairns in which he inclosed brass cylinders with the necessary memoranda for rallying the lost expedition. While he was away his lieutenant McClure explored the northern coasts of Barrow Strait, but without result. James Ross had under his orders two officers who, later on, were destined to become celebrities—McClure, who cleared the North-West passage, and McClintock, who discovered the remains of Sir John Franklin.”

“Yes; they are now two good and brave English captains. You know the history of these seas well, doctor, and you will benefit us by telling us about it. There is always something to be gained by hearing about such daring attempts.”

“Well, to finish all I know about James Ross: he tried to reach Melville Island by a more westerly direction, but he nearly lost his two vessels, for he was caught by the ice and driven back into Baffin’s Sea.”

“Driven back?” repeated Hatteras, contracting his brows; “forced back in spite of himself?”

“Yes, and without having discovered anything,” continued the doctor; “and ever since that year, 1850, English vessels have never ceased to plough these seas, and a reward of twenty thousand pounds was offered to any one who might find the crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror*. Captains Kellett and Moore had already, in 1848, attempted to get through Behring’s Strait. In 1850 and 1851 Captain Austin wintered in Cornwallis Island; Captain Parry, on board the *Assistance* and the *Resolute*, explored Wellington Channel; John Ross, the venerable hero of the magnetic pole, set out again with his yacht, the *Felix*, in search of his friend; the brig *Prince Albert* went on a first cruise at the expense of Lady Franklin; and, lastly, two American ships, sent out by Grinnell with Captain Haven, were drifted out of Wellington Channel and thrown back into Lancaster Strait. It was during this year that McClintock, who was then Austin’s lieutenant, pushed on as far as Melville Island and Cape Dundas, the extreme points attained by Parry in 1819; it was then that he found traces of Franklin’s wintering on Beechey Island in 1845.”

“Yes,” answered Hatteras, “three of his sailors had been buried there—three men more fortunate than the others!”

The doctor nodded in approval of Hatteras’s remark, and continued:

“During 1851 and 1852 the *Prince Albert* went on a second voyage under the French lieutenant, Bellot; he wintered at Batty Bay, in Prince Regent Strait, explored the south-west of Somerset, and reconnoitred the coast as far as Cape Walker. During that time the *Enterprise* and the *Investigator* returned to England and passed under the command of Collinson and McClure for the purpose of rejoining Kellett and Moore in Behring’s Straits; whilst Collinson came back to winter at Hong-Kong, McClure made the best of his way onward, and after being obliged to winter three times—from 1850 to ‘51; from 1851 to ‘52; and from 1852 to ‘53—he discovered the North-West passage without learning anything of Franklin’s fate. During 1852 and ‘53 a new expedition composed of three sailing vessels, the *Resolute*, the *Assistance*, the *North Star*, and two steamers, the *Pioneer* and *Intrepid*, set sail under the command of Sir Edward Belcher, with Captain Kellett under him; Sir Edward visited Wellington Channel, wintered in Northumberland Bay, and went over the coast, whilst Kellett, pushing on to Bridport in Melville Island, explored, without success, that part of the boreal land. It was at this time that news was spread in England that two ships, abandoned in the midst of icebergs, had been descried near the coast of New Scotland. Lady Franklin immediately had prepared the little screw *Isabelle*, and Captain Inglefield, after having steamed up Baffin’s Bay as far as Victoria Point on the eightieth parallel, came back

to Beechey Island no more successful than his predecessors. At the beginning of 1855, Grinnell, an American, fitted up a fresh expedition, and Captain Kane tried to penetrate to the Pole——”

“But he didn’t do it,” cried Hatteras violently; “and what he didn’t do we will, with God’s help!”

“I know, captain,” answered the doctor, “and I mention it because this expedition is of necessity connected with the search for Franklin. But it had no result. I was almost forgetting to tell you that the Admiralty, considering Beechey Island as the general rendezvous of expeditions, charged Captain Inglefield, who then commanded the steamer *Phoenix*, to transport provisions there in 1853; Inglefield set out with Lieutenant Bellot, and lost the brave officer who for the second time had devoted his services to England; we can have more precise details upon this catastrophe, as our boatswain, Johnson, was witness to the misfortune.”

“Lieutenant Bellot was a brave Frenchman,” said Hatteras, “and his memory is honoured in England.”

“By that time,” continued the doctor, “Belcher’s fleet began to come back little by little; not all of it, for Sir Edward had been obliged to abandon the *Assistance* in 1854, as McClure had done with the *Investigator* in 1853. In the meantime, Dr. Rae, in a letter dated the 29th of July, 1854, and addressed from Repulse Bay, which he had succeeded in reaching through America, sent word that the Esquimaux of King William’s Land were in possession of different objects taken from the wrecks of the *Erebus* and *Terror*; there was then not the least doubt about the fate of the expedition; the *Phoenix*, the *North Star*, and Collinson’s vessel then came back to England, leaving the Arctic Seas completely abandoned by English ships. But if the Government seemed to have lost all hope it was not so with Lady Franklin, and with the remnants of her fortune she fitted out the *Fox*, commanded by McClintock, who set sail in 1857, and wintered in the quarters where you made your apparition; he reached Beechey Island on the 11th of August, 1858, wintered a second time in Bellot’s Strait, began his search again in February, 1859, and on the 6th of May found the document which cleared away all doubt about the fate of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, and returned to England at the end of the year. That is all that has happened for fifteen years in these fateful countries, and since the return of the *Fox* not a single vessel has returned to attempt success in the midst of these dangerous seas.”

“Well,” replied Hatteras, “we will attempt it.”

XV. The “Forward” Driven Back South

The weather cleared up towards evening, and land was clearly distinguished between Cape Sepping and Cape Clarence, which runs east, then south, and is joined to the coast on the west by a rather low neck of land. The sea at the entrance to Regent Strait was free from ice, with the exception of an impenetrable ice-bank, a little further than Port Leopold, which threatened to stop the *Forward* in her north-westerly course. Hatteras was greatly vexed, but he did not show it; he was obliged to have recourse to petards in order to force an entrance to Port Leopold; he reached it on Sunday, the 27th of May; the brig was solidly anchored to the enormous icebergs, which were as upright, hard, and solid as rocks.

The captain, followed by the doctor, Johnson, and his dog Dick, immediately leaped upon the ice, and soon reached land. Dick leaped with joy, for since he had recognised the captain he had become more sociable, keeping his grudge against certain men of the crew for whom his master had no more friendship than he. The port was not then blocked up with ice that the east winds generally heaped up there; the earth, intersected with peaks, offered at their summits graceful undulations of snow. The house and lantern erected by James Ross were still in a tolerable state of preservation; but the provisions seemed to have been ransacked by foxes and bears, the recent traces of which were easily distinguished. Men, too, had had something to do with the devastation, for a few remains of Esquimaux huts remained upon the shores of the Bay. The six graves inclosing the remains of the six sailors of the *Enterprise* and the *Investigator* were recognisable by a slight swelling of the ground; they had been respected both by men and animals. In placing his foot for the first time on boreal land, the doctor experienced much emotion. It is impossible to imagine the feelings with which the heart is assailed at the sight of the remains of houses, tents, huts, and magazines that Nature so marvellously preserves in those cold countries.

“There is that residence,” he said to his companions, “which James Ross himself called the Camp of Refuge; if Franklin’s expedition had reached this spot, it would have been saved. There is the engine which was abandoned here, and the stove at which the crew of the *Prince Albert* warmed themselves in 1851. Things have remained just as they were, and any one would think that Captain Kennedy had only left yesterday. Here is the long boat which sheltered him and his for a few days, for this Kennedy, separated from his ship, was in reality saved by Lieutenant Bellot, who braved the October temperature in order to go to his assistance.”

“I knew that brave and worthy officer,” said Johnson.

Whilst the doctor was examining with all an antiquarian’s enthusiasm the vestiges of previous winterings, Hatteras was occupied in piling together the various provisions and articles of fuel, which were only to be found in very small quantities. The following day was employed in transporting them on board. The doctor, without going too far from the ship, surveyed the country, and took sketches of the most remarkable points of view. The temperature rose by degrees, and the heaped-up snow began to melt. The doctor made an almost complete collection of northern birds, such as gulls, divers, eider-down ducks, which are very much like common ducks, with white breasts and backs, blue bellies, the top of the head blue, and the remainder of the plumage white, shaded with green; several of them had already their breasts stripped of that beautiful down with which the male and female line their nests. The doctor also perceived large seals taking breath on the surface of the ice, but could

not shoot one. In his excursions he discovered the high water mark, a stone upon which the following signs are engraved:

(E. I.)
1849,

and which indicate the passage of the *Enterprise* and *Investigator*; he pushed forward as far as Cape Clarence to the spot where John and James Ross, in 1833, waited with so much impatience for the breaking up of the ice. The land was strewn with skulls and bones of animals, and traces of Esquimaux habitations could be still distinguished.

The doctor wanted to raise up a cairn on Port Leopold, and deposit in it a note indicating the passage of the *Forward*, and the aim of the expedition. But Hatteras would not hear of it; he did not want to leave traces behind of which a competitor might take advantage. In spite of his good motives the doctor was forced to yield to the captain's will. Shandon blamed the captain's obstinacy, which prevented any ships following the trace of the *Forward* in case of accident. Hatteras would not give way. His lading was finished on Monday night, and he attempted once more to gain the north by breaking open the ice-bank; but after dangerous efforts he was forced to resign himself, and to go down Regent's Channel again; he would not stop at Port Leopold, which, open to-day, might be closed again to-morrow by an unexpected displacement of ice-fields, a very frequent phenomenon in these seas, and which navigators ought particularly to take into consideration.

If Hatteras did not allow his uneasiness to be outwardly perceived, it did not prevent him feeling it inwardly. His desire was to push northward, whilst, on the contrary, he found himself constrained to put back southward. Where should he get to in that case? Should he be obliged to put back to Victoria Harbour, in Boothia Gulf, where Sir John Ross wintered in 1833? Would he find Bellot Strait open at that epoch, and could he ascend Peel Strait by rounding North Somerset? Or, again, should he, like his predecessors, find himself captured during several winters, and be compelled to exhaust his strength and provisions? These fears were fermenting in his brain; he must decide one way or other. He heaved about, and struck out south. The width of Prince Regent's Channel is about the same from Port Leopold to Adelaide Bay. The *Forward*, more favoured than the ships which had preceded her, and of which the greater number had required more than a month to descend the channel, even in a more favourable season, made her way rapidly amongst the icebergs; it is true that other ships, with the exception of the *Fox*, had no steam at their disposal, and had to endure the caprices of an uncertain and often foul wind.

In general the crew showed little wish to push on with the enterprising Hatteras; the men were only too glad to perceive that the vessel was taking a southerly direction. Hatteras would have liked to go on regardless of consequences.

The *Forward* rushed along under the pressure of her engines, the smoke from which twisted round the shining points of the icebergs; the weather was constantly changing from dry cold to snowy fogs. The brig, which drew little water, sailed along the west coast; Hatteras did not wish to miss the entrance to Bellot Strait, as the only outlet to the Gulf of Boothia on the south was the strait, only partially known to the *Fury* and the *Hecla*; if he missed the Bellot Strait, he might be shut up without possibility of egress.

In the evening the *Forward* was in sight of Elwin Bay, known by its high perpendicular rocks; on the Tuesday morning Batty Bay was sighted, where the *Prince Albert* anchored for its long wintering on the 10th of September, 1851. The doctor swept the whole coast with his telescope. It was from this point that the expeditions radiated that established the

geographical configuration of North Somerset. The weather was clear, and the profound ravines by which the bay is surrounded could be clearly distinguished.

The doctor and Johnson were perhaps the only beings on board who took any interest in these deserted countries. Hatteras was always intent upon his maps, and said little; his taciturnity increased as the brig got more and more south; he often mounted the poop, and there with folded arms, and eyes lost in vacancy, he stood for hours. His orders, when he gave any, were curt and rough. Shandon kept a cold silence, and kept himself so much aloof by degrees that at last he had no relations with Hatteras except those exacted by the service; James Wall remained devoted to Shandon, and regulated his conduct accordingly. The remainder of the crew waited for something to turn up, ready to take any advantage in their own interest. There was no longer that unity of thought and communion of ideas on board which are so necessary for the accomplishment of anything great, and this Hatteras knew to his sorrow.

During the day two whales were perceived rushing towards the south; a white bear was also seen, and was shot at without any apparent success. The captain knew the value of an hour under the circumstances, and would not allow the animal to be chased.

On Wednesday morning the extremity of Regent's Channel was passed; the angle on the west coast was followed by a deep curve in the land. By consulting his map the doctor recognised the point of Somerset House, or Fury Point.

"There," said he to his habitual companion—"there is the very spot where the first English ship, sent into these seas in 1815, was lost, during the third of Parry's voyages to the Pole; the *Fury* was so damaged by the ice on her second wintering, that her crew were obliged to desert her and return to England on board her companion ship the *Hecla*."

"That shows the advantage of having a second ship," answered Johnson. "It is a precaution that Polar navigators ought not to neglect, but Captain Hatteras wasn't the sort of man to trouble himself with another ship."

"Do you think he is imprudent, Johnson?" asked the doctor.

"I? I think nothing, Mr. Clawbonny. Do you see those stakes over there with some rotten tent-rags still hanging to them?"

"Yes; that's where Parry disembarked his provisions from his ship, and, if I remember rightly, the roof of his tent was a topsail."

"Everything must be greatly changed since 1825!"

"Not so much as any one might think. John Ross owed the health and safety of his crew to that fragile habitation in 1829. When the *Prince Albert* sent an expedition there in 1851, it was still existing; Captain Kennedy had it repaired, nine years ago now. It would be interesting to visit it, but Hatteras isn't in the humour to stop!"

"I daresay he is right, Mr. Clawbonny; if time is money in England, here it is life, and a day's or even an hour's delay might make all the difference."

During the day of Thursday, the 1st of June, the *Forward* cut across Creswell Bay; from Fury Point the coast rose towards the north in perpendicular rocks three hundred feet high; it began to get lower towards the south; some snow summits looked like neatly-cut tables, whilst others were shaped like pyramids, and had other strange forms.

The weather grew milder during that day, but was not so clear; land was lost to sight, and the thermometer went up to thirty-two degrees; seafowl fluttered about, the flocks of wild ducks were seen flying north; the crew could divest themselves of some of their garments, and the

influence of the Arctic summer began to be felt. Towards evening the *Forward* doubled Cape Garry at a quarter of a mile from the shore, where the soundings gave from ten to twelve fathoms; from thence she kept near the coast as far as Brentford Bay. It was under this latitude that Bellot Strait was to be met with; a strait the existence of which Sir John Ross did not even guess at during his expedition in 1828; his maps indicated an uninterrupted coastline, whose irregularities he noted with the utmost care; the entrance to the strait must therefore have been blocked up by ice at the time. It was really discovered by Kennedy in April, 1852, and he gave it the name of his lieutenant, Bellot, as “a just tribute,” he said, “to the important services rendered to our expedition by the French officer.”

XVI. The Magnetic Pole

Hatteras felt his anxiety increase as he neared the strait; the fate of his voyage depended upon it; up till now he had done more than his predecessors, the most fortunate of whom, McClintock, had taken fifteen months to reach this part of the Polar Seas; but it was little or nothing if he did not succeed in clearing Bellot Strait; he could not retrace his steps, and would be blocked up till the following year.

He trusted the care of examining the coast to no one but himself; he mounted the crow's nest and passed several hours there during the morning of Saturday. The crew perfectly understood the ship's position; profound silence reigned on board; the engine slackened steam, and the *Forward* kept as near land as possible; the coast bristled with icebergs, which the warmest summers do not melt; an experienced eye alone could distinguish an opening between them. Hatteras compared his maps with the land. As the sun showed himself for an instant towards noon, he caused Shandon and Wall to take a pretty exact observation, which was shouted to him. All the crew suffered the tortures of anxiety for half the day, but towards two o'clock these words were shouted from the top of the mizenmast:

"Veer to the west, all steam on."

The brig instantly obeyed; her prow was directed towards the point indicated; the sea foamed under the screws, and the *Forward*, with all speed on, entered between two ice-streams. The road was found, Hatteras descended upon deck, and the ice-master took his place.

"Well, captain," said the doctor, "we are in the famous strait at last."

"Yes," answered Hatteras, lowering his voice; "but getting in isn't everything; we must get out too," and so saying he regained his cabin.

"He's right," said the doctor; "we are here in a sort of mousetrap, with scarcely enough space for working the brig, and if we are forced to winter in the strait!... Well, we shan't be the first that have had to do it, and they got over it, and so shall we."

The doctor was not mistaken. It was in that very place, in a little sheltered harbour called Kennedy Harbour by McClintock himself, that the *Fox* wintered in 1858. The high granite chain and the steep cliffs of the two banks were clearly discernible.

Bellot Strait is seventeen miles long and a mile wide, and about six or seven fathoms deep. It lies between mountains whose height is estimated at 1,600 feet. It separates North Somerset from Boothia Land.

It is easy to understand that there is not much elbow-room for vessels in such a strait.

The *Forward* advanced slowly, but it did advance; tempests are frequent in the strait, and the brig did not escape them; by Hatteras's order all sails were furled; but, notwithstanding all precautions, the brig was much knocked about; the waves dashed over her, and her smoke fled towards the east with astonishing rapidity; her course was not certain amongst the moving ice; the barometer fell; it was difficult to stop on deck, and most of the men stayed below to avoid useless suffering.

Hatteras, Johnson, and Shandon remained on the poop in spite of the gales of snow and rain; as usual the doctor had asked himself what would be the most disagreeable thing he could do, and answered himself by going on deck at once; it was impossible to hear and difficult to see one another, so that he kept his reflections to himself. Hatteras tried to see through the fog; he calculated that they would be at the mouth of the strait at six o'clock, but when the time came

all issue seemed closed up; he was obliged to wait and anchor the brig to an iceberg; but he stopped under pressure all night.

The weather was frightful. The *Forward* threatened to break her chains at every instant; it was feared that the iceberg to which they were anchored, torn away at its base under the violent west wind, would float away with the brig. The officers were constantly on the lookout and under extreme apprehension; along with the snow there fell a perfect hail of ice torn off from the surface of the icebergs by the strength of the wind; it was like a shower of arrows bristling in the atmosphere. The temperature rose singularly during this terrible night; the thermometer marked fifty-seven degrees, and the doctor, to his great astonishment, thought he saw flashes of lightning in the south, followed by the roar of far-off thunder that seemed to corroborate the testimony of the whaler Scoresby, who observed a similar phenomenon above the sixty-fifth parallel. Captain Parry was also witness to a similar meteorological wonder in 1821.

Towards five o'clock in the morning the weather changed with astonishing rapidity; the temperature went down to freezing point, the wind turned north, and became calmer. The western opening to the strait was in sight, but entirely obstructed. Hatteras looked eagerly at the coast, asking himself if the passage really existed. However, the brig got under way, and glided slowly amongst the ice-streams, whilst the icebergs pressed noisily against her planks, the packs at that epoch were still from six to seven feet thick; they were obliged carefully to avoid their pressure, for if the brig had resisted them she would have run the risk of being lifted up and turned over on her side. At noon, for the first time, they could admire a magnificent solar phenomenon, a halo with two parhelia; the doctor observed it, and took its exact dimensions; the exterior bow was only visible over an extent of thirty degrees on each side of its horizontal diameter; the two images of the sun were remarkably clear; the colours of the luminous bows proceeded from inside to outside, and were red, yellow, green, and very light blue—in short, white light without any assignable exterior limit. The doctor remembered the ingenious theory of Thomas Young about these meteors; this natural philosopher supposed that certain clouds composed of prisms of ice are suspended in the atmosphere; the rays of the sun that fall on the prisms are decomposed at angles of sixty and ninety degrees. Halos cannot, therefore, exist in a calm atmosphere. The doctor thought this theory very probable. Sailors accustomed to the boreal seas generally consider this phenomenon as the precursor of abundant snow. If their observation was just, the position of the *Forward* became very difficult. Hatteras, therefore, resolved to go on fast; during the remainder of the day and following night he did not take a minute's rest, sweeping the horizon with his telescope, taking advantage of the least opening, and losing no occasion of getting out of the strait.

But in the morning he was obliged to stop before the insuperable ice-bank. The doctor joined him on the poop. Hatteras went with him apart where they could talk without fear of being overheard.

“We are in for it,” began Hatteras; “it is impossible to go any further.”

“Is there no means of getting out?” asked the doctor.

“None. All the powder in the *Forward* would not make us gain half a mile!”

“What shall we do, then?” said the doctor.

“I don't know. This cursed year has been unfavourable from the beginning.”

“Well,” answered the doctor, “if we must winter here, we must. One place is as good as another.”

“But,” said Hatteras, lowering his voice, “we must not winter here, especially in the month of June. Wintering is full of physical and moral danger. The crew would be unmanageable during a long inaction in the midst of real suffering. I thought I should be able to stop much nearer the Pole than this!”

“Luck would have it so, or Baffin’s Bay wouldn’t have been closed.”

“It was open enough for that American!” cried Hatteras in a rage.

“Come, Hatteras,” said the doctor, interrupting him on purpose, “to-day is only the 5th of June; don’t despair; a passage may suddenly open up before us; you know that the ice has a tendency to break up into several blocks, even in the calmest weather, as if a force of repulsion acted upon the different parts of it; we may find the sea free at any minute.”

“If that minute comes we shall take advantage of it. It is quite possible that, once out of Bellot Strait, we shall be able to go north by Peel Strait or McClintock Channel, and then——”

“Captain,” said James Wall, who had come up while Hatteras was speaking, “the ice nearly carries off our rudder.”

“Well,” answered Hatteras, “we must risk it. We must be ready day and night. You must do all you can to protect it, Mr. Wall, but I can’t have it removed.”

“But——” added Wall.

“That is my business,” said Hatteras severely, and Wall went back to his post.

“I would give five years of my life,” said Hatteras, in a rage, “to be up north. I know no more dangerous passage. To add to the difficulty, the compass is no guide at this distance from the magnetic pole: the needle is constantly shifting its direction.”

“I acknowledge,” answered the doctor, “that navigation is difficult, but we knew what we had to expect when we began our enterprise, and we ought not to be surprised at it.”

“Ah, doctor, my crew is no longer what it was; the officers are spoiling the men. I could make them do what I want by offering them a pecuniary reward, but I am not seconded by my officers, but they shall pay dearly for it!”

“You are exaggerating, Hatteras.”

“No, I am not. Do you think the crew is sorry for the obstacles that I meet with? On the contrary, they hope they will make me abandon my projects. They do not complain now, and they won’t as long as the *Forward* is making for the south. The fools! They think they are getting nearer England! But once let me go north and you’ll see how they’ll change! I swear, though, that no living being will make me deviate from my line of conduct. Only let me find a passage, that’s all!”

One of the captain’s wishes was fulfilled soon enough. There was a sudden change during the evening; under some influence of the wind, the current, or the temperature, the ice-fields were separated; the *Forward* went along boldly, breaking up the ice with her steel prow; she sailed along all night, and the next morning about six cleared Bellot Strait. But that was all; the northern passage was completely obstructed—to the great disgust of Hatteras. However, he had sufficient strength of character to hide his disappointment, and as if the only passage open was the one he preferred, he let the *Forward* sail down Franklin Strait again; not being able to get up Peel Strait, he resolved to go round Prince of Wales’s Land to get into McClintock Channel. But he felt he could not deceive Shandon and Wall as to the extent of his disappointment. The day of the 6th of June was uneventful; the sky was full of snow, and the prognostics of the halo were fulfilled.

During thirty-six hours the *Forward* followed the windings of Boothia Land, unable to approach Prince of Wales's Land; the captain counted upon getting supplies at Beechey Island; he arrived on the Thursday at the extremity of Franklin Strait, where he again found the road to the north blocked up. It was enough to make him despair; he could not even retrace his steps; the icebergs pushed him onwards, and he saw the passages close up behind him as if there never had existed open sea where he had passed an hour before.

The *Forward* was, therefore, not only prevented from going northwards, but could not stop still an instant for fear of being caught, and she fled before the ice as a ship flies before a storm.

On Friday, the 8th of June, they arrived near the shore of Boothia, at the entrance to James Ross Strait, which they were obliged to avoid, as its only issue is on the west, near the American coasts.

Observations taken at noon from this point gave $70^{\circ} 5' 17''$ latitude, and $96^{\circ} 46' 45''$ longitude; when the doctor heard that he consulted his map, and saw they were at the magnetic pole, at the very place where James Ross, the nephew of Sir John, had fixed it. The land was low near the coast, and at about a mile's distance became slightly elevated, sixty feet only. The *Forward's* boiler wanted cleaning, and the captain caused the brig to be anchored to an ice-field, and allowed the doctor and the boatswain to land. He himself cared for nothing but his pet project, and stayed in his cabin, consulting his map of the Pole.

The doctor and his companion easily succeeded in reaching land; the doctor took a compass to make experiments with. He wished to try if James Ross's conclusions hold good. He easily discovered the limestone heap raised by Ross; he ran to it; an opening allowed him to see, in the interior, the tin case in which James Ross had placed the official report of his discoveries. No living being seemed to have visited this desolate coast for the last thirty years. In this spot a loadstone needle, suspended as delicately as possible, immediately moved into an almost vertical position under the magnetic influence; if the centre of attraction was not immediately under the needle, it could only be at a trifling distance. The doctor made the experiment carefully, and found that the imperfect instruments of James Ross had given his vertical needle an inclination of $89^{\circ} 59'$, making the real magnetic point at a minute's distance from the spot, but that his own at a little distance gave him an inclination of 90° .

"Here is the exact spot of the world's magnetic pole," said the doctor, rapping the earth.

"Then," said the boatswain, "there's no loadstone mountain, after all."

"Of course not; that mountain was only a credulous hypothesis. As you see, there isn't the least mountain capable of attracting ships, of attracting their iron anchor after anchor and nail after nail, and you see it respects your shoes as much as any other land on the globe."

"Then how do you explain——"

"Nothing is explained, Johnson; we don't know enough for that yet. But it is certain, exact, mathematical, that the magnetic pole is in this very spot!"

"Ah, Mr. Clawbonny! how happy the captain would be to say as much of the boreal pole!"

"He will some day, Johnson, you will see."

"I hope he will," answered the boatswain.

He and the doctor elevated a cairn on the exact spot where the experiment had been made, and returned on board at five o'clock in the evening.

XVII. The Fate Of Sir John Franklin

The *Forward* succeeded in cutting straight across James Ross Strait, but not without difficulty; the crew were obliged to work the saws and use petards, and they were worn out with fatigue. Happily the temperature was bearable, and thirty degrees higher than that experienced by James Ross at the same epoch. The thermometer marked thirty-four degrees.

On Saturday they doubled Cape Felix at the northern extremity of King William's Land, one of the middle-sized isles of the northern seas. The crew there experienced a strong and painful sensation, and many a sad look was turned towards the island as they sailed by the coast. This island had been the theatre of the most terrible tragedy of modern times. Some miles to the west the *Erebus* and the *Terror* had been lost for ever. The sailors knew about the attempts made to find Admiral Franklin and the results, but they were ignorant of the affecting details of the catastrophe. While the doctor was following the progress of the ship on his map, several of them, Bell, Bolton, and Simpson, approached and entered into conversation with him. Their comrades, animated by curiosity, soon followed them; while the brig flew along with extreme rapidity, and the coast with its bays, capes, and promontories passed before their eyes like a gigantic panorama.

Hatteras was marching up and down the poop with quick steps. The doctor, on the deck, looked round, and saw himself surrounded by almost the whole crew. He saw how powerful a recital would be in such a situation, and he continued the conversation begun with Johnson as follows:—

“You know how Franklin began, my friends; he was a cabin-boy like Cook and Nelson; after having employed his youth in great maritime expeditions, he resolved in 1845 to launch out in search of the North-West passage; he commanded the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, two vessels, already famous, that had just made an Antarctic campaign under James Ross, in 1840. The *Erebus*, equipped by Franklin, carried a crew of seventy men, officers and sailors, with Fitz-James as captain; Gore and Le Vesconte, lieutenants; Des Voeux, Sargent, and Couch, boatswains; and Stanley as surgeon. The *Terror* had sixty-eight men, Captain Crozier; Lieutenants Little, Hodgson, and Irving; Horesby and Thomas were the boatswains, and Peddie the surgeon. In the names on the map of the capes, straits, points, and channels, you may read those of these unfortunate men, not one of whom was destined ever again to see his native land. There were a hundred and thirty-eight men in all! We know that Franklin's last letters were addressed from Disko Island, and were dated July 12th, 1845. ‘I hope,’ he said, ‘to get under way to-night for Lancaster Strait.’ What happened after his departure from Disko Bay? The captains of two whalers, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Enterprise*, perceived the two ships in Melville Bay for the last time, and after that day nothing was heard of them. However, we can follow Franklin in his westerly course: he passed through Lancaster and Barrow Straits, and arrived at Beechey Island, where he passed the winter of 1845 and ‘46.”

“But how do you know all this?” asked Bell, the carpenter.

“By three tombs which Austin discovered on that island in 1850. Three of Franklin's sailors were buried there, and by a document which was found by Lieutenant Hobson, of the *Fox*, which bears the date of April 25th, 1848, we know that after their wintering the *Erebus* and the *Terror* went up Wellington Strait as far as the seventy-seventh parallel; but instead of continuing their route northwards, which was, probably, not practicable, they returned south.”

“And that was their ruin!” said a grave voice. “Safety lay to the north.”

Every one turned round. Hatteras, leaning on the rail of the poop, had just uttered that terrible observation.

“There is not a doubt,” continued the doctor, “that Franklin’s intention was to get back to the American coast; but tempests stopped him, and on the 12th September, 1846, the two ships were seized by the ice, at a few miles from here, to the north-west of Cape Felix; they were dragged along N.N.W. to Victoria Point over there,” said the doctor, pointing to a part of the sea. “Now,” he continued, “the ships were not abandoned till the 22nd of April, 1848. What happened during these nineteen months? What did the poor unfortunate men do? They, doubtless, explored the surrounding land, attempting any chance of safety, for the admiral was an energetic man, and if he did not succeed——”

“Very likely his crew betrayed him,” added Hatteras.

The sailors dared not raise their eyes; these words pricked their conscience.

“To end my tale, the fatal document informs us also that John Franklin succumbed to fatigue on the 11th of June, 1847. Honour to his memory!” said the doctor, taking off his hat. His audience imitated him in silence.

“What became of the poor fellows for the next ten months after they had lost their chief? They remained on board their vessels, and only resolved to abandon them in April, 1848; a hundred and five men out of a hundred and thirty-eight were still living; thirty-three were dead! Then Captain Crozier and Captain Fitz-James raised a cairn on Victory Point, and there deposited their last document. See, my friends, we are passing the point now! You can still see the remains of the cairn placed on the extreme point, reached by John Ross in 1831. There is Jane Franklin Cape. There is Franklin Point. There is Le Vesconte Point. There is Erebus Bay, where the boat made out of the *débris* of one of the vessels was found on a sledge. Silver spoons, provisions in abundance, chocolate, tea, and religious books were found there too. The hundred and five survivors, under Captain Crozier, started for Great Fish River. Where did they get to? Did they succeed in reaching Hudson’s Bay? Did any survive? What became of them after this last departure?”

“I will tell you what became of them,” said John Hatteras in a firm voice. “Yes, they did try to reach Hudson’s Bay, and they split up into several parties! Yes, they did make for the south! A letter from Dr. Rae in 1854 contained the information that in 1850 the Esquimaux had met on King William’s Land a detachment of forty men travelling on the ice, and dragging a boat, thin, emaciated, worn out by fatigue and suffering! Later on they discovered thirty corpses on the continent and five on a neighbouring island, some half-buried, some left without burial, some under a boat turned upside down, others under the remains of a tent; here an officer with his telescope on his shoulder and a loaded gun at his side, further on a boiler with the remnants of a horrible meal! When the Admiralty received these tidings it begged the Hudson’s Bay Company to send its most experienced agents to the scene. They descended Back River to its mouth. They visited the islands of Montreal, Maconochie, and Ogle Point. But they discovered nothing. All the poor wretches had died from misery, suffering, and hunger, whilst trying to prolong their existence by the dreadful resource of cannibalism. That is what became of them on the southern route. Well! Do you still wish to march in their footsteps?”

His trembling voice, his passionate gestures and beaming face, produced an indescribable effect. The crew, excited by its emotion before this fatal land, cried out with one voice: “To the north! To the north!”

“Yes, to the north! Safety and glory lie to the north. Heaven is for us! The wind is changing; the pass is free!”

So saying, Hatteras gave orders to turn the vessel; the sailors went to work with alacrity; the ice streams got clear little by little; the *Forward*, with all steam on, made for McClintock Channel. Hatteras was right when he counted upon a more open sea; he followed up the supposed route taken by Franklin, sailing along the western coast of Prince of Wales's Land, then pretty well known, whilst the opposite shore is still unknown. It was evident that the breaking up of the ice had taken place in the eastern locks, for this strait appeared entirely free; the *Forward* made up for lost time; she fled along so quickly that she passed Osborne Bay on the 14th of June, and the extreme points attained by the expeditions of 1851. Icebergs were still numerous, but the sea did not threaten to quit the keel of the *Forward*.

XVIII. The Northern Route

The crew seemed to have returned to its habits of discipline and obedience. There was little fatiguing work to do, and they had a good deal of leisure. The temperature kept above freezing point, and it seemed as if the thaw had removed the great obstacles to navigation.

Dick, now sociable and familiar, had made great friends with Dr. Clawbonny. But as in most friendships one friend has to give way to the other, it must be acknowledged it was not the dog. Dick did what he liked with the doctor, who obeyed him as if he were the dog. He was amiable with most of the sailors and officers on board, only by instinct, doubtless, he shunned Shandon's society; he also kept up a grudge against Pen and Foker; he vented his hatred of them by growling at their approach. But they dare not now attack the captain's dog—his "familiar," as Clifton called him. On the whole the crew had plucked up courage again and worked well.

"It seems to me," said James Wall one day to Richard Shandon, "that our men took the captain's speech seriously; they no longer seem to be doubtful of success."

"The more fools they!" answered Shandon. "If they reflected, if they examined the situation, they would see that we are going out of one imprudence into another."

"But," continued Wall, "the sea is open now, and we are getting back into well-known tracks; aren't you exaggerating a bit, Shandon?"

"No, I am not exaggerating; the dislike I feel to Hatteras is not blinding me. Have you seen the coal-holes lately?"

"No," answered Wall.

"Well, then, go and examine them: you will see how much there's left. He ought to have navigated under sail, and have kept the engine for currents and contrary winds; he ought only to have used his coal where he was obliged; who can tell where we shall be kept, and for how many years? But Hatteras only thinks about getting north. Whether the wind is contrary or not, he goes along at full steam, and if things go on as they are doing now, we shall soon be in a pretty pickle."

"If what you say is true, it is very serious."

"Yes, it is, because of the wintering. What shall we do without coal in a country where even the thermometer freezes?"

"But, if I am not mistaken, the captain counts upon renewing his stock of coal at Beechey Island. It appears there is a large provision there."

"And suppose we can't reach Beechey Island, what will become of us then?"

"You are right, Shandon; Hatteras seems to me very imprudent; but why don't you expostulate with him on the subject?"

"No," said Shandon, with ill-concealed bitterness, "I won't say a word. It is nothing to do with me now. I shall wait to see what turns up; I shall obey orders, and not give my opinion where it isn't wanted."

"Allow me to tell you that you are in the wrong, Shandon; you have as much interest in setting yourself against the captain's imprudence as we have."

"He wouldn't listen to me if I were to speak; do you think he would?"

Wall dared not answer in the affirmative, and he added—

“But perhaps he would listen to the crew.”

“The crew!” answered Shandon, shrugging his shoulders; “you don’t know the crew. The men know they are nearing the 72nd parallel, and that they will earn a thousand pounds for every degree above that.”

“The captain knew what he was doing when he offered them that.”

“Of course he did, and for the present he can do what he likes with them.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that while they have nothing to do, and there is an open sea, they will go on right enough; but wait till difficulty and danger come, and you will see how much they’ll think about the money!”

“Then you don’t think Hatteras will succeed?”

“No, he will not; to succeed in such an enterprise there must be a good understanding between him and his officers, and that does not exist. Hatteras is a madman; all his past career proves it. Well, we shall see; perhaps circumstances will force them to give the command to a less adventurous captain.”

“Still,” said Wall, shaking his head, “he will always have on his side——”

“Dr. Clawbonny, a man who only cares for science, and Johnson, a sailor who only cares to obey, and perhaps two more men like Bell, the carpenter; four at the most, and we are eighteen on board! No, Wall, Hatteras has not got the confidence of his men, and he knows it, so he bribes them; he profited cleverly by the Franklin affair, but that won’t last, I tell you, and if he doesn’t reach Beechey Island he’s a lost man!”

“Suppose the crew should take it into its head——”

“Don’t tell the crew what I think,” answered Shandon quickly; “the men will soon see for themselves. Besides, just now we must go north. Who knows if Hatteras won’t find that way will bring us back sooner? At the end of McClintock Channel lies Melville Bay, and from thence go the straits that lead to Baffin’s Bay. Hatteras must take care! The way to the east is easier than the road to the north!”

Hatteras was not mistaken in his opinion that Shandon would betray him if he could. Besides, Shandon was right in attributing the contentment of the men to the hope of gain. Clifton had counted exactly how much each man would have. Without reckoning the captain and the doctor, who would not expect a share in the bounty-money, there remained sixteen men to divide it amongst. If ever they succeeded in reaching the Pole, each man would have £1,125—that is to say, a fortune. It would cost the captain £18,000, but he could afford it. The thoughts of the money inflamed the minds of the crew, and they were now as anxious to go north as before they had been eager to turn south. The *Forward* during the day of June 16th passed Cape Aworth. Mount Rawlinson raised its white peaks towards the sky; the snow and fog made it appear colossal, as they exaggerated its distance; the temperature still kept some degrees above freezing point; improvised cascades and cataracts showed themselves on the sides of the mountains, and avalanches roared down with the noise of artillery discharges. The glaciers, spread out in long white sheets, projected an immense reverberation into space. Boreal nature, in its struggle with the frost, presented a splendid spectacle. The brig went very near the coast; on some sheltered rocks rare heaths were to be seen, the pink flowers

lifting their heads timidly out of the snows, and some meagre lichens of a reddish colour and the shoots of a dwarf willow.

At last, on the 19th of June, at the famous seventy-third parallel, they doubled Cape Minto, which forms one of the extremities of Ommaney Bay; the brig entered Melville Bay, surnamed by Bolton Money Bay; the merry sailors joked about the name, and made Dr. Clawbonny laugh heartily. Notwithstanding a strong breeze from the northeast, the *Forward* made considerable progress, and on the 23rd of June she passed the 74th degree of latitude. She was in the midst of Melville Bay, one of the most considerable seas in these regions. This sea was crossed for the first time by Captain Parry in his great expedition of 1819, and it was then that his crew earned the prize of £5,000 promised by Act of Parliament. Clifton remarked that there were two degrees from the 72nd to the 74th; that already placed £125 to his credit. But they told him that a fortune was not worth much there, and that it was of no use being rich if he could not drink his riches, and he had better wait till he could roll under a Liverpool table before he rejoiced and rubbed his hands.

XIX. A Whale In Sight

Melville Bay, though easily navigable, was not free from ice; ice-fields lay as far as the utmost limits of the horizon; a few icebergs appeared here and there, but they were immovable, as if anchored in the midst of the frozen fields. The *Forward*, with all steam on, followed the wide passes where it was easy to work her. The wind changed frequently from one point of the compass to another. The variability of the wind in the Arctic Seas is a remarkable fact; sometimes a dead calm is followed in a few minutes by a violent tempest, as the *Forward* found to her cost on the 23rd of June in the midst of the immense bay. The more constant winds blow from off the ice-bank on to the open sea, and are intensely cold. On that day the thermometer fell several degrees; the wind veered round to the south, and violent gusts, sweeping over the ice-fields, brought a thick snow along with them. Hatteras immediately caused the sails that helped the screw to be furled, but not quickly enough to prevent his little foresail being carried away in the twinkling of an eye. Hatteras worked his ship with the greatest composure, and did not leave the deck during the tempest; he was obliged to fly before the weather and to turn westward. The wind raised up enormous waves, in the midst of which blocks of ice balanced themselves; these blocks were of all sizes and shapes, and had been struck off the surrounding ice-fields; the brig was tossed about like a child's plaything, and morsels of the packs were thrown over her hull; at one instant she was lying perpendicularly along the side of a liquid mountain; her steel prow concentrated the light, and shone like a melting metal bar; at another she was down an abyss, plunging her head into whirlwinds of snow, whilst her screws, out of the water, turned in space with a sinister noise, striking the air with their paddles. Rain mixed with the snow and fell in torrents.

The doctor could not miss such an occasion of getting wet to the skin; he remained on deck, a prey to that emotional admiration which a scientific man must necessarily feel during such a spectacle. His nearest neighbour could not have heard him speak, so he said nothing and watched; but whilst watching he was witness to an odd phenomenon, peculiar to hyperborean regions. The tempest was confined to a restricted area, and only extended for about three or four miles; the wind that passes over ice-fields loses much of its strength and cannot carry its violence far out; the doctor perceived from time to time, through an opening in the tempest, a calm sky and a quiet sea beyond some ice-fields. The *Forward* would therefore only have to take advantage of some channels left by the ice to find a peaceful navigation again, but she ran the risk of being thrown on to one of the moving banks which followed the movement of the swell. However, in a few hours Hatteras succeeded in getting his ship into a calm sea, whilst the violence of the hurricane spent itself at a few cables' length from the *Forward*. Melville Bay no longer presented the same aspect; under the influence of the winds and the waves a great number of icebergs, detached from the coast, floated northward, running against one another in every direction. There were several hundreds of them, but the bay is very wide, and the brig easily avoided them. The spectacle of these floating masses was magnificent; they seemed to be having a grand race for it on the open sea. The doctor was getting quite excited with watching them, when the harpooner, Simpson, came up and made him look at the changing tints in the sea; they varied from a deep blue to olive green; long stripes stretched north and south in such decided lines that the eye could follow each shade out of sight. Sometimes a transparent sheet of water would follow a perfectly opaque sheet.

“Well, Mr. Clawbonny, what do you think of that?” said Simpson.

“I am of the same opinion as the whaler Scoresby on the nature of the different coloured waters; blue water has no animalculæ, and green water is full of them. Scoresby has made several experiments on this subject, and I think he is right.”

“Well, sir, I know something else about the colours in the sea, and if I were a whaler I should be precious glad to see them.”

“But I don’t see any whales,” answered the doctor.

“You won’t be long before you do, though, I can tell you. A whaler is lucky when he meets with those green stripes under this latitude.”

“Why?” asked the doctor, who always liked to get information from anybody who understood what they were talking about.

“Because whales are always found in great quantities in green water.”

“What’s the reason of that?”

“Because they find plenty of food in them.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“I’ve seen it a hundred times, at least, in Baffin Sea; why shouldn’t it be the same in Melville Bay? Besides, look there, Mr. Clawbonny,” added Simpson, leaning over the barricading.

“Why any one would think it was the wake of a ship!”

“It is an oily substance that the whale leaves behind. The animal can’t be far off!”

The atmosphere was impregnated with a strong oily odour, and the doctor attentively watched the surface of the water. The prediction of the harpooner was soon accomplished. Foker called out from the masthead—

“A whale alee!”

All looks turned to the direction indicated. A small spout was perceived coming up out of the sea about a mile from the brig.

“There she spouts!” cried Simpson, who knew what that meant.

“She has disappeared!” answered the doctor.

“Oh, we could find her again easily enough if necessary!” said Simpson, with an accent of regret. To his great astonishment, and although no one dared ask for it, Hatteras gave orders to man the whaler. Johnson went aft to the stern, while Simpson, harpoon in hand, stood in the bow. They could not prevent the doctor joining the expedition. The sea was pretty calm. The whaler soon got off, and in ten minutes was a mile from the brig. The whale had taken in another provision of air, and had plunged again; but she soon returned to the surface and spouted out that mixture of gas and mucus that escapes from her air-holes.

“There! There!” said Simpson, pointing to a spot about eight hundred yards from the boat. It was soon alongside the animal, and as they had seen her from the brig too, she came nearer, keeping little steam on. The enormous cetacean disappeared and reappeared as the waves rose and fell, showing its black back like a rock in open sea. Whales do not swim quickly unless they are pursued, and this one only rocked itself in the waves. The boat silently approached along the green water; its opacity prevented the animal seeing the enemy. It is always an agitating spectacle when a fragile boat attacks one of these monsters; this one was about 130 feet long, and it is not rare, between the 72nd and the 80th degree, to meet with whales more than 180 feet long. Ancient writers have described animals more than 700 feet long, but they

drew upon their imagination for their facts. The boat soon neared the whale; on a sign from Simpson the men rested on their oars, and brandishing his harpoon, the experienced sailor threw it with all his strength; it went deep into the thick covering of fat. The wounded whale struck the sea with its tail and plunged. The four oars were immediately raised perpendicularly; the cord fastened to the harpoon, and attached to the bow, rolled rapidly out and dragged the boat along, steered cleverly by Johnson.

The whale got away from the brig and made for the moving icebergs; she kept on for more than half-an-hour; they were obliged to wet the cord fastened to the harpoon to prevent it catching fire by rubbing against the boat. When the whale seemed to be going along a little more slowly, the cord was pulled in little by little and rolled up; the whale soon reappeared on the surface of the sea, which she beat with her formidable tail: veritable waterspouts fell in a violent rain on to the boat. It was getting nearer. Simpson had seized a long lance, and was preparing to give close battle to the animal, when all at once the whale glided into a pass between two mountainous icebergs. The pursuit then became really dangerous.

“The devil!” said Johnson.

“Go ahead,” cried Simpson; “we’ve got her!”

“But we can’t follow her into the icebergs!” said Johnson, steering steadily.

“Yes we can!” cried Simpson.

“No, no!” cried some of the sailors.

“Yes, yes!” said others.

During the discussion the whale had got between two floating mountains which the swell was bringing close together. The boat was being dragged into this dangerous part when Johnson rushed to the fore, an axe in his hand, and cut the cord. He was just in time; the two mountains came together with a tremendous crash, crushing the unfortunate animal.

“The whale’s lost!” cried Simpson.

“But we are saved!” answered Johnson.

“Well,” said the doctor, who had not moved, “that was worth seeing!”

The crushing force of these ice-mountains is enormous. The whale was victim to an accident that often happens in these seas. Scoresby relates that in the course of a single summer thirty whales perished in the same way in Baffin’s Sea; he saw a three-master flattened in a minute between two immense walls of ice. Other vessels were split through, as if with a lance, by pointed icicles a hundred feet long, meeting through the planks. A few minutes afterwards the boat hailed the brig, and was soon in its accustomed place on deck.

“It is a lesson for those who are imprudent enough to adventure into the channels amongst the ice!” said Shandon in a loud voice.

XX. Beechey Island

On the 25th of June the *Forward* arrived in sight of Cape Dundas at the north-western extremity of Prince of Wales's Land. There the difficulty of navigating amongst the ice grew greater. The sea is narrower there, and the line made by Crozier, Young, Day, Lowther, and Garret Islands, like a chain of forts before a roadstead, forced the ice-streams to accumulate in this strait. The brig took from the 25th to the 30th of June to make as much way as she would have done in one day under any other circumstances; she stopped, retraced her steps, waiting for a favourable occasion so as not to miss Beechey Island, using a great deal of coal, as the fires were only moderated when she had to halt, but were never put out, so that she might be under pressure day and night. Hatteras knew the extent of his coal provision as well as Shandon, but as he was certain of getting his provision renewed at Beechey Island he would not lose a minute for the sake of economy; he had been much delayed by his forced march southward, and although he had taken the precaution of leaving England before the month of April, he did not find himself more advanced than preceding expeditions had been at the same epoch. On the 30th they sighted Cape Walker at the north-eastern extremity of Prince of Wales's Land; it was the extreme point that Kennedy and Bellot perceived on the 3rd of May, 1852, after an excursion across the whole of North Somerset. Before that, in 1851, Captain Ommaney, of the Austin expedition, had the good luck to revictual his detachments there. This cape is very high, and remarkable for its reddish-brown colour; from there, when the weather is clear, the view stretches as far as the entrance to Wellington Channel. Towards evening they saw Cape Bellot, separated from Cape Walker by McLeon Bay. Cape Bellot was so named in the presence of the young French officer, for whom the English expedition gave three cheers. At this spot the coast is made of yellowish limestone, presenting a very rugged outline; it is defended by enormous icebergs which the north winds pile up there in a most imposing way. It was soon lost to sight by the *Forward* as she opened a passage amongst the ice to get to Beechey Island through Barrow Strait. Hatteras resolved to go straight on, and, so as not to be drifted further than the island, scarcely quitted his post during the following days; he often went to the masthead to look out for the most advantageous channels. All that pluck, skill, and genius could do he did while they were crossing the strait. Fortune did not favour him, for the sea is generally more open at this epoch. But at last, by dint of sparing neither his steam, his crew, nor himself, he attained his end.

On the 3rd of July, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the ice-master signalled land to the north. After taking an observation Hatteras recognised Beechey Island, that general meeting-place of Arctic navigators. Almost all ships that adventure in these seas stop there. Franklin wintered there for the first time before getting into Wellington Strait, and Creswell, with Lieutenant McClure, after having cleared 170 miles on the ice, rejoined the *Phoenix* and returned to England. The last ship which anchored at Beechey Island before the *Forward* was the *Fox*; McClintock revictualled there the 11th of August, 1858, and repaired the habitations and magazines; only two years had elapsed since then, and Hatteras knew all these details. The boatswain's heart beat with emotion at the sight of this island; when he had visited it he was quartermaster on board the *Phoenix*; Hatteras questioned him about the coast line, the facilities for anchoring, how far they could go inland, &c.; the weather was magnificent, and the temperature kept at 57°.

"Well, Johnson," said the captain, "do you know where you are?"

“Yes, sir, that is Beechey Island; only you must let us get further north—the coast is more easy of access.”

“But where are the habitations and the magazines?” said Hatteras.

“Oh, you can’t see them till you land; they are sheltered behind those little hills you see yonder.”

“And is that where you transported a considerable quantity of provisions?”

“Yes, sir; the Admiralty sent us here in 1853, under the command of Captain Inglefield, with the steamer *Phoenix* and a transport ship, the *Breadalbane*, loaded with provisions; we brought enough with us to revictual a whole expedition.”

“But the commander of the *Fox* took a lot of them in 1858,” said Hatteras.

“That doesn’t matter, sir; there’ll be plenty left for you; the cold preserves them wonderfully, and we shall find them as fresh and in as good a state of preservation as the first day.”

“What I want is coal,” said Hatteras; “I have enough provisions for several years.”

“We left more than a thousand tons there, so you can make your mind easy.”

“Are we getting near?” said Hatteras, who, telescope in hand, was watching the coast.

“You see that point?” continued Johnson. “When we have doubled it we shall be very near where we drop anchor. It was from that place that we started for England with Lieutenant Creswell and the twelve invalids from the *Investigator*. We were fortunate enough to bring back McClure’s lieutenant, but the officer Bellot, who accompanied us on board the *Phoenix*, never saw his country again! It is a painful thing to think about. But, captain, I think we ought to drop anchor here.”

“Very well,” answered Hatteras, and he gave his orders in consequence. The *Forward* was in a little bay naturally sheltered on the north, east, and south, and at about a cable’s length from the coast.

“Mr. Wall,” said Hatteras, “have the long boat got ready to transport the coal on board. I shall land in the pirogue with the doctor and the boatswain. Will you accompany us, Mr. Shandon?”

“As you please,” answered Shandon.

A few minutes later the doctor, armed as a sportsman and a *savant*, took his place in the pirogue along with his companions; in ten minutes they landed on a low and rocky coast.

“Lead the way, Johnson,” said Hatteras. “You know it, I suppose?”

“Perfectly, sir; only there’s a monument here that I did not expect to find!”

“That!” cried the doctor; “I know what it is; let us go up to it; the stone itself will tell us.”

The four men advanced, and the doctor said, after taking off his hat—

“This, my friends, is a monument in memory of Franklin and his companions.”

Lady Franklin had, in 1855, confided a black marble tablet to Doctor Kane, and in 1858 she gave a second to McClintock to be raised on Beechey Island. McClintock accomplished this duty religiously, and placed the stone near a funeral monument erected to the memory of Bellot by Sir John Barrow.

The tablet bore the following inscription:

“TO THE MEMORY OF
FRANKLIN, CROZIER, FITZ-JAMES,
AND ALL THEIR VALIANT BRETHERN
OFFICERS AND FAITHFUL COMPANIONS

who suffered for the cause of science and for their country’s glory.

“This stone is erected near the place where they passed their first Arctic winter, and from whence they departed to conquer obstacles or to die.

“It perpetuates the regret of their countrymen and friends who admire them, and the anguish, conquered by Faith, of her who lost in the chief of the expedition the most devoted and most affectionate of husbands.

“It is thus that He led them to the supreme haven where all men take their rest.

“1855.”

This stone, on a forlorn coast of these far-off regions, appealed mournfully to the heart; the doctor, in presence of these touching regrets, felt his eyes fill with tears. At the very same place which Franklin and his companions passed full of energy and hope, there only remained a block of marble in remembrance! And notwithstanding this sombre warning of destiny, the *Forward* was going to follow in the track of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*. Hatteras was the first to rouse himself from the perilous contemplation, and quickly climbed a rather steep hill, almost entirely bare of snow.

“Captain,” said Johnson, following him, “we shall see the magazines from here.”

Shandon and the doctor joined them on the summit. But from there the eye contemplated the vast plains, on which there remained no vestige of a habitation.

“That is singular!” cried the boatswain.

“Well, and where are the magazines?” said Hatteras quickly.

“I don’t know—I don’t see——” stammered Johnson.

“You have mistaken the way,” said the doctor.

“It seemed to me that this was the very place,” continued Johnson.

“Well,” said Hatteras, impatiently “where are we to go now?”

“We had better go down, for I may be mistaken. I may have forgotten the exact locality in seven years!”

“Especially when the country is so uniformly monotonous!” added the doctor.

“And yet——” murmured Johnson.

Shandon had not spoken a word. After walking for a few minutes, Johnson stopped.

“But no,” he cried, “I am not mistaken!”

“Well?” said Hatteras, looking round him.

“Do you see that swell of the ground?” asked the boatswain, pointing to a sort of mound with three distinct swells on it.

“What do you conclude from that?” asked the doctor.

“Those are the three graves of Franklin’s sailors. I am sure now that I am not mistaken; the habitations ought to be about a hundred feet from here, and if they are not, they——”

He dared not finish his sentence; Hatteras had rushed forward, a prey to violent despair. There, where the wished-for stores on which he had counted ought to have been, there ruin, pillage and destruction had been before him. Who had done it? Animals would only have attacked the provisions, and there did not remain a single rag from the tent, a piece of wood or iron, and, more terrible still, not a fragment of coal! It was evident that the Esquimaux had learnt the value of these objects from their frequent relations with Europeans; since the departure of the *Fox* they had fetched everything away, and had not left a trace even of their passage. A slight coating of snow covered the ground. Hatteras was confounded. The doctor looked and shook his head. Shandon still said nothing, but an attentive observer would have noticed his lips curl with a cruel smile. At this moment the men sent by Lieutenant Wall came up; they soon saw the state of affairs. Shandon advanced towards the captain, and said:

“Mr. Hatteras, we need not despair; happily we are near the entrance to Barrow Strait, which will take us back to Baffin’s Sea!”

“Mr. Shandon,” answered Hatteras, “happily we are near the entrance to Wellington Strait, and that will take us north!”

“But how shall we get along, captain?”

“With the sails, sir. We have two months’ firing left, and that is enough for our wintering.”

“But allow me to tell you——” added Shandon.

“I will allow you to follow me on board my ship, sir,” answered Hatteras, and turning his back on his second, he returned to the brig and shut himself up in his cabin. For the next two days the wind was contrary, and the captain did not show up on deck. The doctor profited by the forced sojourn to go over Beechey Island; he gathered some plants, which the temperature, relatively high, allowed to grow here and there on the rocks that the snow had left, some heaths, a few lichens, a sort of yellow ranunculus, a sort of plant something like sorrel, with wider leaves and more veins, and some pretty vigorous saxifrages. He found the fauna of this country much richer than the flora; he perceived long flocks of geese and cranes going northward, partridges, eider ducks of a bluish black, sandpipers, a sort of wading bird of the scolopax class, northern divers, plungers with very long bodies, numerous ptarmites, a sort of bird very good to eat, dovebies with black bodies, wings spotted with white, feet and beak red as coral; noisy bands of kittiwakes and fat loons with white breasts, represented the ornithology of the island. The doctor was fortunate enough to kill a few grey hares, which had not yet put on their white winter fur, and a blue fox which Dick ran down skilfully. Some bears, evidently accustomed to dread the presence of men, would not allow themselves to be got at, and the seals were extremely timid, doubtless for the same reason as their enemies the bears. The class of articulated animals was represented by a single mosquito, which the doctor caught to his great delight, though not till it had stung him. As a conchologist he was less favoured, and only found a sort of mussel and some bivalve shells.

XXI. The Death Of Bellot

The temperature during the days of the 3rd and 4th of July kept up to 57°; this was the highest thermometric point observed during the campaign. But on Thursday, the 5th, the wind turned to the south-east, and was accompanied by violent snow-storms. The thermometer fell during the preceding night to 23°. Hatteras took no notice of the murmurs of the crew, and gave orders to get under way. For the last thirteen days, from Cape Dundas, the *Forward* had not been able to gain one more degree north, so the party represented by Clifton was no longer satisfied, but wished like Hatteras to get into Wellington Channel, and worked away with a will. The brig had some difficulty in getting under sail; but Hatteras having set his mizensail, his topsails, and his gallantsails during the night, advanced boldly in the midst of fields of ice which the current was drifting south. The crew were tired out with this winding navigation, which kept them constantly at work at the sails. Wellington Channel is not very wide; it is bounded by North Devon on the east and Cornwallis Island on the west; this island was long believed to be a peninsula. It was Sir John Franklin who first sailed round it in 1846, starting west, and coming back to the same point to the north of the channel. The exploration of Wellington Channel was made in 1851 by Captain Penny in the whalers *Lady Franklin* and *Sophia*; one of his lieutenants, Stewart, reached Cape Beecher in latitude 76° 20', and discovered the open sea—that open sea which was Hatteras's dream!

"What Stewart found I shall find," said he to the doctor; "then I shall be able to set sail to the Pole."

"But aren't you afraid that your crew——"

"My crew!" said Hatteras severely. Then in a low tone—"Poor fellows!" murmured he, to the great astonishment of the doctor. It was the first expression of feeling he had heard the captain deliver.

"No," he repeated with energy, "they must follow me! They shall follow me!"

However, although the *Forward* had nothing to fear from the collision of the ice-streams, which were still pretty far apart, they made very little progress northward, for contrary winds often forced them to stop. They passed Capes Spencer and Innis slowly, and on Tuesday, the 10th, cleared 75° to the great delight of Clifton. The *Forward* was then at the very place where the American ships, the *Rescue* and the *Advance*, encountered such terrible dangers. Doctor Kane formed part of this expedition; towards the end of September, 1850, these ships got caught in an ice-bank, and were forcibly driven into Lancaster Strait. It was Shandon who related this catastrophe to James Wall before some of the brig's crew.

"The *Advance* and the *Rescue*," he said to them, "were so knocked about by the ice, that they were obliged to leave off fires on board; but that did not prevent the temperature sinking 18° below zero. During the whole winter the unfortunate crews were kept prisoners in the ice-bank, ready to abandon their ships at any moment; for three weeks they did not even change their clothes. They floated along in that dreadful situation for more than a thousand miles, when at last they were thrown into the middle of Baffin's Sea."

The effect of this speech upon a crew already badly disposed can be well imagined. During this conversation Johnson was talking to the doctor about an event that had taken place in those very quarters; he asked the doctor to tell him when the brig was in latitude 75° 30', and when they passed it he cried:

"Yes, it was just there!" in saying which tears filled his eyes.

“You mean that Lieutenant Bellot died there?” said the doctor.

“Yes, Mr. Clawbonny. He was as good and brave a fellow as ever lived! It was upon this very North Devon coast! It was to be, I suppose, but if Captain Pullen had returned on board sooner it would not have happened.”

“What do you mean, Johnson?”

“Listen to me, Mr. Clawbonny, and you will see on what a slight thread existence often hangs. You know that Lieutenant Bellot went his first campaign in search of Franklin in 1850?”

“Yes, on the *Prince Albert*.”

“Well, when he got back to France he obtained permission to embark on board the *Phoenix* under Captain Inglefield; I was a sailor on board. We came with the *Breadalbane* to transport provisions to Beechey Island!”

“Those provisions we, unfortunately, did not find. Well?”

“We reached Beechey Island in the beginning of August; on the 10th Captain Inglefield left the *Phoenix* to rejoin Captain Pullen, who had been separated from his ship, the *North Star*, for a month. When he came back he thought of sending his Admiralty despatches to Sir Edward Belcher, who was wintering in Wellington Channel. A little while after the departure of our captain, Captain Pullen got back to his ship. Why did he not arrive before the departure of Captain Inglefield? Lieutenant Bellot, fearing that our captain would be long away, and knowing that the Admiralty despatches ought to be sent at once, offered to take them himself. He left the command of the two ships to Captain Pullen, and set out on the 12th of August with a sledge and an indiarubber boat. He took the boatswain of the *North Star* (Harvey) with him, and three sailors, Madden, David Hook, and me. We supposed that Sir Edward Belcher was to be found in the neighbourhood of Beecher Cape, to the north of the channel; we made for it with our sledge along the eastern coast. The first day we encamped about three miles from Cape Innis; the next day we stopped on a block of ice about three miles from Cape Bowden. As land lay at about three miles’ distance, Lieutenant Bellot resolved to go and encamp there during the night, which was as light as the day; he tried to get to it in his indiarubber canoe; he was twice repulsed by a violent breeze from the south-east; Harvey and Madden attempted the passage in their turn, and were more fortunate; they took a cord with them, and established a communication between the coast and the sledge; three objects were transported by means of the cord, but at the fourth attempt we felt our block of ice move; Mr. Bellot called out to his companions to drop the cord, and we were dragged to a great distance from the coast. The wind blew from the south-east, and it was snowing; but we were not in much danger, and the lieutenant might have come back as we did.”

Here Johnson stopped an instant to take a glance at the fatal coast, and continued:

“After our companions were lost to sight we tried to shelter ourselves under the tent of our sledge, but in vain; then, with our knives, we began to cut out a house in the ice. Mr. Bellot helped us for half an hour, and talked to us about the danger of our situation. I told him I was not afraid. ‘By God’s help,’ he answered, ‘we shall not lose a hair of our heads.’ I asked him what o’clock it was, and he answered, ‘About a quarter-past six.’ It was a quarter-past six in the morning of Thursday, August 18th. Then Mr. Bellot tied up his books, and said he would go and see how the ice floated; he had only been gone four minutes when I went round the block of ice to look for him; I saw his stick on the opposite side of a crevice, about five fathoms wide, where the ice was broken, but I could not see him anywhere. I called out, but

no one answered. The wind was blowing great guns. I looked all round the block of ice, but found no trace of the poor lieutenant.”

“What do you think had become of him?” said the doctor, much moved.

“I think that when Mr. Bellot got out of shelter the wind blew him into the crevice, and, as his greatcoat was buttoned up he could not swim. Oh! Mr. Clawbonny, I never was more grieved in my life! I could not believe it! He was a victim to duty, for it was in order to obey Captain Pullen’s instructions that he tried to get to land. He was a good fellow, everybody liked him; even the Esquimaux, when they learnt his fate from Captain Inglefield on his return from Pound Bay, cried while they wept, as I am doing now, ‘Poor Bellot! poor Bellot!’”

“But you and your companion, Johnson,” said the doctor, “how did you manage to reach land?”

“Oh! we stayed twenty-four hours more on the block of ice, without food or firing; but at last we met with an ice-field; we jumped on to it, and with the help of an oar we fastened ourselves to an iceberg that we could guide like a raft, and we got to land, but without our brave officer.”

By the time Johnson had finished his story the *Forward* had passed the fatal coast, and Johnson lost sight of the place of the painful catastrophe. The next day they left Griffin Bay to the starboard, and, two days after, Capes Grinnell and Helpmann; at last, on the 14th of July, they doubled Osborn Point, and on the 15th the brig anchored in Baring Bay, at the extremity of the channel. Navigation had not been very difficult; Hatteras met with a sea almost as free as that of which Belcher profited to go and winter with the *Pioneer* and the *Assistance* as far north as 77°. It was in 1852 and 1853, during his first wintering, for he passed the winter of 1853 to 1854 in Baring Bay, where the *Forward* was now at anchor. He suffered so much that he was obliged to leave the *Assistance* in the midst of the ice. Shandon told all these details to the already discontented sailors. Did Hatteras know how he was betrayed by his first officer? It is impossible to say; if he did, he said nothing about it.

At the top of Baring Bay there is a narrow channel which puts Wellington and Queen’s Channel into communication with each other. There the rafts of ice lie closely packed. Hatteras tried, in vain, to clear the passes to the north of Hamilton Island; the wind was contrary; five precious days were lost in useless efforts. The temperature still lowered, and, on the 19th of July, fell to 26°; it got higher the following day; but this foretaste of winter made Hatteras afraid of waiting any longer. The wind seemed to be going to keep in the west, and to stop the progress of the ship. However, he was in a hurry to gain the point where Stewart had met with the open sea. On the 19th he resolved to get into the Channel at any price; the wind blew right on the brig, which might, with her screw, have stood against it, had not Hatteras been obliged to economise his fuel; on the other hand, the Channel was too wide to allow the men to haul the brig along. Hatteras, not considering the men’s fatigue, resolved to have recourse to means often employed by whalers under similar circumstances. The men took it in turns to row, so as to push the brig on against the wind. The *Forward* advanced slowly up the Channel. The men were worn out and murmured loudly. They went on in that manner till the 23rd of July, when they reached Baring Island in Queen’s Channel. The wind was still against them. The doctor thought the health of the men much shaken, and perceived the first symptoms of scurvy amongst them; he did all he could to prevent the spread of the wretched malady, and distributed lime-juice to the men.

Hatteras saw that he could no longer count upon his crew; reasoning and kindness were ineffectual, so he resolved to employ severity for the future; he suspected Shandon and Wall, though they dare not speak out openly. Hatteras had the doctor, Johnson, Bell, and Simpson

for him; they were devoted to him body and soul; amongst the undecided were Foker, Bolton, Wolsten the gunsmith, and Brunton the first engineer; and they might turn against the captain at any moment; as to Pen, Gripper, Clifton, and Warren, they were in open revolt; they wished to persuade their comrades to force the captain to return to England. Hatteras soon saw that he could not continue to work his ship with such a crew. He remained twenty-four hours at Baring Island without taking a step forward. The weather grew cooler still, for winter begins to be felt in July in these high latitudes. On the 24th the thermometer fell to 22°. Young ice formed during the night, and if snow fell it would soon be thick enough to bear the weight of a man. The sea began already to have that dirty colour which precedes the formation of the first crystals. Hatteras could not mistake these alarming symptoms; if the channels got blocked up, he should be obliged to winter there at a great distance from the point he had undertaken the voyage in order to reach, without having caught a glimpse of that open sea which his predecessors made out was so near. He resolved, then, to gain several degrees further north, at whatever cost; seeing that he could not employ oars without the rowers were willing, nor sail in a contrary wind, he gave orders to put steam on again.

XXII. Beginning Of Revolt

At this unexpected command, the surprise was great on board the *Forward*.

“Light the fires!” exclaimed some.

“What with?” asked others.

“When we’ve only two months’ coal in the hold!” said Pen.

“What shall we warm ourselves with in the winter?” asked Clifton.

“We shall be obliged to burn the brig down to her water-line,” answered Gripper.

“And stuff the stove with the masts,” added Warren. Shandon looked at Wall. The stupefied engineers hesitated to go down to the machine-room.

“Did you hear me?” cried the captain in an irritated tone.

Brunton made for the hatchway, but before going down he stopped.

“Don’t go, Brunton!” called out a voice.

“Who spoke?” cried Hatteras.

“I did,” said Pen, advancing towards the captain.

“And what did you say?” asked Hatteras.

“I say,” answered Pen with an oath—“I say, we’ve had enough of it, and we won’t go any further. You shan’t kill us with hunger and work in the winter, and they shan’t light the fires!”

“Mr. Shandon,” answered Hatteras calmly, “have that man put in irons!”

“But, captain,” replied Shandon, “what the man says——”

“If you repeat what the man says,” answered Hatteras, “I’ll have you shut up in your cabin and guarded! Seize that man! Do you hear?” Johnson, Bell, and Simpson advanced towards the sailor, who was in a terrible passion.

“The first who touches me——” he said, brandishing a handspike. Hatteras approached him.

“Pen,” said he tranquilly, “if you move, I shall blow out your brains!” So speaking, he cocked a pistol and aimed it at the sailor. A murmur was heard.

“Not a word, men,” said Hatteras, “or that man falls dead!” Johnson and Bell disarmed Pen, who no longer made any resistance, and placed him in the hold.

“Go, Brunton,” said Hatteras. The engineer, followed by Plover and Warren, went down to his post. Hatteras returned to the poop.

“That Pen is a wretched fellow!” said the doctor.

“No man has ever been nearer death!” answered the captain, simply.

The steam was soon got up, the anchors were weighed, and the *Forward* veered away east, cutting the young ice with her steel prow. Between Baring Island and Beecher Point there are a considerable quantity of islands in the midst of ice-fields; the streams crowd together in the little channels which cut up this part of the sea; they had a tendency to agglomerate under the relatively low temperature; hummocks were formed here and there, and these masses, already

more compact, denser, and closer together, would soon form an impenetrable mass. The *Forward* made its way with great difficulty amidst the snowstorms. However, with the mobility that characterises the climate of these regions, the sun appeared from time to time, the temperature went up several degrees, obstacles melted as if by magic, and a fine sheet of water lay where icebergs bristled all the passes. The horizon glowed with those magnificent orange shades which rest the eye, tired with the eternal white of the snow.

On the 26th of July the *Forward* passed Dundas Island, and veered afterwards more to the north; but there Hatteras found himself opposite an ice-bank eight or nine feet high, formed of little icebergs detached from the coast; he was obliged to turn west. The uninterrupted cracking of the ice, added to the noise of the steamer, was like sighs or groans. At last the brig found a channel, and advanced painfully along it; often an enormous iceberg hindered her course for hours; the fog hindered the pilot's look-out; as long as he can see for a mile in front of him, he can easily avoid obstacles; but in the midst of the fog it was often impossible to see a cable's length, and the swell was very strong. Sometimes the clouds looked smooth and white as though they were reflections of the ice-banks; but there were entire days when the yellow rays of the sun could not pierce the tenacious fog. Birds were still very numerous, and their cries were deafening; seals, lying idle on the floating ice, raised their heads, very little frightened, and moved their long necks as the brig passed. Pieces from the ship's sheathing were often rubbed off in her contact with the ice. At last, after six days of slow navigation, Point Beecher was sighted to the north on the 1st of August. Hatteras passed the last few hours at his masthead; the open sea that Stewart had perceived on May 30th, 1851, about latitude $76^{\circ} 20'$, could not be far off; but as far as the eye could reach, Hatteras saw no indication of it. He came down without saying a word.

"Do you believe in an open sea?" asked Shandon of the lieutenant.

"I am beginning not to," answered Wall.

"Wasn't I right to say the pretended discovery was purely imagination? But they would not believe me, and even you were against me, Wall."

"We shall believe in you for the future, Shandon."

"Yes," said he, "when it's too late," and so saying he went back to his cabin, where he had stopped almost ever since his dispute with the captain. The wind veered round south towards evening; Hatteras ordered the brig to be put under sail and the fires to be put out; the crew had to work very hard for the next few days; they were more than a week getting to Barrow Point. The *Forward* had only made thirty miles in ten days. There the wind turned north again, and the screw was set to work. Hatteras still hoped to find an open sea beyond the 77th parallel, as Sir Edward Belcher had done. Ought he to treat these accounts as apocryphal? or had the winter come upon him earlier? On the 15th of August Mount Percy raised its peak, covered with eternal snow, through the mist. The next day the sun set for the first time, ending thus the long series of days with twenty-four hours in them. The men had ended by getting accustomed to the continual daylight, but it had never made any difference to the animals; the Greenland dogs went to their rest at their accustomed hour, and Dick slept as regularly every evening as though darkness had covered the sky. Still, during the nights which followed the 15th of August, darkness was never profound; although the sun set, he still gave sufficient light by refraction. On the 19th of August, after a pretty good observation, they sighted Cape Franklin on the east coast and Cape Lady Franklin on the west coast; the gratitude of the English people had given these names to the two opposite points—probably the last reached by Franklin: the name of the devoted wife, opposite to that of her husband, is a touching emblem of the sympathy which always united them.

The doctor, by following Johnson's advice, accustomed himself to support the low temperature; he almost always stayed on deck braving the cold, the wind, and the snow. He got rather thinner, but his constitution did not suffer. Besides, he expected to be much worse off, and joyfully prepared for the approaching winter.

"Look at those birds," he said to Johnson one day; "they are emigrating south in flocks! They are shrieking out their good-byes!"

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny, some instinct tells them they must go, and they set out."

"There's more than one amongst us who would like to imitate them, I think."

"They are cowards, Mr. Clawbonny; those animals have no provisions as we have, and are obliged to seek their food where it is to be found. But sailors, with a good ship under their feet, ought to go to the world's end."

"You hope that Hatteras will succeed, then?"

"He certainly will, Mr. Clawbonny."

"I am of the same opinion as you, Johnson, and if he only wanted one faithful companion—"

"He'll have two!"

"Yes, Johnson," answered the doctor, shaking hands with the brave sailor.

Prince Albert Land, which the *Forward* was then coasting, bears also the name of Grinnell Land, and though Hatteras, from his hatred to the Yankees, would never call it by its American name, it is the one it generally goes by. It owes its double appellation to the following circumstances: At the same time that Penny, an Englishman, gave it the name of Prince Albert, Lieutenant Haven, commander of the *Rescue*, called it Grinnell Land in honour of the American merchant who had fitted out the expedition from New York at his own expense. Whilst the brig was coasting it, she experienced a series of unheard-of difficulties, navigating sometimes under sail, sometimes by steam. On the 18th of August they sighted Britannia Mountain, scarcely visible through the mist, and the *Forward* weighed anchor the next day in Northumberland Bay. She was hemmed in on all sides.

XXIII. Attacked By Icebergs

Hatteras, after seeing to the anchoring of his ship, re-entered his cabin and examined his map attentively. He found himself in latitude $76^{\circ} 57'$ and longitude $99^{\circ} 20'$ —that is to say, at only three minutes from the 77th parallel. It was at this very spot that Sir Edward Belcher passed his first winter with the *Pioneer* and the *Assistance*. It was thence that he organised his sledge and boat excursions. He discovered Table Isle, North Cornwall, Victoria Archipelago, and Belcher Channel. He reached the 78th parallel, and saw that the coast was depressed on the south-east. It seemed to go down to Jones's Strait, the entrance to which lies in Baffin's Bay. But to the north-west, on the contrary, says his report, an open sea lay as far as the eye could reach.

Hatteras considered attentively the white part of the map, which represented the Polar basin free from ice.

"After such testimony as that of Stewart, Penny, and Belcher, I can't have a doubt about it," he said to himself. "They saw it with their own eyes. But if the winter has already frozen it! But no; they made their discoveries at intervals of several years. It exists, and I shall find it! I shall see it."

Hatteras went on to the poop. An intense fog enveloped the *Forward*; the masthead could scarcely be distinguished from the deck. However, Hatteras called down the ice-master from his crow's nest, and took his place. He wished to profit by the shortest clear interval to examine the north-western horizon. Shandon did not let the occasion slip for saying to the lieutenant:

"Well, Wall, where is the open sea?"

"You were right, Shandon, and we have only six weeks' coal in the hold."

"Perhaps the doctor will find us some scientific fuel to warm us in the place of coal," answered Shandon. "I have heard say you can turn fire to ice; perhaps he'll turn ice to fire." And he entered his cabin, shrugging his shoulders. The next day was the 20th of August, and the fog cleared away for several minutes. They saw Hatteras look eagerly at the horizon, and then come down without speaking; but it was easy to see that his hopes had again been crushed. The *Forward* weighed anchor, and took up her uncertain march northward. As the *Forward* began to be weather-worn, the masts were unreeved, for they could no longer rely on the variable wind, and the sails were nearly useless in the winding channels. Large white marks appeared here and there on the sea like oil spots; they presaged an approaching frost; as soon as the breeze dropped the sea began to freeze immediately; but as soon as the wind got up again, the young ice was broken up and dispersed. Towards evening the thermometer went down to 17° .

When the brig came to a closed-up pass she acted as a battering ram, and ran at full steam against the obstacle, which she sunk. Sometimes they thought she was stopped for good; but an unexpected movement of the streams opened her a new passage, and she took advantage of it boldly. When the brig stopped, the steam which escaped from the safety-pipes was condensed by the cold air and fell in snow on to the deck. Another impediment came in the way; the ice-blocks sometimes got entangled in the paddles, and they were so hard that all the strength of the machine was not sufficient to break them; it was then necessary to back the engine and send men to clear the screws with their handspikes. All this delayed the brig; it lasted thirteen days. The *Forward* dragged herself painfully along Penny Strait; the crew

grumbled, but obeyed: the men saw now that it was impossible to go back. Keeping north was less dangerous than retreating south. They were obliged to think about wintering. The sailors talked together about their present position, and one day they mentioned it to Richard Shandon, who, they knew, was on their side. The second officer forgot his duty as an officer, and allowed them to discuss the authority of the captain before him.

“You say, then, Mr. Shandon, that we can’t go back now?” said Gripper.

“No, it’s too late now,” answered Shandon.

“Then we must think about wintering,” said another sailor.

“It’s the only thing we can do. They wouldn’t believe me.”

“Another time,” said Pen, who had been released, “we shall believe you.”

“But as I am not the master——” replied Shandon.

“Who says you mayn’t be?” answered Pen. “John Hatteras may go as far as he likes, but we aren’t obliged to follow him.”

“You all know what became of the crew that did follow him in his first cruise to Baffin’s Sea?” said Gripper.

“And the cruise of the *Farewell* under him that got lost in the Spitzbergen seas!” said Clifton.

“He was the only man that came back,” continued Gripper.

“He and his dog,” answered Clifton.

“We won’t die for his pleasure,” added Pen.

“Nor lose the bounty we’ve been at so much trouble to earn,” cried Clifton. “When we’ve passed the 78th degree—and we aren’t far off it, I know—that will make just the £375 each.”

“But,” answered Gripper, “shan’t we lose it if we go back without the captain?”

“Not if we prove that we were obliged to,” answered Clifton.

“But it’s the captain——”

“You never mind, Gripper,” answered Pen; “we’ll have a captain and a good one—that Mr. Shandon knows. When one commander goes mad, folks have done with him, and they take another; don’t they, Mr. Shandon?”

Shandon answered evasively that they could reckon upon him, but that they must wait to see what turned up. Difficulties were getting thick round Hatteras, but he was as firm, calm, energetic, and confident as ever. After all, he had done in five months what other navigators had taken two or three years to do! He should be obliged to winter now, but there was nothing to frighten brave sailors in that. Sir John Ross and McClure had passed three successive winters in the Arctic regions. What they had done he could do too!

“If I had only been able to get up Smith Strait at the north of Baffin’s Sea, I should be at the Pole by now!” he said to the doctor regretfully.

“Never mind, captain!” answered the doctor, “we shall get at it by the 99th meridian instead of by the 75th; if all roads lead to Rome, it’s more certain still that all meridians lead to the Pole.”

On the 31st of August the thermometer marked 13°. The end of the navigable season was approaching; the *Forward* left Exmouth Island to the starboard, and three days after passed Table Island in the middle of Belcher Channel. At an earlier period it would perhaps have

been possible to regain Baffin's Sea by this channel, but it was not to be dreamt of then; this arm of the sea was entirely barricaded by ice; ice-fields extended as far as the eye could reach, and would do so for eight months longer. Happily they could still gain a few minutes further north on the condition of breaking up the ice with huge clubs and petards. Now the temperature was so low, any wind, even a contrary one, was welcome, for in a calm the sea froze in a single night. The *Forward* could not winter in her present situation, exposed to winds, icebergs, and the drift from the channel; a shelter was the first thing to find; Hatteras hoped to gain the coast of New Cornwall, and to find above Albert Point a bay of refuge sufficiently sheltered. He therefore pursued his course northward with perseverance. But on the 8th an impenetrable ice-bank lay in front of him, and the temperature was at 10°. Hatteras did all he could to force a passage, continually risking his ship and getting out of danger by force of skill. He could be accused of imprudence, want of reflection, folly, blindness, but he was a good sailor, and one of the best! The situation of the *Forward* became really dangerous; the sea closed up behind her, and in a few hours the ice got so hard that the men could run along it and tow the ship in all security.

Hatteras found he could not get round the obstacle, so he resolved to attack it in front; he used his strongest blasting cylinders of eight to ten pounds of powder; they began by making a hole in the thick of the ice, and filled it with snow, taking care to place the cylinder in a horizontal position, so that a greater portion of the ice might be submitted to the explosion; lastly, they lighted the wick, which was protected by a gutta-percha tube. They worked at the blasting, as they could not saw, for the saws stuck immediately in the ice. Hatteras hoped to pass the next day. But during the night a violent wind raged, and the sea rose under her crust of ice as if shaken by some submarine commotion, and the terrified voice of the pilot was heard crying:

“Look out aft!”

Hatteras turned to the direction indicated, and what he saw by the dim twilight was frightful. A high iceberg, driven back north, was rushing on to the ship with the rapidity of an avalanche.

“All hands on deck!” cried the captain.

The rolling mountain was hardly half a mile off; the blocks of ice were driven about like so many huge grains of sand; the tempest raged with fury.

“There, Mr. Clawbonny,” said Johnson to the doctor, “we are in something like danger now.”

“Yes,” answered the doctor tranquilly, “it looks frightful enough.”

“It's an assault we shall have to repulse,” replied the boatswain.

“It looks like a troop of antediluvian animals, those that were supposed to inhabit the Pole. They are trying which shall get here first!”

“Well,” added Johnson, “I hope we shan't get one of their spikes into us!”

“It's a siege—let's run to the ramparts!”

And they made haste aft, where the crew, armed with poles, bars of iron, and handspikes, were getting ready to repulse the formidable enemy. The avalanche came nearer, and got bigger by the addition of the blocks of ice which it caught in its passage; Hatteras gave orders to fire the cannon in the bow to break the threatening line. But it arrived and rushed on to the brig; a great crackling noise was heard, and as it struck on the brig's starboard a part of her barricading was broken. Hatteras gave his men orders to keep steady and prepare for the ice. It came along in blocks; some of them weighing several hundredweight came over the ship's

side; the smaller ones, thrown up as high as the topsails, fell in little spikes, breaking the shrouds and cutting the rigging. The ship was boarded by these innumerable enemies, which in a block would have crushed a hundred ships like the *Forward*. Some of the sailors were badly wounded whilst trying to keep off the ice, and Bolton had his left shoulder torn open. The noise was deafening. Dick barked with rage at this new kind of enemy. The obscurity of the night came to add to the horror of the situation, but did not hide the threatening blocks, their white surface reflected the last gleams of light. Hatteras's orders were heard in the midst of the crew's strange struggle with the icebergs. The ship giving way to the tremendous pressure, bent to the larboard, and the extremity of her mainyard leaned like a buttress against the iceberg and threatened to break her mast.

Hatteras saw the danger; it was a terrible moment; the brig threatened to turn completely over, and the masting might be carried away. An enormous block, as big as the steamer itself, came up alongside her hull; it rose higher and higher on the waves; it was already above the poop; it fell over the *Forward*. All was lost; it was now upright, higher than the gallant yards, and it shook on its foundation. A cry of terror escaped the crew. Everyone fled to starboard. But at this moment the steamer was lifted completely up, and for a little while she seemed to be suspended in the air, and fell again on to the ice-blocks; then she rolled over till her planks cracked again. After a minute, which appeared a century, she found herself again in her natural element, having been turned over the ice-bank that blocked her passage by the rising of the sea.

"She's cleared the ice-bank!" shouted Johnson, who had rushed to the fore of the brig.

"Thank God!" answered Hatteras.

The brig was now in the midst of a pond of ice, which hemmed her in on every side, and though her keel was in the water, she could not move; she was immovable, but the ice-field moved for her.

"We are drifting, captain!" cried Johnson.

"We must drift," answered Hatteras; "we can't help ourselves."

When daylight came, it was seen that the brig was drifting rapidly northward, along with a submarine current. The floating mass carried the *Forward* along with it. In case of accident, when the brig might be thrown on her side, or crushed by the pressure of the ice, Hatteras had a quantity of provisions brought up on deck, along with materials for encamping, the clothes and blankets of the crew. Taking example from Captain McClure under similar circumstances, he caused the brig to be surrounded by a belt of hammocks, filled with air, so as to shield her from the thick of the damage; the ice soon accumulated under a temperature of 7°, and the ship was surrounded by a wall of ice, above which her masts only were to be seen. They navigated thus for seven days; Point Albert, the western extremity of New Cornwall, was sighted on the 10th of September, but soon disappeared; from thence the ice-field drifted east. Where would it take them to? Where should they stop? Who could tell? The crew waited, and the men folded their arms. At last, on the 15th of September, about three o'clock in the afternoon, the ice-field, stopped, probably, by collision with another field, gave a violent shake to the brig, and stood still. Hatteras found himself out of sight of land in latitude 78° 15' and longitude 95° 35' in the midst of the unknown sea, where geographers have placed the Frozen Pole.

XXIV. Preparations For Wintering

The southern hemisphere is colder in parallel latitudes than the northern hemisphere; but the temperature of the new continent is still 15° below that of the other parts of the world; and in America the countries known under the name of the Frozen Pole are the most formidable. The average temperature of the year is 2° below zero. Scientific men, and Dr. Clawbonny amongst them, explain the fact in the following way. According to them, the prevailing winds of the northern regions of America blow from the south-west; they come from the Pacific Ocean with an equal and bearable temperature; but in order to reach the Arctic Seas they have to cross the immense American territory, covered with snow, they get cold by contact with it, and then cover the hyperborean regions with their frigid violence. Hatteras found himself at the Frozen Pole beyond the countries seen by his predecessors; he, therefore, expected a terrible winter on a ship lost in the midst of the ice with a crew nearly in revolt. He resolved to face these dangers with his accustomed energy. He began by taking, with the help of Johnson's experience, all the measures necessary for wintering. According to his calculations he had been dragged two hundred and fifty miles beyond New Cornwall, the last country discovered; he was clasped in an ice-field as securely as in a bed of granite, and no power on earth could extricate him.

There no longer existed a drop of water in the vast seas over which the Arctic winter reigned. Ice-fields extended as far as the eye could reach, bristling with icebergs, and the *Forward* was sheltered by three of the highest on three points of the compass; the south-east wind alone could reach her. If instead of icebergs there had been rocks, verdure instead of snow, and the sea in its liquid state again, the brig would have been safely anchored in a pretty bay sheltered from the worst winds. But in such a latitude it was a miserable state of things. They were obliged to fasten the brig by means of her anchors, notwithstanding her immovability; they were obliged to prepare for the submarine currents and the breaking up of the ice. When Johnson heard where they were, he took the greatest precautions in getting everything ready for wintering.

"It's the captain's usual luck," said he to the doctor; "we've got nipped in the most disagreeable point of the whole glove! Never mind; we'll get out of it!"

As to the doctor, he was delighted at the situation. He would not have changed it for any other! A winter at the Frozen Pole seemed to him desirable. The crew were set to work at the sails, which were not taken down, and put into the hold, as the first people who wintered in these regions had thought prudent; they were folded up in their cases, and the ice soon made them an impervious envelope. The crow's nest, too, remained in its place, serving as a nautical observatory; the rigging alone was taken away. It became necessary to cut away the part of the field that surrounded the brig, which began to suffer from the pressure. It was a long and painful work. In a few days the keel was cleared, and on examination was found to have suffered little, thanks to the solidity of its construction, only its copper plating was almost all torn off. When the ship was once liberated she rose at least nine inches; the crew then bevelled the ice in the shape of the keel, and the field formed again under the brig, and offered sufficient opposition to pressure from without. The doctor helped in all this work; he used the ice-knife skilfully; he incited the sailors by his happy disposition. He instructed himself and others, and was delighted to find the ice under the ship.

"It's a very good precaution!" said he.

“We couldn’t do without it, Mr. Clawbonny,” said Johnson. “Now we can raise a snow-wall as high as the gunwale, and if we like we can make it ten feet thick, for we’ve plenty of materials.”

“That’s an excellent idea,” answered the doctor. “Snow is a bad conductor of heat; it reflects it instead of absorbing it, and the heat of the interior does not escape.”

“That’s true,” said Johnson. “We shall raise a fortification against the cold, and against animals too, if they take it into their heads to pay us a visit; when the work is done it will answer, I can tell you. We shall make two flights of steps in the snow, one from the ship and the other from outside; when once we’ve cut out the steps we shall pour water over them, and it will make them as hard as rock. We shall have a royal staircase.”

“It’s a good thing that cold makes ice and snow, and so gives us the means of protecting ourselves against it. I don’t know what we should do if it did not.”

A roofing of tarred cloth was spread over the deck and descended to the sides of the brig. It was thus sheltered from all outside impression, and made a capital promenade; it was covered with two feet and a-half of snow, which was beaten down till it became very hard, and above that they put a layer of sand, completely macadamising it.

“With a few trees I should imagine myself in Hyde Park,” said the doctor, “or in one of the hanging gardens of Babylon.”

They made a hole at a short distance from the brig; it was round, like a well; they broke the ice every morning. This well was useful in case of fire or for the frequent baths ordered to keep the crew in health. In order to spare their fuel, they drew the water from a greater depth by means of an apparatus invented by a Frenchman, François Arago. Generally, when a ship is wintering, all the objects which encumber her are placed in magazines on the coast, but it was impossible to do this in the midst of an ice-field. Every precaution was taken against cold and damp; men have been known to resist the cold and succumb to damp; therefore both had to be guarded against. The *Forward* had been built expressly for these regions, and the common room was wisely arranged. They had made war on the corners, where damp takes refuge at first. If it had been quite circular it would have done better, but warmed by a vast stove and well ventilated, it was very comfortable; the walls were lined with buckskins and not with woollen materials, for wool condenses the vapours and impregnates the atmosphere with damp. The partitions were taken down in the poop, and the officers had a large comfortable room, warmed by a stove. Both this room and that of the crew had a sort of antechamber, which prevented all direct communication with the exterior, and prevented the heat going out; it also made the crew pass more gradually from one temperature to another. They left their snow-covered garments in these antechambers, and scraped their feet on scrapers put there on purpose to prevent any unhealthy element getting in.

Canvas hose let in the air necessary to make the stoves draw; other hose served for escape-pipes for the steam. Two condensers were fixed in the two rooms; they gathered the vapour instead of letting it escape, and were emptied twice a week; sometimes they contained several bushels of ice. By means of the air-pipes the fires could be easily regulated, and it was found that very little fuel was necessary to keep up a temperature of 50 degrees in the rooms. But Hatteras saw with grief that he had only enough coal left for two months’ firing. A drying-room was prepared for the garments that were obliged to be washed, as they could not be hung in the air or they would have been frozen and spoiled. The delicate parts of the machine were taken to pieces carefully, and the room where they were placed was closed up hermetically. The rules for life on board were drawn up by Hatteras and hung up in the common room. The men got up at six in the morning, and their hammocks were exposed to

the air three times a week; the floors of the two rooms were rubbed with warm sand every morning; boiling tea was served out at every meal, and the food varied as much as possible, according to the different days of the week; it consisted of bread, flour, beef suet and raisins for puddings, sugar, cocoa, tea, rice, lemon-juice, preserved meat, salted beef and pork, pickled cabbage and other vegetables; the kitchen was outside the common rooms, and the men were thus deprived of its heat, but cooking is a constant source of evaporation and humidity.

The health of men depends a great deal on the food they eat; under these high latitudes it is of great importance to consume as much animal food as possible. The doctor presided at the drawing up of the bill of fare.

“We must take example from the Esquimaux,” said he; “they have received their lessons from nature, and are our teachers here; although Arabians and Africans can live on a few dates and a handful of rice, it is very different here, where we must eat a great deal and often. The Esquimaux absorb as much as ten and fifteen pounds of oil in a day. If you do not like oil, you must have recourse to things rich in sugar and fat. In a word, you want carbon in the stove inside you as much as the stove there wants coal.”

Every man was forced to take a bath in the half-frozen water condensed from the fire. The doctor set the example; he did it at first as we do all disagreeable things that we feel obliged to do, but he soon began to take extreme pleasure in it. When the men had to go out either to hunt or work they had to take great care not to get frost-bitten; and if by accident it happened, they made haste to rub the part attacked with snow to bring back the circulation of the blood. Besides being carefully clothed in wool from head to foot, the men wore hoods of buckskin and sealskin trousers, through which it is impossible for the wind to penetrate. All these preparations took about three weeks, and the 10th of October came round without anything remarkable happening.

XXV. An Old Fox

That day the thermometer went down to 3° below zero. The weather was pretty calm, and the cold without breeze was bearable. Hatteras profited by the clearness of the atmosphere to reconnoitre the surrounding plains; he climbed one of the highest icebergs to the north, and could see nothing, as far as his telescope would let him, but ice-fields and icebergs. No land anywhere, but the image of chaos in its saddest aspect. He came back on board trying to calculate the probable duration of his captivity. The hunters, and amongst them the doctor, James Wall, Simpson, Johnson, and Bell, did not fail to supply the ship with fresh meat. Birds had disappeared; they were gone to less rigorous southern climates. The ptarmigans, a sort of partridge, alone stay the winter in these latitudes; they are easily killed, and their great number promised an abundant supply of game. There were plenty of hares, foxes, wolves, ermine, and bears; there were enough for any sportsman, English, French, or Norwegian; but they were difficult to get at, and difficult to distinguish on the white plains from the whiteness of their fur; when the intense cold comes their fur changes colour, and white is their winter colour. The doctor found that this change of fur is not caused by the change of temperature, for it takes place in the month of October, and is simply a precaution of Providence to guard them from the rigour of a boreal winter.

Seals were abundant in all their varieties, and were particularly sought after by the hunters for the sake, not only of their skins, but their fat, which is very warming; besides which, the liver of these animals makes excellent fuel: hundreds of them were to be seen, and two or three miles to the north of the brig the ice was literally perforated all over with the holes these enormous amphibians make; only they smelt the hunters from afar, and many were wounded that escaped by plunging under the ice. However, on the 19th, Simpson managed to catch one at about a hundred yards from the ship; he had taken the precaution to block up its hole of refuge so that it was at the mercy of the hunters. It took several bullets to kill the animal, which measured nine feet in length; its bulldog head, the sixteen teeth in its jaws, its large pectoral fins in the shape of pinions, and its little tail, furnished with another pair of fins, made it a good specimen of the family of dog-hound fish. The doctor, wishing to preserve the head for his natural history collection, and its skin for his future use, had them prepared by a rapid and inexpensive process. He plunged the body of the animal into the hole in the ice, and thousands of little prawns soon ate off all the flesh; in half a day the work was accomplished, and the most skilful of the honourable corporation of Liverpool tanners could not have succeeded better.

As soon as the sun had passed the autumnal equinox—that is to say, on the 23rd of September—winter may be said to begin in the Arctic regions. The sun disappears entirely on the 23rd of October, lighting up with its oblique rays the summits of the frozen mountains. The doctor wished him a traveller's farewell; he was not going to see him again till February. But obscurity is not complete during this long absence of the sun; the moon comes each month to take its place as well as she can; starlight is very bright, and there is besides frequent aurora borealis, and a refraction peculiar to the snowy horizons; besides, the sun at the very moment of his greatest austral declination, the 21st of December, is still only 13° from the Polar horizon, so that there is twilight for a few hours; only fogs, mists, and snowstorms often plunge these regions into complete obscurity. However, at this epoch the weather was pretty favourable; the partridges and the hares were the only animals that had a right to complain, for the sportsmen did not give them a moment's peace; they set several fox-traps, but the suspicious animals did not let themselves be caught so easily; they would

often come and eat the snare by scratching out the snow from under the trap; the doctor wished them at the devil, as he could not get them himself. On the 25th of October the thermometer marked more than 4° below zero. A violent tempest set in; the air was thick with snow, which prevented a ray of light reaching the *Forward*. During several hours they were very uneasy about Bell and Simpson, who had gone too far whilst hunting; they did not reach the ship till the next day, after having lain for a whole day in their buckskins, whilst the tempest swept the air about them, and buried them under five feet of snow. They were nearly frozen, and the doctor had some trouble to restore their circulation.

The tempest lasted a week without interruption. It was impossible to stir out. In a single day the temperature varied fifteen and twenty degrees. During their forced idleness each one lived to himself; some slept, others smoked, or talked in whispers, stopping when they saw the doctor or Johnson approach; there was no moral union between the men; they only met for evening prayers, and on Sunday for Divine service. Clifton had counted that once the 78th parallel cleared, his share in the bounty would amount to £375; he thought that enough, and his ambition did not go beyond. The others were of the same opinion, and only thought of enjoying the fortune acquired at such a price. Hatteras was hardly ever seen. He neither took part in the hunting nor other excursions. He felt no interest in the meteorological phenomena which excited the doctor's admiration. He lived for one idea; it was comprehended in three words—the North Pole. He was constantly looking forward to the moment when the *Forward*, once more free, would begin her adventurous voyage again.

In short, it was a melancholy life; the brig, made for movement, seemed quite out of place as a stationary dwelling; her original form could not be distinguished amidst the ice and snow that covered her, and she was anything but a lively spectacle. During these unoccupied hours the doctor put his travelling notes in order—the notes from which this history is taken; he was never idle, and the evenness of his humour remained the same, only he was very glad to see the tempest clearing off so as to allow him to set off hunting once more. On the 3rd of November, at six in the morning, with a temperature at 5° below zero, he started, accompanied by Johnson and Bell; the plains of ice were level; the snow, which covered the ground thickly, solidified by the frost, made the ground good for walking; a dry and keen cold lightened the atmosphere; the moon shone in all her splendour, and threw an astonishing light on all the asperities of the field; their footsteps left marks on the snow, and the moon lighted up their edges, so that they looked like a luminous track behind the hunters whose shadows fell on the ice with astonishing outlines.

The doctor had taken his friend Dick with him; he preferred him to the Greenland dogs to run down the game for a good reason; the latter do not seem to have the scent of their brethren of more temperate climates. Dick ran on and often pointed out the track of a bear, but in spite of his skill the hunters had not even killed a hare after two hours' walking.

“Do you think the game has gone south too?” asked the doctor, halting at the foot of a hummock.

“It looks like it, Mr. Clawbonny,” answered the carpenter.

“I don't think so,” answered Johnson; “hares, foxes, and bears are accustomed to the climate; I believe the late tempest is the cause of their disappearance; but with the south winds they'll soon come back. Ah! if you said reindeers or musk-oxen it would be a different thing.”

“But it appears those, too, are found in troops in Melville Island,” replied the doctor; “that is much further south, I grant you; when Parry wintered there he always had as much game as he wanted.”

“We are not so well off,” said Bell; “if we could only get plenty of bear’s flesh I should not complain.”

“Bears are very difficult to get at,” answered the doctor; “it seems to me they want civilising.”

“Bell talks about the bear’s flesh, but we want its fat more than its flesh or its skin,” said Johnson.

“You are right, Johnson; you are always thinking about the fuel.”

“How can I help thinking about it? I know if we are ever so careful of it we’ve only enough left for three weeks.”

“Yes,” replied the doctor, “that is our greatest danger, for we are only at the beginning of November, and February is the coldest month of the year in the Frozen Zone; however, if we can’t get bear’s grease we can rely on that of the seals.”

“Not for long, Mr. Clawbonny,” answered Johnson. “They’ll soon desert us too; either through cold or fright, they’ll soon leave off coming on to the surface of the ice.”

“Then we must get at the bears,” said the doctor; “they are the most useful animals in these countries: they furnish food, clothes, light, and fuel. Do you hear, Dick?” continued he, caressing his friend; “we must have a bear, so look out.”

Dick, who was smelling the ice as the doctor spoke, started off all at once, quick as an arrow. He barked loudly, and, notwithstanding his distance, the sportsmen heard him distinctly. The extreme distance to which sound is carried in these low temperatures is astonishing; it is only equalled by the brilliancy of the constellations in the boreal sky.

The sportsmen, guided by Dick’s barking, rushed on his traces; they had to run about a mile, and arrived quite out of breath, for the lungs are rapidly suffocated in such an atmosphere. Dick was pointing at about fifty paces from an enormous mass at the top of a mound of ice.

“We’ve got him,” said the doctor, taking aim.

“And a fine one,” added Bell, imitating the doctor.

“It’s a queer bear,” said Johnson, waiting to fire after his two companions.

Dick barked furiously. Bell advanced to within twenty feet and fired, but the animal did not seem to be touched. Johnson advanced in his turn, and after taking a careful aim, pulled the trigger.

“What,” cried the doctor, “not touched yet? Why, it’s that cursed refraction. The bear is at least a thousand paces off.”

The three sportsmen ran rapidly towards the animal, whom the firing had not disturbed; he seemed to be enormous, and without calculating the dangers of the attack, they began to rejoice in their conquest. Arrived within reasonable distance they fired again; the bear, mortally wounded, gave a great jump and fell at the foot of the mound. Dick threw himself upon it.

“That bear wasn’t difficult to kill,” said the doctor.

“Only three shots,” added Bell in a tone of disdain, “and he’s down.”

“It’s very singular,” said Johnson.

“Unless we arrived at the very moment when it was dying of old age,” said the doctor, laughing.

So speaking, the sportsmen reached the foot of the mound, and, to their great stupefaction, they found Dick with his fangs in the body of a white fox.

“Well, I never!” cried Bell.

“We kill a bear and a fox falls,” added the doctor.

Johnson did not know what to say.

“Why!” said the doctor, with a roar of laughter, “it’s the refraction again!”

“What do you mean, Mr. Clawbonny?” asked the carpenter.

“Why, it deceived us about the size as it did about the distance. It made us see a bear in a fox’s skin.”

“Well,” answered Johnson, “now we’ve got him, we’ll eat him.”

Johnson was going to lift the fox on to his shoulders, when he cried like Bell—“Well, I never!”

“What is it?” asked the doctor.

“Look, Mr. Clawbonny—look what the animal’s got on its neck; it’s a collar, sure enough.”

“A collar?” echoed the doctor, leaning over the animal. A half worn-out collar encircled the fox’s neck, and the doctor thought he saw something engraved on it; he took it off and examined it.

“That bear is more than twelve years old, my friends,” said the doctor; “it’s one of James Ross’s foxes, and the collar has been round its neck ever since 1848.”

“Is it possible?” cried Bell.

“There isn’t a doubt about it, and I’m sorry we’ve shot the poor animal. During his wintering James Ross took a lot of white foxes in his traps, and had brass collars put round their necks on which were engraved the whereabouts of his ships, the *Enterprise* and the *Investigator*, and the store magazines. He hoped one of them might fall into the hands of some of the men belonging to Franklin’s expedition. The poor animal might have saved the lives of the ship’s crews, and it has fallen under our balls.”

“Well, we won’t eat him,” said Johnson, “especially as he’s twelve years old. Anyway, we’ll keep his skin for curiosity sake.” So saying he lifted the animal on his shoulders, and they made their way to the ship, guided by the stars; still their expedition was not quite fruitless: they bagged several brace of ptarmigans. An hour before they reached the *Forward*, a phenomenon occurred which excited the astonishment of the doctor; it was a very rain of shooting stars; they could be counted by thousands, like rockets in a display of fireworks. They paled the light of the moon, and the admirable spectacle lasted several hours. A like meteor was observed at Greenland by the Moravian brothers in 1799. The doctor passed the whole night watching it, till it ceased, at seven in the morning, amidst the profound silence of the atmosphere.

XXVI. The Last Lump Of Coal

It seemed certain that no bears were to be had; several seals were killed during the days of the 4th, 5th, and 6th of November; then the wind changed, and the thermometer went up several degrees; but the snow-drifts began again with great violence. It became impossible to leave the vessel, and the greatest precaution was needed to keep out the damp. At the end of the week there were several bushels of ice in the condensers. The weather changed again on the 15th of November, and the thermometer, under the influence of certain atmospherical conditions, went down to 24° below zero. It was the lowest temperature observed up till then. This cold would have been bearable in a quiet atmosphere, but there was a strong wind which seemed to fill the atmosphere with sharp blades. The doctor was vexed at being kept prisoner, for the ground was covered with snow, made hard by the wind, and was easy to walk upon; he wanted to attempt some long excursion.

It is very difficult to work when it is so cold, because of the shortness of breath it causes. A man can only do a quarter of his accustomed work; iron implements become impossible to touch; if one is taken up without precaution, it causes a pain as bad as a burn, and pieces of skin are left on it. The crew, confined to the ship, were obliged to walk for two hours on the covered deck, where they were allowed to smoke, which was not allowed in the common room. There, directly the fire got low, the ice invaded the walls and the joins in the flooring; every bolt, nail, or metal plate became immediately covered with a layer of ice. The doctor was amazed at the instantaneity of the phenomenon. The breath of the men condensed in the air, and passing quickly from a fluid to a solid state, fell round them in snow. At a few feet only from the stoves the cold was intense, and the men stood near the fire in a compact group. The doctor advised them to accustom their skin to the temperature, which would certainly get worse, and he himself set the example; but most of them were too idle or too benumbed to follow his advice, and preferred remaining in the unhealthy heat. However, according to the doctor, there was no danger in the abrupt changes of temperature in going from the warm room into the cold. It is only dangerous for people in perspiration; but the doctor's lessons were thrown away on the greater part of the crew.

As to Hatteras, he did not seem to feel the influence of the temperature. He walked silently about at his ordinary pace. Had the cold no empire over his strong constitution, or did he possess in a supreme degree the natural heat he wished his sailors to have? Was he so armed in his one idea as to be insensible to exterior impressions? His men were profoundly astonished at seeing him facing the 24° below zero; he left the ship for hours, and came back without his face betraying the slightest mark of cold.

"He is a strange man," said the doctor to Johnson; "he even astonishes me. He is one of the most powerful natures I have ever studied in my life."

"The fact is," answered Johnson, "that he comes and goes in the open air without clothing himself more warmly than in the month of June."

"Oh! the question of clothes is not of much consequence," replied the doctor; "it is of no use clothing people who do not produce heat naturally. It is the same as if we tried to warm a piece of ice by wrapping it up in a blanket! Hatteras does not want that; he is constituted so, and I should not be surprised if being by his side were as good as being beside a stove."

Johnson had the job of clearing the water-hole the next day, and remarked that the ice was more than ten feet thick. The doctor could observe magnificent aurora borealis almost every

night; from four till eight p.m. the sky became slightly coloured in the north; then this colouring took the regular form of a pale yellow border, whose extremities seemed to buttress on to the ice-field. Little by little the brilliant zone rose in the sky, following the magnetic meridian, and appeared striated with blackish bands; jets of some luminous matter, augmenting and diminishing, shot out lengthways; the meteor, arrived at its zenith, was often composed of several bows, bathed in floods of red, yellow, or green light. It was a dazzling spectacle. Soon the different curves all joined in one point, and formed boreal crowns of a heavenly richness. At last the bows joined, the splendid aurora faded, the intense rays melted into pale, vague, undetermined shades, and the marvellous phenomenon, feeble, and almost extinguished, fainted insensibly into the dark southern clouds. Nothing can equal the wonders of such a spectacle under the high latitudes less than eight degrees from the Pole; the aurora borealis perceived in temperate regions gives no idea of them—not even a feeble one; it seems as if Providence wished to reserve its most astonishing marvels for these climates.

During the duration of the moon several images of her are seen in the sky, increasing her brilliancy; often simple lunar halos surround her, and she shines from the centre of her luminous circle with a splendid intensity.

On the 26th of November there was a high tide, and the water escaped with violence from the water-hole; the thick layer of ice was shaken by the rising of the sea, and sinister crackings announced the submarine struggle; happily the ship kept firm in her bed, and her chains only were disturbed. Hatteras had had them fastened in anticipation of the event. The following days were still colder; there was a penetrating fog, and the wind scattered the piled-up snow; it became difficult to see whether the whirlwinds began in the air or on the ice-fields; confusion reigned.

The crew were occupied in different works on board, the principal of which consisted in preparing the grease and oil produced by the seals; they had become blocks of ice, which had to be broken with axes into little bits, and ten barrels were thus preserved.

All sorts of vessels were useless, and the liquid they contained would only have broken them when the temperature changed. On the 28th the thermometer went down to 32° below zero; there was only coal enough left for ten days, and everyone looked forward to its disappearance with dread. Hatteras had the poop stove put out for economy's sake, and from that time Shandon, the doctor, and he stayed in the common room. Hatteras was thus brought into closer contact with the men, who threw ferocious and stupefied looks at him. He heard their reproaches, their recriminations, and even their threats, and he could not punish them. But he seemed to be deaf to everything. He did not claim the place nearest the fire, but stopped in a corner, his arms folded, never speaking.

In spite of the doctor's recommendations, Pen and his friends refused to take the least exercise; they passed whole days leaning against the stove or lying under the blankets of their hammocks. Their health soon began to suffer; they could not bear up against the fatal influence of the climate, and the terrible scurvy made its appearance on board. The doctor had, however, begun, some time ago, to distribute limejuice and lime pastilles every morning; but these preservatives, generally so efficacious, had very little effect on the malady, which soon presented the most horrible symptoms. The sight of the poor fellows, whose nerves and muscles contracted with pain, was pitiable. Their legs swelled in an extraordinary fashion, and were covered with large blackish blue spots; their bloody gums and ulcerated lips only gave passage to inarticulate sounds; the vitiated blood no longer went to the extremities.

Clifton was the first attacked; then Gripper, Brunton, and Strong took to their hammocks. Those that the malady still spared could not lose sight of their sufferings; they were obliged

to stay there, and it was soon transformed into a hospital, for out of eighteen sailors of the *Forward*, thirteen were attacked in a few days. Pen seemed destined to escape contagion; his vigorous nature preserved him from it. Shandon felt the first symptoms, but they did not go further, and exercise kept the two in pretty good health.

The doctor nursed the invalids with the greatest care, and it made him miserable to see the sufferings he could not alleviate. He did all he could to keep his companions in good spirits; he talked to them, read to them, and told them tales, which his astonishing memory made it easy for him to do. He was often interrupted by the complaints and groans of the invalids, and he stopped his talk to become once more the attentive and devoted doctor. His health kept up well; he did not get thinner, and he used to say that it was a good thing for him that he was dressed like a seal or a whale, who, thanks to its thick layer of fat, easily supports the Arctic atmosphere. Hatteras felt nothing, either physically or morally. Even the sufferings of his crew did not seem to touch him. Perhaps it was because he would not let his face betray his emotions; but an attentive observer would have remarked that a man's heart beat beneath the iron envelope. The doctor analysed him, studied him, but did not succeed in classifying so strange an organisation, a temperament so supernatural. The thermometer lowered again; the walk on deck was deserted; the Esquimaux dogs alone frequented it, howling lamentably.

There was always one man on guard near the stove to keep up the fire; it was important not to let it go out. As soon as the fire got lower, the cold glided into the room; ice covered the walls, and the humidity, rapidly condensed, fell in snow on the unfortunate inhabitants of the brig. It was in the midst of these unutterable tortures that the 8th of December was reached. That morning the doctor went as usual to consult the exterior thermometer. He found the mercury completely frozen.

"Forty-four degrees below zero!" he cried with terror. And that day they threw the last lump of coal into the stove.

XXVII. Christmas

There was then a movement of despair. The thought of death, and death from cold, appeared in all its horror; the last piece of coal burnt away as quickly as the rest, and the temperature of the room lowered sensibly. But Johnson went to fetch some lumps of the new fuel which the marine animals had furnished him with, and he stuffed it into the stove; he added some oakum, impregnated with frozen oil, and soon obtained enough heat. The smell of the grease was abominable, but how could they get rid of it? They were obliged to get used to it. Johnson agreed that his expedient left much to wish for, and would have no success in a Liverpool house.

“However,” added he, “the smell may have one good result.”

“What’s that?” asked the carpenter.

“It will attract the bears; they are very fond of the stink.”

“And what do we want with bears?” added Bell.

“You know, Bell, we can’t depend on the seals; they’ve disappeared for a good while to come; if the bears don’t come to be turned into fuel too, I don’t know what will become of us.”

“There would be only one thing left; but I don’t see how——”

“The captain would never consent; but perhaps we shall be obliged.”

Johnson shook his head sadly, and fell into a silent reverie, which Bell did not interrupt. He knew that their stock of grease would not last more than a week with the strictest economy.

The boatswain was not mistaken. Several bears, attracted by the fetid exhalations, were signalled to the windward; the healthy men gave chase to them, but they are extraordinarily quick, and did not allow themselves to be approached, and the most skilful shots could not touch them. The ship’s crew was seriously menaced with death from cold; it was impossible to resist such a temperature more than forty-eight hours, and every one feared the end of the fuel. The dreaded moment arrived at three o’clock p.m. on the 20th of December. The fire went out; the sailors looked at each other with haggard eyes. Hatteras remained immovable in his corner. The doctor as usual marched up and down in agitation; he was at his wits’ end. The temperature of the room fell suddenly to 7° below zero. But if the doctor did not know what to do, some of the others did. Shandon, calm and resolute, and Pen with anger in his eyes, and two or three of their comrades, who could still walk, went up to Hatteras.

“Captain!” said Shandon.

Hatteras, absorbed in thought, did not hear him.

“Captain!” repeated Shandon, touching his hand.

Hatteras drew himself up.

“What is it?” he said.

“Our fire is out!”

“What then?” answered Hatteras.

“If you mean to kill us with cold, you had better say so,” said Shandon ironically.

“I mean,” said Hatteras gravely, “to require every man to do his duty to the end.”

“There’s something higher than duty, captain—there’s the right to one’s own preservation. I repeat that the fire is out, and if it is not relighted, not one of us will be alive in two days.”

“I have no fuel,” answered Hatteras, with a hollow voice.

“Very well,” cried Pen violently, “if you have no fuel, we must take it where we can!”

Hatteras grew pale with anger.

“Where?” said he.

“On board,” answered the sailor insolently.

“On board!” echoed the captain, his fists closed, his eyes sparkling.

He had seized an axe, and he now raised it over Pen’s head.

“Wretch!” he cried.

The doctor rushed between the captain and Pen; the axe fell to the ground, its sharp edge sinking into the flooring. Johnson, Bell, and Simpson were grouped round Hatteras, and appeared determined to give him their support. But lamentable and plaintive voices came from the beds.

“Some fire! Give us some fire!” cried the poor fellows.

Hatteras made an effort, and said calmly:

“If we destroy the brig, how shall we get back to England?”

“We might burn some of the rigging and the gunwale, sir,” said Johnson.

“Besides, we should still have the boats left,” answered Shandon; “and we could build a smaller vessel with the remains of the old one!”

“Never!” answered Hatteras.

“But——” began several sailors, raising their voices.

“We have a great quantity of spirits of wine,” answered Hatteras; “burn that to the last drop.”

“Ah, we didn’t think of that!” said Johnson, with affected cheerfulness, and by the help of large wicks steeped in spirits he succeeded in raising the temperature a few degrees.

During the days that followed this melancholy scene the wind went round to the south, and the thermometer went up. Some of the men could leave the vessel during the least damp part of the day; but ophthalmia and scurvy kept the greater number on board; besides, neither fishing nor hunting was practicable. But it was only a short respite from the dreadful cold, and on the 25th, after an unexpected change in the wind, the mercury again froze; they were then obliged to have recourse to the spirits of wine thermometer, which never freezes. The doctor found, to his horror, that it marked 66° below zero; men had never been able to support such a temperature. The ice spread itself in long tarnished mirrors on the floor; a thick fog invaded the common room; the damp fell in thick snow; they could no longer see one another; the extremities became blue as the heat of the body left them; a circle of iron seemed to be clasping their heads, and made them nearly delirious. A still more fearful symptom was that their tongues could no longer articulate a word.

From the day they had threatened to burn his ship, Hatteras paced the deck for hours. He was guarding his treasures; the wood of the ship was his own flesh, and whoever cut a piece off cut off one of his limbs. He was armed, and mounted guard, insensible to the cold, the snow,

and the ice, which stiffened his garments and enveloped him in granite armour. His faithful Dick accompanied him, and seemed to understand why he was there.

However, on Christmas Day he went down to the common room. The doctor, taking advantage of what energy he had left, went straight to him, and said—

“Hatteras, we shall all die if we get no fuel.”

“Never!” said Hatteras, knowing what was coming.

“We must,” said the doctor gently.

“Never!” repeated Hatteras with more emphasis still. “I will never consent! They can disobey me if they like!”

Johnson and Bell took advantage of the half-permission, and rushed on deck. Hatteras heard the wood crack under the axe. He wept. What a Christmas Day for Englishmen was that on board the *Forward*! The thought of the great difference between their position and that of the happy English families who rejoiced in their roast beef, plum pudding, and mince pies added another pang to the miseries of the unfortunate crew. However, the fire put a little hope and confidence into the men; the boiling of coffee and tea did them good, and the next week passed less miserably, ending the dreadful year 1860; its early winter had defeated all Hatteras’s plans.

On the 1st of January, 1861, the doctor made a discovery. It was not quite so cold, and he had resumed his interrupted studies; he was reading Sir Edward Belcher’s account of his expedition to the Polar Seas; all at once a passage struck him; he read it again and again. It was where Sir Edward Belcher relates that after reaching the extremity of Queen’s Channel he had discovered important traces of the passage and residence of men. “They were,” said he, “very superior habitations to those which might be attributed to the wandering Esquimaux. The walls had foundations, the floors of the interior had been covered with a thick layer of fine gravel, and were paved. Reindeer, seal, and walrus bones were seen in great quantities. *We found some coal.*” At the last words the doctor was struck with an idea; he carried the book to Hatteras and showed him the passage.

“They could not have found coal on this deserted coast,” said Hatteras; “it is not possible!”

“Why should we doubt what Belcher says? He would not have recorded such a fact unless he had been certain and had seen it with his own eyes.”

“And what then, doctor?”

“We aren’t a hundred miles from the coast where Belcher saw the coal, and what is a hundred miles’ excursion? Nothing. Longer ones than that have often been made across the ice.”

“We will go,” said Hatteras.

Johnson was immediately told of their resolution, of which he strongly approved; he told his companions about it: some were glad, others indifferent.

“Coal on these coasts!” said Wall, stretched on his bed of pain.

“Let them go,” answered Shandon mysteriously.

But before Hatteras began his preparations for the journey, he wished to be exactly certain of the *Forward*’s position. He was obliged to be mathematically accurate as to her whereabouts, because of finding her again. His task was very difficult; he went upon deck and took at different moments several lunar distances and the meridian heights of the principal stars. These observations were hard to make, for the glass and mirrors of the instrument were

covered with ice from Hatteras's breath; he burnt his eyelashes more than once by touching the brass of the glasses. However, he obtained exact bases for his calculations, and came down to make them in the room. When his work was over, he raised his head in astonishment, took his map, pricked it, and looked at the doctor.

"What is it?" asked the latter.

"In what latitude were we at the beginning of our wintering?"

"We were in latitude $78^{\circ} 15'$, by longitude $95^{\circ} 35'$; exactly at the Frozen Pole."

"Well," said Hatteras, in a low tone, "our ice-field has been drifting! We are two degrees farther north and farther west, and three hundred miles at least from your store of coal!"

"And those poor fellows don't know," said the doctor.

"Hush!" said Hatteras, putting his finger on his lips.

XXVIII. Preparations For Departure

Hatteras would not inform his crew of their situation, for if they had known that they had been dragged farther north they would very likely have given themselves up to the madness of despair. The captain had hidden his own emotions at his discovery. It was his first happy moment during the long months passed in struggling with the elements. He was a hundred and fifty miles farther north, scarcely eight degrees from the Pole! But he hid his delight so profoundly that even the doctor did not suspect it; he wondered at seeing an unwonted brilliancy in the captain's eyes; but that was all, and he never once thought of the reason.

The *Forward*, by getting nearer the Pole, had got farther away from the coal repository observed by Sir Edward Belcher; instead of one hundred, it lay at two hundred and fifty miles farther south. However, after a short discussion about it between Hatteras and Clawbonny, the journey was persisted in. If Belcher had written the truth—and there was no reason for doubting his veracity—they should find things exactly in the same state as he had left them, for no new expedition had gone to these extreme continents since 1853. There were few or no Esquimaux to be met with in that latitude. They could not be disappointed on the coast of New Cornwall as they had been on Beechey Island. The low temperature preserves the objects abandoned to its influence for any length of time. All probabilities were therefore in favour of this excursion across the ice. It was calculated that the expedition would take, at the most, forty days, and Johnson's preparations were made in consequence.

The sledge was his first care; it was in the Greenland style, thirty-five inches wide and twenty-four feet long. The Esquimaux often make them more than fifty feet long. This one was made of long planks, bent up front and back, and kept bent like a bow by two thick cords; the form thus given to it gave it increased resistance to shocks; it ran easily on the ice, but when the snow was soft on the ground it was put upon a frame; to make it glide more easily it was rubbed, Esquimaux fashion, with sulphur and snow. Six dogs drew it; notwithstanding their leanness these animals did not appear to suffer from the cold; their buckskin harness was in good condition, and they could draw a weight of two thousand pounds without fatigue. The materials for encampment consisted of a tent, should the construction of a snow-house be impossible, a large piece of mackintosh to spread over the snow, to prevent it melting in contact with the human body, and lastly, several blankets and buffalo-skins. They took the Halkett boat too.

The provisions consisted of five cases of pemmican, weighing about four hundred and fifty pounds; they counted one pound of pemmican for each man and each dog; there were seven dogs including Dick, and four men. They also took twelve gallons of spirits of wine—that is to say, about one hundred fifty pounds weight—a sufficient quantity of tea and biscuit, a portable kitchen with plenty of wicks, oakum, powder, ammunition, and two double-barrelled guns. They also used Captain Parry's invention of indiarubber belts, in which the warmth of the body and the movement of walking keeps coffee, tea, and water in a liquid state. Johnson was very careful about the snow-shoes; they are a sort of wooden patten, fastened on with leather straps; when the ground was quite hard and frozen they could be replaced by buckskin moccasins; each traveller had two pairs of both.

These preparations were important, for any detail omitted might occasion the loss of an expedition; they took four whole days. Each day at noon Hatteras took care to set the position of his ship; they had ceased to drift; he was obliged to be certain in order to get back. He next set about choosing the men he should take with him; some of them were not fit either to take

or leave, but the captain decided to take none but sure companions, as the common safety depended upon the success of the excursion. Shandon was, therefore, excluded, which he did not seem to regret. James Wall was ill in bed. The state of the sick got no worse, however, and as the only thing to do for them was to rub them with lime-juice, and give them doses of it, the doctor was not obliged to stop, and he made one of the travellers. Johnson very much wished to accompany the captain in his perilous enterprise, but Hatteras took him aside, and said, in an affectionate tone:

“Johnson, I have confidence in you alone. You are the only officer in whose hands I can leave my ship. I must know that you are there to overlook Shandon and the others. They are kept prisoners here by the winter, but I believe them capable of anything. You will be furnished with my formal instructions, which, in case of need, will give you the command. You will take my place entirely. Our absence will last four or five weeks at the most. I shall not be anxious, knowing you are where I cannot be. You must have wood, Johnson, I know, but, as far as possible, spare my poor ship. Do you understand me, Johnson?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the old sailor, “I’ll stop if you wish.”

“Thank you,” said Hatteras, shaking his boatswain’s hand; “and if we don’t come back, wait for the next breaking-up time, and try to push forward towards the Pole. But if the others won’t go, don’t mind us, and take the *Forward* back to England.”

“Are those your last commands, captain?”

“Yes, my express commands,” answered Hatteras.

“Very well, sir, they shall be carried out,” said Johnson simply.

The doctor regretted his friend, but he thought Hatteras had acted wisely in leaving him. Their other two travelling companions were Bell the carpenter and Simpson. The former was in good health, brave and devoted, and was the right man to render service during the encampments on the snow; Simpson was not so sure, but he accepted a share in the expedition, and his hunting and fishing capabilities might be of the greatest use. The expedition consisted, therefore, of four men, Hatteras, Clawbonny, Bell, and Simpson, and seven dogs. The provisions had been calculated in consequence. During the first days of January the temperature kept at an average of 33° below zero. Hatteras was very anxious for the weather to change; he often consulted the barometer, but it is of little use in such high latitudes. A clear sky in these regions does not always bring cold, and the snow does not make the temperature rise; the barometer is uncertain; it goes down with the north and east winds; low, it brought fine weather; high, snow or rain. Its indications could not, therefore, be relied upon.

At last, on January 5th, the mercury rose to 18° below zero, and Hatteras resolved to start the next day; he could not bear to see his ship burnt piece by piece before his eyes; all the poop had gone into the stove. On the 6th, then, in the midst of whirlwinds of snow, the order for departure was given. The doctor gave his last orders about the sick; Bell and Simpson shook hands silently with their companions. Hatteras wished to say his good-byes aloud, but he saw himself surrounded by evil looks and thought he saw Shandon smile ironically. He was silent, and perhaps hesitated for an instant about leaving the *Forward*, but it was too late to turn back; the loaded sledge, with the dogs harnessed to it, awaited him on the ice-field. Bell started the first; the others followed.

Johnson accompanied the travellers for a quarter of a mile, then Hatteras begged him to return on board, and the old sailor went back after making a long farewell gesture. At that

moment Hatteras turned a last look towards the brig, and saw the extremity of her masts disappear in the dark clouds of the sky.

XXIX. Across The Ice

The little troop descended towards the south-east. Simpson drove the sledge. Dick helped him with zeal, and did not seem astonished at the new occupation of his companions. Hatteras and the doctor walked behind, whilst Bell went on in front, sounding the ice with his iron-tipped stick. The rising of the thermometer indicated approaching snow; it soon fell in thick flakes, and made the journey difficult for the travellers; it made them deviate from the straight line, and obliged them to walk slower; but, on an average, they made three miles an hour. The surface of the ice was unequal, and the sledge was often in danger of being overturned, but by great care it was kept upright.

Hatteras and his companions were clothed in skins more useful than elegant. Their heads and faces were covered with hoods, their mouths, eyes, and noses alone coming into contact with the air. If they had not been exposed the breath would have frozen their coverings, and they would have been obliged to take them off with the help of an axe—an awkward way of undressing. The interminable plain kept on with fatiguing monotony; icebergs of uniform aspect and hummocks whose irregularity ended by seeming always the same; blocks cast in the same mould, and icebergs between which tortuous valleys wound. The travellers spoke little, and marched on, compass in hand. It is painful to open one's mouth in such an atmosphere; sharp icicles form immediately between one's lips, and the breath is not warm enough to melt them. Bell's steps were marked in the soft ground, and they followed them attentively, certain of being able to go where he had been before.

Numerous traces of bears and foxes crossed their path, but not an animal was seen that day. It would have been dangerous and useless to hunt them, as the sledge was sufficiently freighted. Generally in this sort of excursion travellers leave provision-stores along their route; they place them in hiding-places of snow, out of reach of animals; unload during the journey, and take up the provisions on their return. But Hatteras could not venture to do this on moveable ice-fields, and the uncertainty of the route made the return the same way exceedingly problematic. At noon Hatteras caused his little troop to halt under shelter of an ice-wall. Their breakfast consisted of pemmican and boiling tea; the latter beverage comforted the cold wayfarers. They set out again after an hour's rest. The first day they walked about twenty miles, and in the evening both men and dogs were exhausted. However, notwithstanding their fatigue, they were obliged to construct a snow-house in which to pass the night. It took about an hour and a half to build. Bell showed himself very skilful. The ice-blocks were cut out and placed above one another in the form of a dome; a large block at the top made the vault. Snow served for mortar and filled up the chinks. It soon hardened and made a single block of the entire structure. It was reached by a narrow opening, through which the doctor squeezed himself painfully, and the others followed him. The supper was rapidly prepared with spirits of wine. The interior temperature of the snow-house was bearable, as the wind which raged outside could not penetrate. When their repast, which was always the same, was over, they began to think of sleep. A mackintosh was spread over the floor and kept them from the damp. Their stockings and shoes were dried by the portable grate, and then three of the travellers wrapped themselves up in their blankets, leaving the fourth to keep watch; he watched over the common safety, and prevented the opening getting blocked up, for if it did they would be buried alive.

Dick shared the snow-house; the other dogs remained outside, and after their supper they squatted down in the snow, which made them a blanket. The men were tired out with their day's walk, and soon slept. The doctor took his turn on guard at three o'clock in the morning.

There was a tempest during the night, the gusts of which thickened the walls of the snow-house. The next day, at six o'clock, they set out again on their monotonous march. The temperature lowered several degrees, and hardened the ground so that walking was easier. They often met with mounds or cairns something like the Esquimaux hiding-places. The doctor had one demolished, and found nothing but a block of ice.

"What did you expect, Clawbonny?" said Hatteras. "Are we not the first men who have set foot here?"

"It's very likely we are, but who knows?" answered the doctor.

"I do not want to lose my time in useless search," continued the captain; "I want to be quick back to my ship, even if we don't find the fuel."

"I believe we are certain of doing that," said the doctor.

"I often wish I had not left the *Forward*," said Hatteras; "a captain's place is on board."

"Johnson is there."

"Yes; but—well, we must make haste, that's all."

The procession marched along rapidly; Simpson excited the dogs by calling to them; in consequence of a phosphorescent phenomenon they seemed to be running on a ground in flames, and the sledges seemed to raise a dust of sparks. The doctor went on in front to examine the state of the snow, but all at once he disappeared. Bell, who was nearest to him, ran up.

"Well, Mr. Clawbonny," he called out in anxiety, "where are you?"

"Doctor!" called the captain.

"Here, in a hole," answered a reassuring voice; "throw me a cord, and I shall soon be on the surface of the globe again."

They threw a cord to the doctor, who was at the bottom of a hole about ten feet deep; he fastened it round his waist, and his companions hauled him up with difficulty.

"Are you hurt?" asked Hatteras.

"Not a bit," answered the doctor, shaking his kind face, all covered with snow.

"But how did you tumble down there?"

"Oh, it was the refraction's fault," he answered laughing. "I thought I was stepping across about a foot's distance, and I fell into a hole ten feet deep! I never shall get used to it. It will teach us to sound every step before we advance. Ears hear and eyes see all topsy-turvy in this enchanted spot."

"Can you go on?" asked the captain.

"Oh, yes; the little fall has done me more good than harm."

In the evening the travellers had marched twenty-five miles; they were worn out, but it did not prevent the doctor climbing up an iceberg while the snow-house was being built. The full moon shone with extraordinary brilliancy in the clearest sky; the stars were singularly bright; from the top of the iceberg the view stretched over an immense plain, bristling with icebergs; they were of all sizes and shapes, and made the field look like a vast cemetery, in which twenty generations slept the sleep of death. Notwithstanding the cold, the doctor remained a long time in contemplation of the spectacle, and his companions had much trouble to get him

away; but they were obliged to think of rest; the snow-hut was ready; the four companions burrowed into it like moles, and soon slept the sleep of the just.

The next day and the following ones passed without any particular incident; the journey was easy or difficult according to the weather; when it was cold and clear they wore their moccasins and advanced rapidly, when damp and penetrating, their snow-shoes, and made little way. They reached thus the 15th of January; the moon was in her last quarter, and was only visible for a short time; the sun, though still hidden below the horizon, gave six hours of a sort of twilight, not sufficient to see the way by; they were obliged to stake it out according to the direction given by the compass. Bell led the way; Hatteras marched in a straight line behind him; then Simpson and the doctor, taking it in turns, so as only to see Hatteras, and keep in a straight line. But notwithstanding all their precautions, they deviated sometimes thirty or forty degrees; they were then obliged to stake it out again. On Sunday, the 15th of January, Hatteras considered he had made a hundred miles to the south; the morning was consecrated to the mending of different articles of clothing and encampment; divine service was not forgotten. They set out again at noon; the temperature was cold, the thermometer marked only 32° below zero in a very clear atmosphere.

All at once, without warning of any kind, a vapour rose from the ground in a complete state of congelation, reaching a height of about ninety feet, and remaining stationary; they could not see a foot before them; it clung to their clothing, and bristled it with ice. Our travellers, surprised by the frost-rime, had all the same idea—that of getting near one another. They called out, “Bell!” “Simpson!” “This way, doctor!” “Where are you, captain?” But no answers were heard; the vapour did not conduct sound. They all fired as a sign of rallying. But if the sound of the voice appeared too weak, the detonation of the firearms was too strong, for it was echoed in all directions, and produced a confused rumble without appreciable direction. Each acted then according to his instincts. Hatteras stopped, folded his arms, and waited. Simpson contented himself with stopping his sledge. Bell retraced his steps, feeling the traces with his hands. The doctor ran hither and thither, bumping against the icebergs, falling down, getting up, and losing himself more and more. At the end of five minutes he said:

“I can’t go on like this! What a queer climate! It changes too suddenly, and the icicles are cutting my face. Captain! I say, captain!”

But he obtained no answer; he discharged his gun, and notwithstanding his thick gloves, burnt his hand with the trigger. During this operation he thought he saw a confused mass moving at a few steps from him.

“At last!” said he. “Hatteras! Bell! Simpson! Is it you? Answer, do!”

A hollow growl was the only answer.

“Whatever is that?” thought the doctor. The mass approached, and its outline was more distinctly seen. “Why, it’s a bear!” thought the terrified doctor. It was a bear, lost too in the frost-rime, passing within a few steps of the men of whose existence it was ignorant. The doctor saw its enormous paws beating the air, and did not like the situation. He jumped back and the mass disappeared like a phantom. The doctor felt the ground rising under his feet; climbing on all-fours he got to the top of a block, then another, feeling the end with his stick. “It’s an iceberg!” he said to himself: “if I get to the top I shall be saved.” So saying he climbed to a height of about eighty feet; his head was higher than the frozen fog, of which he could clearly see the top. As he looked round he saw the heads of his three companions emerging from the dense fluid.

“Hatteras!”

“Doctor!”

“Bell!”

“Simpson!”

The four names were all shouted at the same time; the sky, lightened by a magnificent halo, threw pale rays which coloured the frost-rime like clouds, and the summits of the icebergs seemed to emerge from liquid silver. The travellers found themselves circumscribed by a circle less than a hundred feet in diameter. Thanks to the purity of the upper layers of air, they could hear each other distinctly, and could talk from the top of their icebergs. After the first shots they had all thought the best thing they could do was to climb.

“The sledge!” cried the captain.

“It’s eighty feet below us,” answered Simpson.

“In what condition?”

“In good condition.”

“What about the bear?” asked the doctor.

“What bear?” asked Bell.

“The bear that nearly broke my head,” answered the doctor.

“If there is a bear we must go down,” said Hatteras.

“If we do we shall get lost again,” said the doctor.

“And our dogs?” said Hatteras.

At this moment Dick’s bark was heard through the fog.

“That’s Dick,” said Hatteras; “there’s something up; I shall go down.”

Growls and barks were heard in a fearful chorus. In the fog it sounded like an immense humming in a wadded room. Some struggle was evidently going on.

“Dick! Dick!” cried the captain, re-entering the frost-rime.

“Wait a minute, Hatteras; I believe the fog is clearing off,” called out the doctor. So it was, but lowering like the waters of a pond that is being emptied; it seemed to enter the ground from whence it sprang; the shining summits of the icebergs grew above it; others, submerged till then, came out like new islands; by an optical illusion the travellers seemed to be mounting with their icebergs above the fog. Soon the top of the sledge appeared, then the dogs, then about thirty other animals, then enormous moving masses, and Dick jumping about in and out of the fog.

“Foxes!” cried Bell.

“Bears!” shouted the doctor. “Five!”

“Our dogs! Our provisions!” cried Simpson. A band of foxes and bears had attacked the sledge, and were making havoc with the provisions. The instinct of pillage made them agree; the dogs barked furiously, but the herd took no notice, and the scene of destruction was lamentable.

“Fire!” cried the captain, discharging his gun. His companions imitated him. Upon hearing the quadruple detonation the bears raised their heads, and with a comical growl gave the signal for departure; they went faster than a horse could gallop, and, followed by the herd of foxes, soon disappeared amongst the northern icebergs.

XXX. The Cairn

The frost-rime had lasted about three-quarters of an hour; quite long enough for the bears and foxes to make away with a considerable quantity of provisions which they attacked all the more greedily, arriving, as they did, when the animals were perishing with hunger from the long winter. They had torn open the covering of the sledge with their enormous paws; the cases of pemmican were open, and half-empty; the biscuit-bags pillaged, the provisions of tea spilt over the snow, a barrel of spirits of wine broken up, and its precious contents run out; the camping materials lying all about. The wild animals had done their work.

“The devils have done for us!” said Bell.

“What shall we do now?” said Simpson.

“Let us first see how much we’ve lost,” said the doctor; “we can talk after.”

Hatteras said nothing, but began picking up the scattered objects. They picked up all the pemmican and biscuit that was still eatable. The loss of so much spirits of wine was deplorable, as without it it was impossible to get any hot drinks—no tea nor coffee.

The doctor made an inventory of the provisions that were left, and found that the animals had eaten two hundred pounds of pemmican and a hundred and fifty pounds of biscuit; if the travellers continued their journey they would be obliged to put themselves on half-rations. They deliberated about what was to be done under the circumstances. Should they return to the brig and begin their expedition again? But how could they resolve to lose the hundred and fifty miles already cleared? and coming back without the fuel, how would they be received by the crew? and which of them would begin the excursion again? It was evident that the best thing to do was to go on, even at the price of the worst privations. The doctor, Hatteras, and Bell were for going on, but Simpson wanted to go back; his health had severely suffered from the fatigues of the journey, and he grew visibly weaker; but at last, seeing he was alone in his opinion, he took his place at the head of the sledge, and the little caravan continued its route. During the three following days, from the 15th to the 17th of January, the monotonous incidents of the journey took place again. They went on more slowly; the travellers were soon tired; their legs ached with fatigue, and the dogs drew with difficulty. Their insufficient food told upon them. The weather changed with its usual quickness, going suddenly from intense cold to damp and penetrating fogs.

On the 18th of January the aspect of the ice-field changed all at once. A great number of peaks, like pyramids, ending in a sharp point at a great elevation, showed themselves on the horizon. The soil in certain places was seen through the layer of snow; it seemed to consist of schist and quartz, with some appearance of calcareous rock. At last the travellers had reached *terra firma*, and, according to their estimation, the continent must be New Cornwall. The doctor was delighted to tread on solid ground once more; the travellers had only a hundred more miles to go before reaching Belcher Cape; but the trouble of walking increased on this rocky soil, full of inequalities, crevices, and precipices; they were obliged to plunge into the interior of the land and climb the high cliffs on the coast, across narrow gorges, in which the snow was piled up to a height of thirty or forty feet. The travellers soon had cause to regret the levels they had left, on which the sledge rolled so easily. Now they were obliged to drag it with all their strength. The dogs were worn out, and had to be helped; the men harnessed themselves along with them, and wore themselves out too. They were often obliged to unload the provisions in order to get over a steep hill, whose frozen surface gave

no hold. Some passages ten feet long took hours to clear. During the first day they only made about five miles on that land, so well named Cornwall. The next day the sledge attained the upper part of the cliffs; the travellers were too exhausted to construct their snow-house, and were obliged to pass the night under the tent, enveloped in their buffalo-skins, and drying their stockings by placing them on their chests. The consequences of such a state of things may be readily imagined; during the night the thermometer went down to 44° below zero, and the mercury froze.

The health of Simpson became alarming; an obstinate cold, violent rheumatism, and intolerable pain forced him to lie down on the sledge, which he could no longer guide. Bell took his place; he was not well, but was obliged not to give in. The doctor also felt the influence of his terrible winter excursion, but he did not utter a complaint; he marched on in front, leaning on his stick; he lighted the way; he helped in everything. Hatteras, impassive, impenetrable, insensible, in as good health as the first day, with his iron constitution, followed the sledge in silence. On the 20th of January the weather was so bad that the least effort caused immediate prostration; but the difficulties of the ground became so great that Hatteras and Bell harnessed themselves along with the dogs; the front of the sledge was broken by an unexpected shock, and they were forced to stop and mend it. Such delays occurred several times a day. The travellers were journeying along a deep ravine up to their waists in snow, and perspiring, notwithstanding the violent cold. No one spoke. All at once Bell looked at the doctor in alarm, picked up a handful of snow, and began to rub his companion's face with all his might.

"What the deuce, Bell?" said the doctor, struggling.

But Bell went on rubbing.

"Are you mad? You've filled my eyes, nose, and mouth with snow. What is it?"

"Why," answered Bell, "if you've got a nose left, you owe it to me."

"A nose?" said the doctor, putting his hand to his face.

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny, you were quite frostbitten; your nose was quite white when I looked at you, and without my bit of rubbing you would be minus nose."

"Thanks, Bell," said the doctor; "I'll do the same for you in case of need."

"I hope you will, Mr. Clawbonny, and I only wish we had nothing worse to look forward to!"

"You mean Simpson! Poor fellow, he is suffering dreadfully!"

"Do you fear for him?" asked Hatteras quickly.

"Yes, captain," answered the doctor.

"What do you fear?"

"A violent attack of scurvy. His legs swell already, and his gums are attacked; the poor fellow is lying under his blankets on the sledge, and every shock increases his pain. I pity him, but I can't do anything for him!"

"Poor Simpson!" said Bell.

"Perhaps we had better stop a day or two," said the doctor.

"Stop!" cried Hatteras, "when the lives of eighteen men depend upon our return! You know we have only enough provisions left for twenty days."

Neither the doctor nor Bell could answer that, and the sledge went on its way. In the evening they stopped at the foot of an ice-hill, out of which Bell soon cut a cavern; the travellers took refuge in it, and the doctor passed the night in nursing Simpson; he was a prey to the scurvy, and constant groans issued from his terrified lips.

“Ah, Mr. Clawbonny, I shall never get over it. I wish I was dead already.”

“Take courage, my poor fellow!” answered the doctor, with pity in his tone, and he answered Simpson’s complaints by incessant attention. Though half-dead with fatigue, he employed a part of the night in making the sick man a soothing draught, and rubbed him with lime-juice. Unfortunately it had little effect, and did not prevent the terrible malady spreading. The next day they were obliged to lift the poor fellow on to the sledge, although he begged and prayed them to leave him to die in peace, and begin their painful march again.

The freezing mists wet the three men to the skin; the snow and sleet beat in their faces; they did the work of beasts of burden, and had not even sufficient food. Dick ran hither and thither, discovering by instinct the best route to follow. During the morning of the 23rd of January, when it was nearly dark, for the new moon had not yet made her appearance, Dick ran on first; he was lost to sight for several hours. Hatteras became anxious, as there were many bear-marks on the ground; he was considering what had better be done, when a loud barking was heard in front. The little procession moved on quicker, and soon came upon the faithful animal in the depth of a ravine. Dick was set as if he had been petrified in front of a sort of cairn, made of limestone, and covered with a cement of ice.

“This time,” said the doctor, disengaging himself from the traces, “it’s really a cairn; we can’t be mistaken.”

“What does it matter to us?” said Hatteras.

“Why, if it is a cairn, it may inclose something that would be useful to us—some provisions perhaps.”

“As if Europeans had ever been here!” said Hatteras, shrugging his shoulders.

“But if not Europeans, it may be that the Esquimaux have hidden some product of their hunting here. They are accustomed to doing it, I think.”

“Well, look if you like, Clawbonny, but I don’t think it is worth your while.”

Clawbonny and Bell, armed with their pickaxes made for the cairn. Dick kept on barking furiously. The cairn was soon demolished, and the doctor took out a damp paper. Hatteras took the document and read:

“Altam..., *Porpoise*, Dec... 13th, 1860,
12..° long... 8..° 35’ lat...”

“The *Porpoise*!” said the doctor.

“I don’t know any ship of that name frequenting these seas,” said Hatteras.

“It is evident,” continued the doctor, “that some sailors, or perhaps some shipwrecked fellows, have passed here within the last two months.”

“That’s certain,” said Bell.

“What shall we do?” asked the doctor.

“Continue our route,” said Hatteras coldly. “I don’t know anything about the *Porpoise*, but I do know that the *Forward* is waiting for our return.”

XXXI. The Death Of Simpson

The travellers went on their weary way, each thinking of the discovery they had just made. Hatteras frowned with uneasiness.

“What can the *Porpoise* be?” he asked himself. “Is it a ship? and if so, what was it doing so near the Pole?”

At this thought he shivered, but not from the cold. The doctor and Bell only thought of the result their discovery might have for others or for themselves. But the difficulties and obstacles in their way soon made them oblivious to everything but their own preservation.

Simpson’s condition grew worse; the doctor saw that death was near. He could do nothing, and was suffering cruelly on his own account from a painful ophthalmia which might bring on blindness if neglected. The twilight gave them enough light to hurt the eyes when reflected by the snow; it was difficult to guard against the reflection, for the spectacle-glasses got covered with a layer of opaque ice which obstructed the view, and when so much care was necessary for the dangers of the route, it was important to see clearly; however, the doctor and Bell took it in turns to cover their eyes or to guide the sledge. The soil was volcanic, and by its inequalities made it very difficult to draw the sledge, the frame of which was getting worn out. Another difficulty was the effect of the uniform brilliancy of the snow; the ground seemed to fall beneath the feet of the travellers, and they experienced the same sensation as that of the rolling of a ship; they could not get accustomed to it, and it made them sleepy, and they often walked on half in a dream. Then some unexpected shock, fall, or obstacle would wake them up from their inertia, which afterwards took possession of them again.

On the 25th of January they began to descend, and their dangers increased. The least slip might send them down a precipice, and there they would have been infallibly lost. Towards evening an extremely violent tempest swept the snow-clad summits; they were obliged to lie down on the ground, and the temperature was so low that they were in danger of being frozen to death. Bell, with the help of Hatteras, built a snow-house, in which the poor fellows took shelter; there they partook of a little pemmican and warm tea; there were only a few gallons of spirits of wine left, and they were obliged to use them to quench their thirst, as they could not take snow in its natural state; it must be melted. In temperate countries, where the temperature scarcely falls below freezing point, it is not injurious; but above the Polar circle it gets so cold that it cannot be touched more than a red-hot iron; there is such a difference of temperature that its absorption produces suffocation. The Esquimaux would rather suffer the greatest torments than slake their thirst with snow.

The doctor took his turn to watch at three o’clock in the morning, when the tempest was at its height; he was leaning in a corner of the snow-house, when a lamentable groan from Simpson drew his attention; he rose to go to him, and struck his head against the roof; without thinking of the accident he began to rub Simpson’s swollen limbs; after about a quarter of an hour he got up again, and bumped his head again, although he was kneeling then.

“That’s very queer,” he said to himself.

He lifted his hand above his head, and felt that the roof was lowering.

“Good God!” he cried; “Hatteras! Bell!”

His cries awoke his companions, who got up quickly, and bumped themselves too; the darkness was thick.

“The roof is falling in!” cried the doctor.

They all rushed out, dragging Simpson with them; they had no sooner left their dangerous retreat, than it fell in with a great noise. The poor fellows were obliged to take refuge under the tent covering, which was soon covered with a thick layer of snow, which, as a bad conductor, prevented the travellers being frozen alive. The tempest continued all through the night. When Bell harnessed the dogs the next morning he found that some of them had begun to eat their leather harness, and that two of them were very ill, and could not go much further. However, the caravan set out again; there only remained sixty miles to go. On the 26th, Bell, who went on in front, called out suddenly to his companions. They ran up to him, and he pointed to a gun leaning against an iceberg.

“A gun!” cried the doctor.

Hatteras took it; it was loaded and in good condition.

“The men from the *Porpoise* can’t be far off,” said the doctor.

Hatteras remarked that the gun was of American manufacture, and his hands crisped the frozen barrel. He gave orders to continue the march, and they kept on down the mountain slope. Simpson seemed deprived of all feeling; he had no longer the strength to complain. The tempest kept on, and the sledge proceeded more and more slowly; they scarcely made a few miles in twenty-four hours, and in spite of the strictest economy, the provisions rapidly diminished; but as long as they had enough for the return journey, Hatteras kept on.

On the 27th they found a sextant half-buried in the snow, then a leather bottle; the latter contained brandy, or rather a lump of ice, with a ball of snow in the middle, which represented the spirit; it could not be used. It was evident that they were following in the steps of some poor shipwrecked fellows who, like them, had taken the only practicable route. The doctor looked carefully round for other cairns, but in vain. Sad thoughts came into his mind; he could not help thinking that it would be a good thing not to meet with their predecessors; what could he and his companions do for them? They wanted help themselves; their clothes were in rags, and they had not enough to eat. If their predecessors were numerous they would all die of hunger. Hatteras seemed to wish to avoid them, and could he be blamed? But these men might be their fellow-countrymen, and, however slight might be the chance of saving them, ought they not to try it? He asked Bell what he thought about it, but the poor fellow’s heart was hardened by his own suffering, and he did not answer. Clawbonny dared not question Hatteras, so he left it to Providence.

In the evening of the 27th, Simpson appeared to be at the last extremity; his limbs were already stiff and frozen; his difficult breathing formed a sort of mist round his head, and convulsive movements announced that his last hour was come. The expression of his face was terrible, desperate, and he threw looks of powerless anger towards the captain. He accused him silently, and Hatteras avoided him and became more taciturn and wrapped up in himself than ever. The following night was frightful; the tempest redoubled in violence; the tent was thrown down three times, and the snowdrifts buried the poor fellows, blinded them, froze them, and wounded them with the sharp icicles struck off the surrounding icebergs. The dogs howled lamentably. Simpson lay exposed to the cruel atmosphere. Bell succeeded in getting up the tent again, which, though it did not protect them from the cold, kept out the snow. But a more violent gust blew it down a fourth time, and dragged it along in its fury.

“Oh, we can’t bear it any longer!” cried Bell.

“Courage, man, courage!” answered the doctor, clinging to him in order to prevent themselves rolling down a ravine. Simpson’s death-rattle was heard. All at once, with a last

effort, he raised himself up and shook his fist at Hatteras, who was looking at him fixedly, then gave a fearful cry, and fell back dead in the midst of his unfinished threat.

“He is dead!” cried the doctor.

“Dead!” repeated Bell.

Hatteras advanced towards the corpse, but was driven back by a gust of wind.

Poor Simpson was the first victim to the murderous climate, the first to pay with his life the unreasonable obstinacy of the captain. The dead man had called Hatteras an assassin, but he did not bend beneath the accusation. A single tear escaped from his eyes and froze on his pale cheek. The doctor and Bell looked at him with a sort of terror. Leaning on his stick, he looked like the genius of the North, upright in the midst of the whirlwind, and frightful in his immobility.

He remained standing thus till the first dawn of twilight, bold, tenacious, indomitable, and seemed to defy the tempest that roared round him.

XXXII. The Return

The wind went down about six in the morning, and turning suddenly north cleared the clouds from the sky; the thermometer marked 33° below zero. The first rays of the sun reached the horizon which they would gild a few days later. Hatteras came up to his two dejected companions, and said to them, in a low, sad voice:

“We are still more than sixty miles from the spot indicated by Sir Edward Belcher. We have just enough provisions to allow us to get back to the brig. If we go on any further we shall meet with certain death, and that will do good to no one. We had better retrace our steps.”

“That is a sensible resolution, Hatteras,” answered the doctor; “I would have followed you as far as you led us, but our health gets daily weaker; we can scarcely put one foot before the other; we ought to go back.”

“Is that your opinion too, Bell?” asked Hatteras.

“Yes, captain,” answered the carpenter.

“Very well,” said Hatteras; “we will take two days’ rest. We want it. The sledge wants mending. I think we had better build ourselves a snow-house, and try to regain a little strength.”

After this was settled, our three men set to work with vigour. Bell took the necessary precautions to assure the solidity of the construction, and they soon had a good shelter at the bottom of the ravine where the last halt had taken place. It had cost Hatteras a great effort to interrupt his journey. All their trouble and pain lost! A useless excursion, which one man had paid for with his life. What would become of the crew now that all hope of coal was over? What would Shandon think? Notwithstanding all these painful thoughts, he felt it impossible to go on any further. They began their preparations for the return journey at once. The sledge was mended; it had now only two hundred pounds weight to carry. They mended their clothes, worn-out, torn, soaked with snow, and hardened by the frost; new moccasins and snow-shoes replaced those that were worn out. This work took the whole day of the 29th and the morning of the 30th; the three travellers rested and comforted themselves as well as they could.

During the thirty-six hours passed in the snow-house and on the icebergs of the ravine, the doctor had noticed that Dick’s conduct was very strange; he crept smelling about a sort of rising in the ground made by several layers of ice; he kept wagging his tail with impatience, and trying to draw the attention of his master to the spot. The doctor thought that the dog’s uneasiness might be caused by the presence of Simpson’s body, which he and his companions had not yet had time to bury. He resolved to put it off no longer, especially as they intended starting early the next morning. Bell and the doctor took their pickaxes and directed their steps towards the lowest part of the ravine; the mound indicated by Dick seemed to be a good spot to place the corpse in; they were obliged to bury it deep to keep it from the bears. They began by removing the layer of soft snow, and then attacked the ice. At the third blow of his pickaxe the doctor broke some hard obstacle; he took out the pieces and saw that it was a glass bottle; Bell discovered a small biscuit-sack with a few crumbs at the bottom.

“Whatever does this mean?” said the doctor.

“I can’t think,” answered Bell, suspending his work.

They called Hatteras, who came immediately. Dick barked loudly, and began scratching at the ice.

“Perhaps we have found a provision-store,” said the doctor.

“It is possible,” said Bell.

“Go on,” said Hatteras.

Some remains of food were drawn out, and a case a quarter full of pemmican.

“If it is a hiding-place,” said Hatteras, “the bears have been before us. See, the provisions are not intact.”

“I am afraid so,” answered the doctor; “for——”

He was interrupted by a cry from Bell, who had come upon a man’s leg, stiffened and frozen.

“A corpse,” cried the doctor.

“It is a tomb,” answered Hatteras.

When the corpse was disinterred it turned out to be that of a sailor, about thirty years old, perfectly preserved. He wore the clothes of an Arctic navigator. The doctor could not tell how long he had been dead. But after this corpse, Bell discovered a second, that of a man of fifty, bearing the mark of the suffering that had killed him on his face.

“These are not buried bodies,” cried the doctor, “the poor fellows were surprised by death just as we find them.”

“You are right, Mr. Clawbonny,” answered Bell.

“Go on! go on!” said Hatteras.

Bell obeyed tremblingly; for who knew how many human bodies the mound contained?

“These men have been the victims of the same accident that almost happened to us,” said the doctor. “Their snow-house tumbled in. Let us see if any one of them is still alive.”

The place was soon cleared, and Bell dug out a third body, that of a man of forty, who had not the cadaverous look of the others. The doctor examined him and thought he recognised some symptoms of existence.

“He is alive!” he cried.

Bell and he carried the body into the snow-house whilst Hatteras, unmoved, contemplated their late habitation. The doctor stripped the resuscitated man and found no trace of a wound on him. He and Bell rubbed him vigorously with oakum steeped in spirits of wine, and they saw signs of returning consciousness; but the unfortunate man was in a state of complete prostration, and could not speak a word. His tongue stuck to his palate as if frozen. The doctor searched his pockets, but they were empty. He left Bell to continue the friction, and rejoined Hatteras. The captain had been down into the depths of the snow-house, and had searched about carefully. He came up holding a half-burnt fragment of a letter. These words were on it:

... tamont

... orpoise

... w York.

“Altamont!” cried the doctor, of the ship *Porpoise*, of New York.”

“An American,” said Hatteras.

“I’ll save him,” said the doctor, “and then we shall know all about it.”

He went back to Altamont whilst Hatteras remained pensive. Thanks to his attentions, the doctor succeeded in recalling the unfortunate man to life, but not to feeling; he neither saw, heard, nor spoke, but he lived. The next day Hatteras said to the doctor:

“We must start at once.”

“Yes. The sledge is not loaded; we’ll put the poor fellow on it and take him to the brig.”

“Very well; but we must bury these bodies first.”

The two unknown sailors were placed under the ruins of the snow-house again, and Simpson’s corpse took Altamont’s place. The three travellers buried their companion, and at seven o’clock in the morning they set out again. Two of the Greenland dogs were dead, and Dick offered himself in their place. He pulled with energy.

During the next twenty days the travellers experienced the same incidents as before. But as it was in the month of February they did not meet with the same difficulty from the ice. It was horribly cold, but there was not much wind. The sun reappeared for the first time on the 31st of January, and every day he stopped longer above the horizon. Bell and the doctor were almost blinded and half-lame; the carpenter was obliged to walk upon crutches. Altamont still lived, but he was in a state of complete insensibility. The doctor took great care of him, although he wanted attention himself; he was getting ill with fatigue. Hatteras thought of nothing but his ship. What state should he find it in?

On the 24th of February he stopped all of a sudden. A red light appeared about 300 paces in front, and a column of black smoke went up to the sky.

“Look at that smoke! my ship is burning,” said he with a beating heart.

“We are three miles off yet,” said Bell; “it can’t be the *Forward*.”

“Yes it is,” said the doctor; “the mirage makes it seem nearer.”

The three men, leaving the sledge to the care of Dick, ran on, and in an hour’s time were in sight of the ship. She was burning in the midst of the ice, which melted around her. A hundred steps farther a man met them, wringing his hands before the *Forward* in flames. It was Johnson. Hatteras ran to him.

“My ship! My ship!” cried he.

“Is that you, captain? Oh, don’t come any nearer,” said Johnson.

“What is it?” said Hatteras.

“The wretches left forty-eight hours ago, after setting fire to the ship.”

“Curse them!” cried Hatteras.

A loud explosion was then heard; the ground trembled; the icebergs fell upon the ice-field; a column of smoke went up into the clouds, and the *Forward* blew up. The doctor and Bell reached Hatteras, who out of the depths of despair cried:

“The cowards have fled! The strong will succeed! Johnson and Bell, you are courageous. Doctor, you have science. I have faith. To the North Pole! To the North Pole!”

His companions heard these energetic words, and they did them good; but it was a terrible situation for these four men, alone, under the 80th degree of latitude, in the midst of the Polar Regions!

II. The Field Of Ice

I. The Doctor's Inventory

It was a bold project of Hatteras to push his way to the North Pole, and gain for his country the honour and glory of its discovery. But he had done all that lay in human power now, and, after having struggled for nine months against currents and tempests, shattering icebergs and breaking through almost insurmountable barriers, amid the cold of an unprecedented winter, after having outdistanced all his predecessors and accomplished half his task, he suddenly saw all his hopes blasted. The treachery, or rather the despondency, of his worn-out crew, and the criminal folly of one or two leading spirits among them had left him and his little band of men in a terrible situation-helpless in an icy desert, two thousand five hundred miles away from their native land, and without even a ship to shelter them.

However, the courage of Hatteras was still undaunted. The three men which were left him were the best on board his brig, and while they remained he might venture to hope.

After the cheerful, manly words of the captain, the Doctor felt the best thing to be done was to look their prospects fairly in the face, and know the exact state of things. Accordingly, leaving his companions, he stole away alone down to the scene of the explosion.

Of the *Forward*, the brig that had been so carefully built and had become so dear, not a vestige remained. Shapeless blackened fragments, twisted bars of iron, cable ends still smouldering, and here and there in the distance spiral wreaths of smoke, met his eye on all sides. His cabin and all his precious treasures were gone, his books, and instruments, and collections reduced to ashes. As he stood thinking mournfully of his irreparable loss, he was joined by Johnson, who grasped his offered hand in speechless sorrow.

"What's to become of us?" asked the Doctor.

"Who can tell!" was the old sailor's reply.

"Anyhow," said Clawbonny, "do not let us despair! Let us be men!"

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny, you are right. Now is the time to show our mettle. We are in a bad plight, and how to get out of it, that is the question."

"Poor old brig!" exclaimed the Doctor. "I had grown so attached to her. I loved her as one loves a house where he has spent a life-time."

"Ay! it's strange what a hold those planks and beams get on a fellow's heart."

"And the long-boat-is that burnt?" asked the Doctor.

"No, Mr. Clawbonny. Shandon and his gang have carried it off."

"And the pirogue?"

"Shivered into a thousand pieces? Stop. Do you see those bits of sheet-iron? That is all that remains of it."

"Then we have nothing but the Halkett-boat?"

"Yes, we have that still, thanks to your idea of taking it with you."

"That isn't much," said the Doctor.

"Oh, those base traitors!" exclaimed Johnson. "Heaven punish them as they deserve!"

“Johnson,” returned the Doctor, gently, “we must not forget how sorely they have been tried. Only the best remain good in the evil day; few can stand trouble. Let us pity our fellow-sufferers, and not curse them.”

For the next few minutes both were silent, and then Johnson asked what had become of the sledge.

“We left it about a mile off,” was the reply.

“In charge of Simpson?”

“No, Simpson is dead, poor fellow!”

“Simpson dead!”

“Yes, his strength gave way entirely, and he first sank.”

“Poor Simpson! And yet who knows if he isn’t rather to be envied?”

“But, for the dead man we have left behind, we have brought back a dying one.”

“A dying man?”

“Yes, Captain Altamont.”

And in a few words he informed Johnson of their discovery.

“An American!” said Johnson, as the recital was ended.

“Yes, everything goes to prove that. But I wonder what the *Porpoise* was, and what brought her in these seas?”

“She rushed on to her ruin like the rest of foolhardy adventurers; but, tell me, did you find the coal?”

The Doctor shook his head sadly.

“No coal! not a vestige! No, we did not even get as far as the place mentioned by Sir Edward Belcher.”

“Then we have no fuel whatever?” said the old sailor.

“No.”

“And no provisions?”

“No.”

“And no ship to make our way back to England?”

It required courage indeed to face these gloomy realities, but, after a moment’s silence, Johnson said again-

“Well, at any rate we know exactly how we stand. The first thing to be done now is to make a hut, for we can’t stay long exposed to this temperature.”

“Yes, we’ll soon manage that with Bell’s help,” replied the Doctor. “Then we must go and find the sledge, and bring back the American, and have a consultation with Hatteras.”

“Poor captain,” said Johnson, always forgetting his own troubles, “how he must feel it!”

Clawbonny and Bell found Hatteras standing motionless, his arms folded in his usual fashion. He seemed gazing into space, but his face had recovered its calm, self-possessed expression. His faithful dog stood beside him, like his master, apparently insensible to the biting cold, though the temperature was 32 degrees below zero.

Bell lay on the ice in an almost inanimate condition. Johnson had to take vigorous measures to rouse him, but at last, by dint of shaking and rubbing him with snow, he succeeded.

“Come, Bell,” he cried, “don’t give way like this. Exert yourself, my man; we must have a talk about our situation, and we need a place to put our heads in. Come and help me, Bell. You haven’t forgotten how to make a snow hut, have you? There is an iceberg all ready to hand; we’ve only got to hollow it out. Let’s set to work; we shall find that is the best remedy for us.”

Bell tried to shake off his torpor and help his comrade, while Mr. Clawbonny undertook to go and fetch the sledge and the dogs.

“Will you go with him, captain?” asked Johnson.

“No, my friend,” said Hatteras, in a gentle tone, “if the Doctor will kindly undertake the task. Before the day ends I must come to some resolution, and I need to be alone to think. Go. Do meantime whatever you think best. I will deal with the future.”

Johnson went back to the Doctor, and said-

“It’s very strange, but the captain seems quite to have got over his anger. I never heard him speak so gently before.”

“So much the better,” said Clawbonny. “Believe me, Johnson, that man can save us yet.”

And drawing his hood as closely round his head as possible, the Doctor seized his iron-tipped staff, and set out without further delay.

Johnson and Bell commenced operations immediately. They had simply to dig a hole in the heart of a great block of ice; but it was not easy work, owing to the extreme hardness of the material. However, this very hardness guaranteed the solidity of the dwelling, and the further their labours advanced the more they became sheltered.

Hatteras alternately paced up and down, and stood motionless, evidently shrinking from any approach to the scene of explosion.

In about an hour the Doctor returned, bringing with him Altamont lying on the sledge, wrapped up in the folds of the tent. The poor dogs were so exhausted from starvation that they could scarcely draw it along, and they had begun to gnaw their harness. It was, indeed, high time for feasts and men to take food and rest.

While the hut was being still further dug out, the Doctor went foraging about, and had the good fortune to find a little stove, almost undamaged by the explosion. He soon restored it to working trim, and, by the time the hut was completed, had filled it with wood and got it lighted. Before long it was roaring, and diffusing a genial warmth on all sides. The American was brought in and laid on blankets, and the four Englishmen seated themselves round the fire to enjoy their scanty meal of biscuit and hot tea, the last remains of the provisions on the sledge. Not a word was spoken by Hatteras, and the others respected his silence.

When the meal was over, the Doctor rose and went out, making a sign to Johnson to follow.

“Come, Johnson,” he said, “we will take an inventory of all we have left. We must know exactly how we are off, and our treasures are scattered in all directions; so we had better begin, and pick them up as fast as possible, for the snow may fall at any moment, and then it would be quite useless to look for anything.”

“Don’t let us lose a minute, then,” replied Johnson. “Fire and food- those are our chief wants.”

“Very well, you take one side and I’ll take the other, and we’ll search from the centre to the circumference.”

This task occupied two hours, and all they discovered was a little salt meat, about 50 lbs. of pemmican, three sacks of biscuits, a small stock of chocolate, five or six pints of brandy, and about 2 lbs. of coffee, picked up bean by bean off the ice.

Neither blankets, nor hammocks, nor clothing—all had been consumed in the devouring flame.

This slender store of provisions would hardly last three weeks, and they had wood enough to supply the stove for about the same time.

Now that the inventory was made, the next business was to fetch the sledge. The tired-out dogs were harnessed sorely against their will, and before long returned bringing the few but precious treasures found among the *débris* of the brig. These were safely deposited in the hut, and then Johnson and Clawbonny, half-frozen with their work, resumed their places beside their companions in misfortune.

II. First Words Of Altamont

About eight o'clock in the evening, the grey snow clouds cleared away for a little, and the stars shone out brilliantly in the sky.

Hatteras seized the opportunity and went out silently to take the altitude of some of the principal constellations. He wished to ascertain if the ice-field was still drifting.

In half an hour he returned and sat down in a corner of the hut, where he remained without stirring all night, motionless as if asleep, but in reality buried in deepest thought.

The next day the snow fell heavily, and the Doctor congratulated himself on his wise forethought, when he saw the white sheet lying three feet thick over the scene of the explosion, completely obliterating all traces of the *Forward*.

It was impossible to venture outside in such weather, but the stove drew capitally, and made the hut quite comfortable, or at any rate it seemed so to the weary, worn out adventurers.

The American was in less pain, and was evidently gradually coming back to life. He opened his eyes, but could not yet speak, for his lips were so affected by the scurvy that articulation was impossible, but he could hear and understand all that was said to him. On learning what had passed, and the circumstances of his discovery, he expressed his thanks by gestures, and the Doctor was too wise to let him know how brief his respite from death would prove. In three weeks at most every vestige of food would be gone.

About noon Hatteras roused himself, and going up to his friends, said-

"We must make up our minds what to do, but I must request Johnson to tell me first all the particulars of the mutiny on the brig, and how this final act of baseness came about."

"What good will that do?" said the Doctor. "The fact is certain, and it is no use thinking over it."

"I differ from your opinion," rejoined Hatteras. "Let me hear the whole affair from Johnson, and then I will banish it from my thoughts."

"Well," said the boatswain, "this was how it happened. I did all in my power to prevent, but--"

"I am sure of that, Johnson; and what's more, I have no doubt the ringleaders had been hatching their plans for some time."

"That's my belief too," said the Doctor.

"And so it is mine," resumed Johnson; "for almost immediately after your departure Shandon, supported by the others, took the command of the ship.

I could not resist him, and from that moment everybody did pretty much as they pleased. Shandon made no attempt to restrain them: it was his policy to make them believe that their privations and toils were at an end. Economy was entirely disregarded. A blazing fire was kept up in the stove, and the men were allowed to eat and drink at discretion; not only tea and coffee was at their disposal, but all the spirits on board, and on men who had been so long deprived of ardent liquors, you may guess the result. They went on in this manner from the 7th to the 15th of January."

"And this was Shandon's doing?" asked Hatteras.

“Yes, captain.”

“Never mention his name to me again! Go on, Johnson.”

“It was about the 24th or 25th of January, that they resolved to abandon the ship. Their plan was to reach the west coast of Baffin’s Bay, and from thence to embark in the boat and follow the track of the whalers, or to get to some of the Greenland settlements on the eastern side. Provisions were abundant, and the sick men were so excited by the hope of return that they were almost well. They began their preparations for departure by making a sledge which they were to draw themselves, as they had no dogs. This was not ready till the 15th of February, and I was always hoping for your arrival, though I half dreaded it too, for you could have done nothing with the men, and they would have massacred you rather than remain on board. I tried my influence on each one separately, remonstrating and reasoning with them, and pointing out the dangers they would encounter, and also the cowardice of leaving you, but it was a mere waste of words; not even the best among them would listen to me. Shandon was impatient to be off, and fixed the 22nd of February for starting. The sledge and the boat were packed as closely as possible with provisions and spirits, and heaps of wood, to obtain which they had hewed the brig down to her water-line. The last day the men ran riot. They completely sacked the ship, and in a drunken paroxysm Pen and two or three others set it on fire. I fought and struggled against them, but they threw me down and assailed me with blows, and then the wretches, headed by Shandon, went off towards the east and were soon out of sight. I found myself alone on the burning ship, and what could I do? The fire-hole was completely blocked up with ice. I had not a single drop of water! For two days the *Forward* struggled with the flames, and you know the rest.”

A long silence followed the gloomy recital, broken at length by Hatteras, who said-

“Johnson, I thank you; you did all you could to save my ship, but single-handed you could not resist. Again I thank you, and now let the subject be dropped. Let us unite efforts for our common salvation. There are four of us, four companions, four friends, and all our lives are equally precious. Let each give his opinion on the best course for us to pursue.”

“You ask us then, Hatteras,” said the Doctor, “we are all devoted to you, and our words come from our hearts. But will you not state you own views first?”

“That would be little use,” said Hatteras, sadly; “my opinion might appear interested; let me hear all yours first.”

“Captain,” said Johnson, “before pronouncing on such an important matter, I wish to ask you a question.”

“Ask it, then, Johnson.”

“You went out yesterday to ascertain our exact position; well, is the field drifting or stationary?”

“Perfectly stationary. It had not moved since the last reckoning was made. I find we are just where we were before we left, in 80° 15” lat. and 97° 35” long.”

“And what distance are we from the nearest sea to the west?”

“About six hundred miles.”

“And that sea is--?”

“Smith’s Sound,” was the reply.

“The same that we could not get through last April?”

“The same.”

“Well, captain, now we know our actual situation, we are in a better position to determine our course of action.”

“Speak your minds, then,” said Hatteras, again burying his head in his hands.

“What do you say, Bell?” asked the Doctor.

“It strikes me the case doesn’t need long thinking over,” said the carpenter. “We must get back at once without losing a single day or even a single hour, either to the south or west, and make our way to the nearest coast, even if we are two months doing it!”

“We have only food for three weeks,” replied Hatteras, without raising his head.

“Very well,” said Johnson, “we must make the journey in three weeks, since it is our last chance. Even if we can only crawl on our knees before we get to our destination, we must be there in twenty-five days.”

“This part of the Arctic Continent is unexplored. We may have to encounter difficulties. Mountains and glaciers may bar our progress,” objected Hatteras.

“I don’t see that’s any sufficient reason for not attempting it. We shall have to endure sufferings, no doubt, and perhaps many. We shall have to limit ourselves to the barest quantities of food, unless our guns should procure us anything.”

“There is only about half a pound of powder left,” said Hatteras.

“Come now, Hatteras, I know the full weight of your objections, and I am not deluding myself with vain hopes. But I think I can read your motive. Have you any practical suggestion to offer?”

“No,” said Hatteras, after a little hesitation.

“You don’t doubt our courage,” continued the Doctor. “We would follow you to the last—you know that. But must we not, meantime, give up all hope of reaching the Pole? Your plans have been defeated by treachery. Natural difficulties you might have overcome, but you have been outmatched by perfidy and human weakness. You have done all that man could do, and you would have succeeded I am certain; but situated as we are now, are you not obliged to relinquish your projects for the present, and is not a return to England even positively necessary before you could continue them?”

“Well, captain?” asked Johnson after waiting a considerable time for Hatteras to reply.

Thus interrogated, he raised his head, and said in a constrained tone—

“You think yourselves quite certain then of reaching the Sound, exhausted though you are, and almost without food?”

“No,” replied the Doctor, “but there is one thing certain, the Sound won’t come to us, we must go to it. We may chance to find some Esquimaux tribes further south.”

“Besides, isn’t there the chance of falling in with some ship that is wintering here?” asked Johnson.

“Even supposing the Sound is blocked up, couldn’t we get across to some Greenland or Danish settlement? At any rate, Hatteras, we can get nothing by remaining here. The route to England is towards the south, not the north.”

“Yes,” said Bell, “Mr. Clawbonny is right. We must start, and start at once. We have been forgetting our country too long already.”

“Is this your advice, Johnson?” asked Hatteras again.

“Yes, captain.”

“And yours, Doctor?”

“Yes, Hatteras.”

Hatteras remained silent, but his face, in spite of himself, betrayed his inward agitation. The issue of his whole life hung on the decision he had to make, for he felt that to return to England was to lose all! He could not venture on a fourth expedition.

The Doctor finding he did not reply, added-

“I ought also to have said, that there is not a moment to lose. The sledge must be loaded with the provisions at once, and as much wood as possible. I must confess six hundred miles is a long journey, but we can, or rather we must make twenty miles a day, which will bring us to the coast about the 26th of March.”

“But cannot we wait a few days yet?” said Hatteras.

“What are you hoping for?” asked Johnson.

“I don’t know. Who can tell the future? It is necessary, too, that you should get your strength a little recruited. You might sink down on the road with fatigue, without even a snow hut to shelter you.”

“But think of the terrible death that awaits us here,” replied the carpenter.

“My friends,” said Hatteras, in almost supplicating tones; “you are despairing too soon. I should propose that we should seek our deliverance towards the north, but you would refuse to follow me, and yet why should there not be Esquimaux tribes round about the Pole as well as towards the south? The open sea, of the existence of which we are certified, must wash the shores of continents. Nature is logical in all her doings. Consequently vegetation must be found there when the earth is no longer ice-bound. Is there not a promised land awaiting us in the north from which you would flee?”

Hatteras became animated as he spoke, and Doctor Clawbonny’s excitable nature was so wrought upon that his decision began to waver. He was on the point of yielding, when Johnson, with his wiser head and calmer temperament, recalled him to reason and duty by calling out-

“Come, Bell, let us be off to the sledge.”

“All right,” said Bell, and the two had risen to leave the hut, when Hatteras exclaimed-

“Oh, Johnson! You! you! 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 rest! Come, Duk, you and I will stay together.”

The faithful dog barked as if he understood, and settled himself down beside his master. Johnson looked at the Doctor, who seemed at a loss to know what to do, but came to the conclusion at last that the best way, meantime, was to calm Hatteras, even at the sacrifice of a day. He was just about to try the force of his eloquence in this direction, when he felt a light touch on his arm, and turning round saw Altamont who had crawled out of bed and managed to get on his knees. He was trying to speak, but his swollen lips could scarcely make a sound. Hatteras went towards him, and watched his efforts to articulate so attentively that in a few minutes he made out a word that sounded like *Porpoise*, and stooping over him he asked-

“Is it the *Porpoise*?”

Altamont made a sign in the affirmative, and Hatteras went on with his queries, now that he had found a clue.

“In these seas?”

The affirmative gesture was repeated.

“Is she in the north?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know her position?”

“Yes.”

“Exactly?”

“Yes.”

For a minute or so, nothing more was said, and the onlookers waited with palpitating hearts.

Then Hatteras spoke again and said-

“Listen to me. We must know the exact position of your vessel. I will count the degrees aloud, and you; will stop me when I come to the right one.”

The American assented by a motion of the head, and Hatteras began-

“We’ll take the longitude first. 105°, No? 106°, 107°? It is to the west, I suppose?”

“Yes,” replied Altamont.

“Let us go on, then: 109°, 110°, 112°, 114°, 116°, 118°, 120°.”

“Yes,” interrupted the sick man.

“120° of longitude, and how many minutes? I will count.”

Hatteras began at number one, and when he got to fifteen, Altamont made a sign to stop.

“Very good,” said Hatteras; “now for the latitude. Are you listening? 80°, 81°, 82°, 83°.”

Again the sign to stop was made.

“Now for the minutes: 5’, 10’, 15’, 20’, 25’, 30’, 35’.”

Altamont stopped him once more, and smiled feebly.

“You say, then, that the *Porpoise* is in longitude 120° 15’, and latitude 83° 35’?”

“Yes,” sighed the American, and fell back motionless in the Doctor’s arms, completely overpowered by the effort he had made.

“Friends!” exclaimed Hatteras; “you see I was right. Our salvation lies indeed in the north, always in the north. We shall be saved!”

But the joyous, exulting words had hardly escaped his lips before a sudden thought made his countenance change. The serpent of jealousy had stung him, for this stranger was an American, and he had reached three degrees nearer the Pole than the ill-fated *Forward*.

III. A Seventeen Days' March

These first words of Altamont had completely changed the whole aspect of affairs, but his communication was still incomplete, and, after giving him a little time to rest, the Doctor undertook the task of conversing again with him, putting his questions in such a form that a movement of the head or eyes would be a sufficient answer.

He soon ascertained that the *Porpoise* was a three-mast American ship, from New York, wrecked on the ice, with provisions and combustibles in abundance still on board, and that, though she had been thrown on her side, she had not gone to pieces, and there was every chance of saving her cargo.

Altamont and his crew had left her two months previously, taking the long boat with them on a sledge. They intended to get to Smith's Sound, and reach some whaler that would take them back to America; but one after another succumbed to fatigue and illness, till at last Altamont and two men were all that remained out of thirty; and truly he had survived by a providential miracle, while his two companions already lay beside him in the sleep of death.

Hatteras wished to know why the *Porpoise* had come so far north, and learned in reply that she had been irresistibly driven there by the ice. But his anxious fears were not satisfied with this explanation, and he asked further what was the purpose of his voyage. Altamont said he wanted to make the north-west passage, and this appeared to content the jealous Englishman, for he made no more reference to the subject. "Well," said the Doctor, "it strikes me that, instead of trying to get to Baffin's Bay, our best plan would be to go in search of the *Porpoise*, for here lies a ship a full third of the distance nearer, and, more than that, stocked with everything necessary for winter quarters."

"I see no other course open to us," replied Bell.

"And the sooner we go the better," added Johnson, "for the time we allow ourselves must depend on our provisions."

"You are right, Johnson," returned the Doctor. "If we start to-morrow, we must reach the *Porpoise* by the 15th of March, unless we mean to die of starvation. What do you say, Hatteras?"

"Let us make preparations immediately, but perhaps the route may be longer than we suppose."

"How can that be, captain? The man seems quite sure of the position of his ship," said the Doctor.

"But suppose the ice-field should have drifted like ours?"

Here Altamont, who was listening attentively, made a sign that he wished to speak, and, after much difficulty, he succeeded in telling the Doctor that the *Porpoise* had struck on rocks near the coast, and that it was impossible for her to move.

This was re-assuring information, though it cut off all hope of returning to Europe, unless Bell could construct a smaller ship out of the wreck.

No time was lost in getting ready to start. The sledge was the principal thing, as it needed thorough repair. There was plenty of wood, and, profiting by the experience they had recently had of this mode of transit, several improvements were made by Bell.

Inside, a sort of couch was laid for the American, and covered over with the tent. The small stock of provisions did not add much to the weight, but, to make up the deficiency, as much wood was piled up on it as it could hold.

The Doctor did the packing, and made an exact calculation of how long their stores would last. He found that, by allowing three-quarter rations to each man and full rations to the dogs, they might hold out for three weeks.

Towards seven in the evening, they felt so worn out that they were obliged to give up work for the night; but, before lying down to sleep, they heaped up the wood in the stove, and made a roaring fire, determined to allow themselves this parting luxury. As they gathered round it, basking in the unaccustomed heat, and enjoying their hot coffee and biscuits and pemmican, they became quite cheerful, and forgot all their sufferings.

About seven in the morning they set to work again and by three in the afternoon everything was ready.

It was almost dark, for, though the sun had reappeared above the horizon since the 31st of January, his light was feeble and of short duration. Happily the moon would rise about half-past six, and her soft beams would give sufficient light to show the road.

The parting moment came. Altamont was overjoyed at the idea of starting, though the jolting would necessarily increase his sufferings, for the Doctor would find on board the medicines he required for his cure.

They lifted him on to the sledge, and laid him as comfortably as possible, and then harnessed the dogs, including Duk. One final look towards the icy bed where the *Forward* had been, and the little party set out for the *Porpoise*. Bell was scout, as before; the Doctor and Johnson took each a side of the sledge, and lent a helping hand when necessary; while Hatteras walked behind to keep all in the right track.

They got on pretty quickly, for the weather was good, and the ice smooth and hard, allowing the sledge to glide easily along, yet the temperature was so low that men and dogs were soon panting, and had often to stop and take breath. About seven the moon shone out, and irradiated the whole horizon. Far as the eye could see, there was nothing visible but a wide-stretching level plain of ice, without a solitary hummock or patch to relieve the uniformity.

As the Doctor remarked to his companion, it looked like some vast, monotonous desert.

“Ay! Mr. Clawbonny, it is a desert, but we shan’t die of thirst in it at any rate.”

“That’s a comfort, certainly, but I’ll tell you one thing: it proves, Johnson, we must be a great distance from any coast. The nearer the coast, the more numerous the icebergs in general, and you see there is not one in sight.”

“The horizon is rather misty, though.”

“So it is, but ever since we started, we have been on this same interminable ice-field.”

“Do you know, Mr. Clawbonny, that smooth as this ice is, we are going over most dangerous ground? Fathomless abysses lie beneath our feet.”

“That’s true enough, but they won’t engulf us. This white sheet over them is pretty tough, I can tell you. It is always getting thicker too; for in these latitudes, it snows nine days out of ten even in April and May; ay, and in June as well. The ice here, in some parts, cannot be less than between thirty and forty feet thick.”

“That sounds reassuring, at all events.” said Johnson.

“Yes, we’re not like the skaters on the Serpentine-always in danger of falling through. This ice is strong enough to bear the weight of the Custom House in Liverpool, or the Houses of Parliament in Westminster.”

“Can they reckon pretty nearly what ice will bear, Mr. Clawbonny?” asked the old sailor, always eager for information.

“What can’t be reckoned now-a-days? Yes, ice two inches thick will bear a man; three and a half inches, a man on horse-back; five inches, an eight pounder; eight inches, field artillery; and ten inches, a whole army.”

“It is difficult to conceive of such a power of resistance, but you were speaking of the incessant snow just now, and I cannot help wondering where it comes from, for the water all round is frozen, and what makes the clouds?”

“That’s a natural enough question, but my notion is that nearly all the snow or rain that we get here comes from the temperate zones. I fancy each of those snowflakes was originally a drop of water in some river, caught up by evaporation into the air, and wafted over here in the shape of clouds; so that it is not impossible that when we quench our thirst with the melted snow, we are actually drinking from the very rivers of our own native land.”

Just at this moment the conversation was interrupted by Hatteras, who called out that they were getting out of the straight line. The increasing mist made it difficult to keep together, and at last, about eight o’clock, they determined to come to a halt, as they had gone fifteen miles. The tent was put up and the stove lighted, and after their usual supper they lay down and slept comfortably till morning.

The calm atmosphere was highly favourable, for though the cold became intense, and the mercury was always frozen in the thermometer, they found no difficulty in continuing their route, confirming the truth of Parry’s assertion that any man suitably clad may walk abroad with impunity in the lowest temperature, provided there is no wind; while, on the other hand, the least breeze would make the skin smart acutely, and bring on violent headache, which would soon end in death.

On the 5th of March a peculiar phenomenon occurred. The sky was perfectly clear and glittering with stars, when suddenly snow began to fall thick and fast, though there was not a cloud in the heavens and through the white flakes the constellations could be seen shining. This curious display lasted two hours, and ceased before the Doctor could arrive at any satisfactory conclusion as to its cause.

The moon had ended her last quarter, and complete darkness prevailed now for seventeen hours out of the twenty-four. The travellers had to fasten themselves together with a long rope to avoid getting separated, and it was all but impossible to pursue the right course. Moreover, the brave fellows, in spite of their iron will, began to show signs of fatigue. Halts became more frequent, and yet every hour was precious, for the provisions were rapidly coming to an end.

Hatteras hardly knew what to think as day after day went on without apparent result, and he asked himself sometimes whether the *Porpoise* had any actual existence except in Altamont’s fevered brain, and more than once the idea even came into his head that perhaps national hatred might have induced the American to drag them along with himself to certain death.

He told the Doctor his suppositions, who rejected them absolutely, and laid them down to the score of the unhappy rivalry that had arisen already between the two captains.

On the 14th of March, after sixteen days' march the little party found themselves only yet in the 82° latitude. Their strength was exhausted, and they had a hundred miles more to go. To increase their sufferings, rations had to be still further reduced. Each man must be content with a fourth part to allow the dogs their full quantity.

Unfortunately they could not rely at all on their guns, for only seven charges of powder were left, and six balls. They had fired at several hares and foxes on the road already, but unsuccessfully.

However, on the 15th, the Doctor was fortunate enough to surprise a seal basking on the ice, and, after several shots, the animal was captured and killed.

Johnson soon had it skinned and cut in pieces, but it was so lean that it was worthless as food, unless its captors would drink the oil like the Esquimaux.

The Doctor was bold enough to make the attempt, but failed in spite of himself.

Next day several icebergs and hummocks were noticed on the horizon. Was this a sign that land was near, or was it some ice-field that had broken up? It was difficult to know what to surmise.

On arriving at the first of these hummocks, the travellers set to work to make a cave in it where they could rest more comfortably than in the tent, and after three hours' persevering toil, were able to light their stove and lie down beside it to stretch their weary limbs.

IV. The Last Charge Of Powder

Johnson was obliged to take the dogs inside the hut, for they would have been soon frozen outside in such dry weather. Had it been snowing they would have been safe enough, for the snow served as a covering, and kept in the natural heat of the animals.

The old sailor, who made a first-rate dog-driver, tried his beasts with the oily flesh of the seal; and found, to his joyful surprise, that they ate it greedily. The Doctor said he was not astonished at this, as in North America the horses were chiefly fed on fish; and he thought that what would satisfy an herbivorous horse might surely content an omnivorous dog.

The whole party were soon buried in deep sleep, for they were fairly overcome with fatigue. Johnson awoke his companions early next morning, and the march was resumed in haste. Their lives depended now on their speed, for provisions would only hold out three days longer.

The sky was magnificent; the atmosphere extremely clear, and the temperature very low. The sun rose in the form of a long ellipse, owing to refraction, which made his horizontal diameter appear twice the length of his vertical.

The Doctor, gun in hand, wandered away from the others, braving the solitude and the cold in the hope of discovering game. He had only sufficient powder left to load three times, and he had just three balls. That was little enough should he encounter a bear, for it often takes ten or twelve shots to have any effect on these enormous animals.

But the brave Doctor would have been satisfied with humbler game. A few hares or foxes would be a welcome addition to their scanty food; but all that day, if even he chanced to see one, either he was too far away, or he was deceived by refraction, and took a wrong aim. He came back to his companions at night with crestfallen looks, having wasted one ball and one charge of powder.

Next day the route appeared more difficult, and the weary men could hardly drag themselves along. The dogs had devoured even the entrails of the seal, and began to gnaw their traces.

A few foxes passed in the distance, and the Doctor lost another ball in attempting to shoot them.

They were forced to come to a halt early in the evening, though the road was illumined by a splendid Aurora Borealis; for they could not put one foot before the other.

Their last meal, on the Sunday evening, was a very sad one-if no providential help came, their doom was sealed.

Johnson set a few traps before going to sleep, though he had no baits to put inside them. He was very disappointed to find them all empty in the morning, and was returning gloomily to the hut, when he perceived a bear of huge dimensions. The old sailor took it into his head that Heaven had sent this beast specially for him to kill; and without waking his comrades, he seized the Doctor's gun, and was soon in pursuit of his prey. On reaching the right distance, he took aim; but, just as his finger touched the trigger, he felt his arm tremble. His thick gloves hampered him, and, flinging them hastily off, he took up the gun with a firmer grasp. But what a cry of agony escaped him! The skin of his fingers stuck to the gun as if it had been red-hot, and he was forced to let it drop. The sudden fall made it go off, and the last ball was discharged in the air.

The Doctor ran out at the noise of the report, and understood all at a glance. He saw the animal walking quietly off, and poor Johnson forgetting his sufferings in his despair.

“I am a regular milksop!” he exclaimed, “a cry-baby, that can’t stand the least pain! And at my age, too!”

“Come, Johnson; go in at once, or you will be frost-bitten. Look at your hands—they are white already! Come, come this minute.”

“I am not worth troubling about, Mr. Clawbonny,” said the old boatswain. “Never mind me!”

“But you must come in, you obstinate fellow. Come, now, I tell you; it will be too late presently.”

At last he succeeded in dragging the poor fellow into the tent, where he made him plunge his hands into a bowl of water, which the heat of the stove kept in a liquid state, though still cold. Johnson’s hands had hardly touched it before it froze immediately.

“You see it was high time you came in; I should have been forced to amputate soon,” said the Doctor.

Thanks to his endeavours, all danger was over in about an hour, but he was advised to keep his hands at a good distance from the stove for some time still.

That morning they had no breakfast. Pemmican and salt beef were both done. Not a crumb of biscuit remained. They were obliged to content themselves with half a cup of hot coffee, and start off again.

They scarcely went three miles before they were compelled to give up for the day. They had no supper but coffee, and the dogs were so ravenous that they were almost devouring each other.

Johnson fancied he could see the bear following them in the distance, but he made no remark to his companions. Sleep forsook the unfortunate men, and their eyes grew wild and haggard.

Tuesday morning came, and it was thirty-four hours since they had tasted a morsel of food. Yet these brave, stout-hearted men continued their march, sustained by their superhuman energy of purpose. They pushed the sledge themselves, for the dogs could no longer draw it.

At the end of two hours, they sank exhausted. Hatteras urged them to make a fresh attempt, but his entreaties and supplications were powerless; they could not do impossibilities.

“Well, at any rate,” he said, “I won’t die of cold if I must of hunger.” He set to work to hew out a hut in an iceberg, aided by Johnson, and really they looked like men digging their own tomb.

It was hard labour, but at length the task was accomplished. The little house was ready, and the miserable men took up their abode in it.

In the evening, while the others lay motionless, a sort of hallucination came over Johnson, and he began raving about bears.

The Doctor roused himself from his torpor, and asked the old man what he meant, and what bear he was talking about.

“The bear that is following us,” replied Johnson.

“A bear following us?”

“Yes, for the last two days!”

“For the last two days! You have seen him?”

“Yes, about a mile to leeward.”

“And you never told me, Johnson!”

“What was the good!”

“True enough,” said the Doctor; “we have not a single bail to send after him!”

“No, not even a bit of iron!”

The Doctor was silent for a minute, as if thinking. Then he said-

“Are you quite certain the animal is following us?”

“Yes, Mr. Clawbonny, he is reckoning on a good feed of human flesh!”

“Johnson!” exclaimed the Doctor, grieved at the despairing mood of his companion.

“He is sure enough of his meal!” continued the poor fellow, whose brain had begun to give way. “He must be hungry, and I don’t see why we should keep him waiting.”

“Johnson, calm yourself!” “No, Mr. Clawbonny, sine we must die, why prolong the sufferings of the poor beast? He is famished like ourselves. There are no seals for him to eat, and Heaven sends hiim men! So much the better for him, that’s all!”

Johnson was fast going mad. He wanted to get up and leave the hut, and the doctor had great difficulty in preventing him. That he succeeded at all, was not through strength, but by saying in a tone of absolute conviction, “Johnson, I shall kill that bear to-morrow!”

“To-morrow!” said Johnson, as if waking up from some bad dream.

“Yes, to-morrow.”

“You have no ball!”

“I’ll make one.”

“You have no lead!”

“No, but I have mercury.”

So saying, he took the thermometer, which stood at 50° above zero, and went outside and laid it on a block of ice. Then he came in again, and said, “Tomorrow! Go to sleep, and wait till the sun rises.”

With the first streak of dawn next day, the Doctor and Johnson rushed out to look at the thermometer. All the mercury had frozen into a compact cylindrical mass. The Doctor broke the tube and took it out. Here was a hard piece of metal ready for use.

“It is wonderful, Mr. Clawbonny; you ought to be a proud man.”

“Not at all, my friend, I am only gifted with a good memory, and I have read a great deal.”

“How did that help you?”

“Why, I just happened to recollect a fact related by Captain Ross in his voyages. He states that they pierced a plank, an inch thick, with a bullet made of mercury. Oil would even have suited my purpose, for, he adds, that a ball of frozen almond oil splits through a post without breaking in pieces.”

“It is quite incredible!”

“But it is a fact, Johnson. Well, come now, this bit of metal may save our lives. We’ll leave it exposed to the air a little while, and go and have a look for the bear.”

Just then Hatteras made his appearance, and the

Doctor told him his project, and showed him the mercury.

The captain grasped his hand silently, and the three hunters went off in quest of their game.

The weather was very clear, and Hatteras, who was a little ahead of the others, speedily discovered the bear about three hundred yards distant, sitting on his hind quarters sniffing the air, evidently scenting the intruders on his domains.

“There he is!” he exclaimed.

“Hush!” cried the Doctor.

But the enormous quadruped, even when he perceived his antagonists, never stirred, and displayed neither fear nor anger. It would not be easy to get near him, however, and Hatteras said-

“Friends, this is no idle sport, our very existence is at stake; we must act prudently.”

“Yes,” replied the Doctor, “for we have but the one shot to depend upon. We must not miss, for if once the beast took to his heels we have lost all chance of him. He would outstrip a hare in fleetness!”

“We must go right up to him,” said Johnson, “that is the only way. It is risking one’s life, of course; but what does that matter? Let me risk mine.”

“No, I wish to take the risk on myself,” said the Doctor.

“I am the one to go,” said Hatteras, quietly.

“But, captain, is your life not more necessary for the safety of all than a stupid old man’s like mine?”

“No, Johnson, let me go. I’ll not risk myself unnecessarily. Besides, I may possibly need your assistance.”

“Hatteras,” asked the Doctor, “do you mean to walk right up to the bear?”

“If I were certain of getting a shot at him, I would do that if it cost me my head; but he might scamper off at my approach. No, Bruin is a cunning fellow, and we must try and be a match for him.”

“What plan have you got in your head?” “To get within ten paces of him without letting him suspect it.”

“And how will you manage that?”

“Well, my scheme is simple enough, though rather dangerous. You kept the skin of the seal you killed, didn’t you?”

“It is on the sledge.”

“All right! Let us get back to the hut, and leave Johnson here to watch.” Away they went, while the old boatswain slipped behind a hummock, which completely hid him from the bear, who continued still in the same place and in the same position.

V. The Seal And The Bear

“You know, Doctor,” said Hatteras, as they returned to the hut, “the polar bears subsist almost entirely on seals. They’ll lie in wait for them beside the crevasses for whole days, ready to strangle them the moment their heads appear above the surface. It is not likely, then, that a bear will be frightened of a seal.”

“I think I see what you are after, but it is dangerous.”

“Yes, but there is more chance of success than in trying any other plan, so I mean to risk it. I am going to dress myself in the seal’s skin, and creep along the ice. Come, don’t let us lose time. Load the gun and give it me.”

The Doctor could not say anything, for he would have done the same himself, so he followed Hatteras silently to the sledge, taking with him a couple of hatchets for his own and Johnson’s use.

Hatteras soon made his *toilette*, and slipped into the skin, which was big enough to cover him almost entirely.

“Now, then, give me the gun,” he said, “and you be off to Johnson. I must try and steal a march on my adversary.”

“Courage, Hatteras!” said the Doctor, handing him the weapon, which he had carefully loaded meanwhile.

“Never fear! but be sure you don’t show yourselves till I fire.”

The Doctor soon joined the old boatswain behind the hummock, and told him what they had been doing. The bear was still there, but moving restlessly about, as if he felt the approach of danger.

In a quarter of an hour or so the seal made his appearance on the ice. He had gone a good way round, so as to come on the bear by surprise, and every movement was so perfect an imitation of a seal, that even the Doctor would have been deceived if he had not known it was Hatteras.

“It is capital!” said Johnson, in a low voice. The bear had instantly caught sight of the supposed seal, for he gathered himself up, preparing to make a spring as the animal came nearer, apparently seeking to return to his native element, and unaware of the enemy’s proximity. Bruin went to work with extreme prudence, though his eyes glared with greedy desire to clutch the coveted prey, for he had probably been fasting a month, if not two. He allowed his victim to get within ten paces of him, and then sprang forward with a tremendous bound, but stopped short, stupefied and frightened, within three steps of Hatteras, who started up that moment, and, throwing off his disguise, knelt on one knee, and aimed straight at the bear’s heart. He fired, and the huge monster rolled back on the ice.

“Forward! Forward!” shouted the Doctor, hurrying towards Hatteras, for the bear had reared on his hind legs, and was striking the air with one paw and tearing up the snow to stanch his wound with the other.

Hatteras never moved, but waited, knife in hand. He had aimed well, and fired with a sure and steady aim. Before either of his companions came up he had plunged the knife in the animal’s throat, and made an end of him, for he fell down at once to rise no more.

“Hurrah! Bravo!” shouted Johnson and the Doctor, but Hatteras was as cool and unexcited as possible, and stood with folded arms gazing at his prostrate foe.

“It is my turn now,” said Johnson. “It is a good thing the bear is killed, but if we leave him out here much longer, he will get as hard as a stone, and we shall be able to do nothing with him.”

He began forthwith to strip the skin off, and a fine business it was, for the enormous quadruped was almost as large as an ox. It measured nearly nine feet long, and four round, and the great tusks in his jaws were three inches long.

On cutting the carcase open, Johnson found nothing but water in the stomach. The beast had evidently had no food for a long time, yet it was very fat, and weighed fifteen hundred pounds. The hunters were so famished that they had hardly patience to carry home the flesh to be cooked, and it needed all the Doctor’s persuasion to prevent them eating it raw.

On entering the hut, each man with a load on his back, Clawbonny was struck with the coldness that pervaded the atmosphere. On going up to the stove he found the fire black out. The exciting business of the morning had made Johnson neglect his accustomed duty of replenishing the stove.

The Doctor tried to blow the embers into a flame, but finding he could not even get a red spark, he went out to the sledge to fetch tinder, and get the steel from Johnson.

The old sailor put his hand into his pocket, but was surprised to find the steel missing. He felt in the other pockets, but it was not there. Then he went into the hut again, and shook the blanket he had slept in all night, but his search was still unsuccessful.

He went back to his companions and said-

“Are you sure, Doctor, you haven’t the steel?”

“Quite, Johnson.”

“And you haven’t it either, captain?”

“Not I!” replied Hatteras.

“It has always been in your keeping,” said the Doctor.

“Well, I have not got it now!” exclaimed Johnson, turning pale.

“Not got the steel!” repeated the Doctor, shuddering involuntarily at the bare idea of its loss, for it was all the means they had of procuring a fire.

“Look again, Johnson,” he said.

The boatswain hurried to the only remaining place he could think of, the hummock where he had stood to watch the bear. But the missing treasure was nowhere to be found, and the old sailor returned in despair.

Hatteras looked at him, but no word of reproach escaped his lips. He only said-

“This is a serious business, Doctor.”

“It is, indeed!” said Clawbonny.

“We have not even an instrument, some glass that we might take the lens out of, and use like a burning glass.”

“No, and it is a great pity, for the sun’s rays are quite strong enough just now to light our tinder.”

“Well,” said Hatteras, “we must just appease our hunger with the raw meat, and set off again as soon as we can, to try to discover the ship.”

“Yes!” replied Clawbonny, speaking to himself, absorbed in his own reflections. “Yes, that might do at a pinch! Why not? We might try.”

“What are you dreaming about?” asked Hatteras.

“An idea has just occurred to me.”

“An idea come into your head, Doctor,” exclaimed Johnson; “then we are saved!”

“Will it succeed? that’s the question.”

“What’s your project?” said Hatteras.

“We want a lens; well, let us make one.”

“How?” asked Johnson.

“With a piece of ice.”

“What? Do you think that would do?”

“Why not? All that is needed is to collect the sun’s rays into one common focus, and ice will serve that purpose as well as the finest crystal.”

“Is it possible?” said Johnson.

“Yes, only I should like fresh water ice, it is harder and more transparent than the other.”

“There it is to your hand, if I am not much mistaken,” said Johnson, pointing to a hummock close by.

“I fancy that is fresh water, from the dark look of it, and the green tinge.”

“You are right. Bring your hatchet, Johnson.”

A good-sized piece was soon cut off, about a foot in diameter, and the Doctor set to work. He began by chopping it into rough shape with the hatchet; then he operated upon it more carefully with his knife, making as smooth a surface as possible, and finished the polishing process with his fingers, rubbing away until he had obtained as transparent a lens as if it had been made of magnificent crystal.

The sun was shining brilliantly enough for the Doctor’s experiment. The tinder was fetched, and held beneath the lens so as to catch the rays in full power. In a few seconds it took fire, to Johnson’s rapturous delight.

He danced about like an idiot, almost beside himself with joy, and shouted, “Hurrah! hurrah!” while Clawbonny hurried back into the hut and rekindled the fire. The stove was soon roaring, and it was not many minutes before the savoury odour of broiled bear-steaks roused Bell from his torpor.

What a feast this meal was to the poor starving men may be imagined. The Doctor, however, counselled moderation in eating, and set the example himself.

“This is a glad day for us,” he said, “and we have no fear of wanting food all the rest of our journey. Still we must not forget we have further to go yet, and I think the sooner we start the better.”

“We cannot be far off now,” said Altamont, who could almost articulate perfectly again; “we must be within forty-eight hours’ march of the *Porpoise*.”

“I hope we’ll find something there to make a fire with,” said the Doctor, smiling. “My lens does well enough at present; but it needs the sun, and there are plenty of days when he does not make his appearance here, within less than four degrees of the pole.”

“Less than four degrees!” repeated Altamont, with a sigh; “yes, my ship went further than any other has ever ventured.”

“It is time we started,” said Hatteras, abruptly.

“Yes,” replied the Doctor, glancing uneasily at the two captains.

The dogs were speedily harnessed to the sledge, and the march resumed.

As they went along, the Doctor tried to get out of Altamont the real motive that had brought him so far north. But the American made only evasive replies, and Clawbonny whispered in old Johnson’s ear-

“Two men we’ve got that need looking after.”

“You are right,” said Johnson.

“Hatteras never says a word to this American, and I must say the man has not shown himself very grateful. I am here, fortunately.”

“Mr. Clawbonny,” said Johnson, “now this Yankee has come back to life again, I must confess I don’t much like the expression of his face.”

“I am much mistaken if he does not suspect the projects of Hatteras.”

“Do you think his own were similar?”

“Who knows? These Americans, Johnson, are bold, daring fellows. It is likely enough an American would try to do as much as an Englishman.”

“Then you think that Altamont-”

“I think nothing about it, but his ship is certainly on the road to the North Pole.”

“But didn’t Altamont say that he had been caught among the ice, and dragged there irresistibly?”

“He said so, but I fancied there was a peculiar smile on his lips while he spoke.”

“Hang it! It would be a bad job, Mr. Clawbonny, if any feeling of rivalry came between two men of their stamp.”

“Heaven forbid! for it might involve the most serious consequences, Johnson.”

“I hope Altamont will remember he owes his life to us?”

“But do we not owe ours to him now? I grant, without us, he would not be alive at this moment, but without him and his ship, what would become of us?”

“Well, Mr. Clawbonny, you are here to keep things straight anyhow, and that is a blessing.”

“I hope I may manage it, Johnson.”

The journey proceeded without any fresh incident, but on the Saturday morning the travellers found themselves in a region of quite an altered character. Instead of the wide smooth plain of ice that had hitherto stretched before them, overturned icebergs and broken hummocks covered the horizon; while the frequent blocks of fresh-water ice showed that some coast was near.

Next day, after a hearty breakfast off the bear's paws, the little party continued their route; but the road became toilsome and fatiguing. Altamont lay watching the horizon with feverish anxiety-an anxiety shared by all his companions, for, according to the last reckoning made by Hatteras, they were now exactly in latitude $83^{\circ} 35''$ and longitude $120^{\circ} 15''$, and the question of life or death would be decided before the day was over.

At last, about two o'clock in the afternoon, Altamont started up with a shout that arrested the whole party, and pointing to a white mass that no eye but his could have distinguished from the surrounding icebergs, exclaimed in a loud, ringing voice, "The *Porpoise*."

VI. The *Porpoise*

It was the 24th of March, and Palm Sunday, a bright, joyous day in many a town and village of the Old World, but in this desolate region what mournful silence prevailed! No willow branches here with their silvery blossom - not even a single withered leaf to be seen - not a blade of grass!

Yet this was a glad day to the travellers, for it promised them speedy deliverance from the death that had seemed so inevitable.

They hastened onward, the dogs put forth renewed energy, and Duk barked his loudest, till, before long, they arrived at the ship. The *Porpoise* was completely buried under the snow. All her masts and rigging had been destroyed in the shipwreck, and she was lying on a bed of rocks so entirely on her side that her hull was uppermost.

They had to knock away fifteen feet of ice before they could even catch a glimpse of her, and it was not without great difficulty that they managed to get on board, and made the welcome discovery that the provision stores had not been visited by any four-footed marauders. It was quite evident, however, that the ship was not habitable.

“Never mind!” said Hatteras, “we must build a snow-house, and make ourselves comfortable on land.”

“Yes, but we need not hurry over it,” said the Doctor; “let us do it well while we’re about it, and for a time we can make shift on board; for we must build a good, substantial house, that will protect us from the bears as well as the cold. I’ll undertake to be the architect, and you shall see what a first-rate job I’ll make of it.”

“I don’t doubt your talents, Mr. Clawbonny,” replied Johnson; “but, meantime, let us see about taking up our abode here, and making an inventory of the stores we find. There does not seem a boat visible of any description, and I fear these timbers are in too bad a condition to build a new ship out of them.”

“I don’t know that,” returned Clawbonny, “time and thought do wonders; but our first business is to build a house, and not a ship; one thing at a time, I propose.”

“And quite right too,” said Hatteras; “so we’ll go ashore again.”

They returned to the sledge, to communicate the result of their investigation to Bell and Altamont; and about four in the afternoon the five men installed themselves as well as they could on the wreck. Bell had managed to make a tolerably level floor with planks and spars; the stiffened cushions and hammocks were placed round the stove to thaw, and were soon fit for use. Altamont, with the Doctor’s assistance, got on board without much trouble, and a sigh of satisfaction escaped him as if he felt himself once more at home—a sigh which to Johnson’s ear boded no good.

The rest of the day was given to repose, and they wound up with a good supper off the remains of the bear, backed by a plentiful supply of biscuit and hot tea.

It was late next morning before Hatteras and his companions woke, for their minds were not burdened now with any solitudes about the morrow, and they might sleep as long as they pleased. The poor fellows felt like colonists safely arrived at their destination, who had forgotten all the sufferings of the voyage, and thought only of the new life that lay before them.

“Well, it is something at all events,” said the Doctor, rousing himself and stretching his arms, “for a fellow not to need to ask where he is going to find his next bed and breakfast.”

“Let us see what there is on board before we say much,” said Johnson.

The *Porpoise* has been thoroughly equipped and provisioned for a long voyage, and, on making an inventory of what stores remained, they found 6150 lbs. of flour, fat, and raisins; 2000 lbs. of salt beef and pork, 1500 lbs. of pemmican; 700 lbs. of sugar, and the same of chocolate; a chest and a half of tea, weighing 96 lbs.; 500 lbs. of rice; several barrels of preserved fruits and vegetables; a quantity of lime-juice, with all sorts of medicines, and 300 gallons of rum and brandy. There was also a large supply of gunpowder, ball, and shot, and coal and wood in abundance.

Altogether, there was enough to last those five men for more than two years, and all fear of death from starvation or cold was at an end.

“Well, Hatteras, we’re sure of enough to live on now,” said the Doctor, “and there is nothing to hinder us reaching the Pole.”

“The Pole!” echoed Hatteras.

“Yes, why not? Can’t we push our way overland in the summer months?”

“We might overland; but how could we cross water?”

“Perhaps we may be able to build a boat out of some of the ship’s planks.”

“Out of an American ship!” exclaimed the captain, contemptuously.

Clawbonny was prudent enough to make no reply, and presently changed the conversation by saying-

“Well, now we have seen what we have to depend upon, we must begin our house and store-rooms. We have materials enough at hand; and, Bell, I hope you are going to distinguish yourself,” he added.

“I am ready, Mr. Clawbonny,” replied Bell; “and, as for material, there is enough for a town here with houses and streets.”

“We don’t require that; we’ll content ourselves with imitating the Hudson’s Bay Company. They entrench themselves in fortresses against the Indians and wild beasts. That’s all we need—a house one side and stores the other, with a wall and two bastions. I must try to make a plan.”

“Ah! Doctor, if you undertake it,” said Johnson, “I am sure you’ll make a good thing of it.”

“Well, the first part of the business is to go and choose the ground. Will you come with us Hatteras?”

“I’ll trust all that to you, Doctor,” replied the captain. “I’m going to look along the coast.”

Altamont was too feeble yet to take part in any work, so he remained on the ship, while the others commenced to explore the unknown continent.

On examining the coast, they found that the *Porpoise* was in a sort of bay bristling with dangerous rocks, and that to the west, far as the eye could reach, the sea extended, entirely frozen now, though if Belcher and Penny were to be believed, open during the summer months. Towards the north, a promontory stretched out into the sea, and about three miles away was an island of moderate size. The roadstead thus formed would have afforded safe anchorage to ships, but for the difficulty of entering it. A considerable distance inland there

was a solitary mountain, about 3000 feet high, by the Doctor's reckoning; and half-way up the steep rocky cliffs that rose from the shore, they noticed a circular plateau, open on three sides to the bay and sheltered on the fourth by a precipitous wall, 120 feet high.

This seemed to the Doctor the very place for this house, from its naturally fortified situation. By cutting steps in the ice, they managed to climb up and examine it more closely.

They were soon convinced they could not have a better foundation, and resolved to commence operations forthwith, by removing the hard snow more than ten feet deep, which covered the ground, as both dwelling and storehouses must have a solid foundation.

This preparatory work occupied the whole of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. At last they came to hard granite close in grain, and containing garnets and felspar crystals, which flew out with every stroke of the pickaxe.

The dimensions and plan of the snow-house were then settled by the Doctor. It was to be divided into three rooms, as all they needed was a bed-room, sitting-room and kitchen. The sitting-room was to be in the middle, the kitchen to the left, and the bed-room to the right.

For five days they toiled unremittingly. There was plenty of material, and the walls required to be thick enough to resist summer thaws. Already the house began to present an imposing appearance. There were four windows in front, made of splendid sheets of ice, in Esquimaux fashion, through which the light came softly in as if through frosted glass.

Outside there was a long covered passage between the two windows of the sitting-room. This was the entrance hall, and it was shut in by a strong door taken from the cabin of the *Porpoise*. The Doctor was highly delighted with his performance when all was finished, for though it would have been difficult to say to what style of architecture it belonged, it was strong, and that was the chief thing.

The next business was to move in all the furniture of the *Porpoise*. The beds were brought first and laid down round the large stove in the sleeping room; then came chairs, tables, arm-chairs, cupboards, and benches for the sitting-room, and finally the ship furnaces and cooking utensils for the kitchen. Sails spread on the ground did duty for carpets, and also served for inner doors.

The walls of the house were over five feet thick, and the windows resembled port-holes for cannon. Every part was as solid as possible, and what more was wanted? Yet if the Doctor could have had his way, he would have made all manner of ornamental additions, in humble imitation of the Ice Palace built in St. Petersburg in January, 1740, of which he had read an account. He amused his companions after work in the evening by describing its grandeur, the cannons in front, and statues of exquisite beauty, and the wonderful elephant that spouted water out of his trunk by day and flaming naphtha by night—all cut out of ice. He also depicted the interior, with tables, and toilette tables, mirrors, candelabra, tapers, beds, mattresses, pillows, curtains, time-pieces, chairs, playing-cards, wardrobes, completely fitted up—in fact, everything in the way of furniture that could be mentioned, and the whole entirely composed of ice.

It was on Easter Sunday, the 31st of March, when the travellers installed themselves in their new abode and after holding divine service in the sitting-room, they devoted the remainder of the day to rest.

Next morning they set about building the storehouses and powder magazine. This took a whole week longer, including the time spent in unloading the vessel, which was a task of considerable difficulty, as the temperature was so low, that they could not work for many hours at a time. At length on the 8th of April, provisions, fuel, and ammunition were all safe

on *terra firma*, and deposited in their respective places. A sort of kennel was constructed a little distance from the house for the Greenland dogs, which the Doctor dignified by the name of "Dog Palace." Duk shared his master's quarters.

All that now remained to be done was to put a parapet right round the plateau by way of fortification.

By the 15th this was also completed, and the snow-house might bid defiance to a whole tribe of Esquimaux, or any other hostile invaders, if indeed any human beings whatever were to be found on this unknown continent, for Hatteras, who had minutely examined the bay and the surrounding coast, had not been able to discover the least vestiges of the huts that are generally met with on shores frequented by Greenland tribes. The shipwrecked sailors of the *Porpoise* and *Forward* seemed to be the first whose feet had ever trod this lone region.

VII. An Important Discussion

While all these preparations for winter were going on Altamont was fast regaining strength. His vigorous constitution triumphed, and he was even able to lend a helping hand in the unloading of the ship. He was a true type of the American, a shrewd, intelligent man, full of energy and resolution, enterprising, bold, and ready for anything. He was a native of New York, he informed his companions, and had been a sailor from his boyhood.

The *Porpoise* had been equipped and sent out by a company of wealthy merchants belonging to the States, at the head of which was the famous Grinnell.

There were many points of resemblance between Altamont and Hatteras, but no affinities. Indeed, any similarity that there was between them, tended rather to create discord than to make the men friends. With a greater show of frankness, he was in reality far more deep and crafty than Hatteras. He was more free and easy, but not so true-hearted, and somehow his apparent openness did not inspire such confidence as the Englishman's gloomy reserve.

The Doctor was in constant dread of a collision between the rival captains, and yet one must command inevitably, and which should it be! Hatteras had the men, but Altamont had the ship, and it was hard to say whose was the better right.

It required all the Doctor's tact to keep things smooth, for the simplest conversation threatened to lead to strife.

At last, in spite of all his endeavours, an outbreak occurred on the occasion of a grand banquet by way of "house-warming," when the new habitation was completed.

This banquet was Dr Clawbonny's idea. He was head-cook, and distinguished himself by the concoction of a wonderful pudding, which would positively have done no dishonour to the *cuisine* of the Lord Chancellor of England.

Bell most opportunely chanced to shoot a white hare and several ptarmigans, which made an agreeable variety from the pemmican and salt meat.

Clawbonny was master of the ceremonies, and brought in his pudding, adorning himself with the insignia of his office—a big apron, and a knife dangling at his belt.

As Altamont did not conform to the teetotal *régime* of his English companions, gin and brandy were set on the table after dinner, and the others, by the Doctor's orders, joined him in a glass for once, that the festive occasion might be duly honoured. When the different toasts were being drunk, one was given to the United States, to which Hatteras made no response.

This important business over, the Doctor introduced an interesting subject of conversation by saying—

"My friends, it is not enough to have come thus far in spite of so many difficulties; we have something more yet to do. I propose we should bestow a name on this continent, where we have found friendly shelter and rest, and not only on the continent, but on the several bays, peaks, and promontories that we meet with. This has been invariably done by navigators and is a most necessary proceeding."

"Quite right," said Johnson, "when once a place is named, it takes away the feeling of being castaways on an unknown shore."

“Yes,” added Bell, “and we might be going on some expedition and obliged to separate, or go out hunting, and it would make it much easier to find one another if each locality had a definite name.”

“Very well; then,” said the Doctor, “since we are all agreed, let us go steadily to work.”

Hatteras had taken no part in the conversation as yet, but seeing all eyes fixed on him, he rose at last, and said-

“If no one objects, I think the most suitable name we can give our house is that of its skilful architect, the best man among us. Let us call it ‘Doctor’s House.’ “

“Just the thing!” said Bell.

“First rate!” exclaimed Johnson, “ ‘Doctor’s House!’ “

“We cannot do better,” chimed in Altamont. “Hurrah for Doctor Clawbonny.”

Three hearty cheers were given, in which Duk joined lustily, barking his loudest.

“It is agreed then,” said Hatteras, “that this house is to be called ‘Doctor’s House.’ “

The Doctor, almost overcome by his feelings, modestly protested against the honour; but he was obliged to yield to the wishes of his friends, and the new habitation was formally named “Doctor’s House.”

“Now, then,” said the Doctor, “let us go onto name the most important of our discoveries.”

“There is that immense sea which surrounds us, unfurrowed as yet by a single ship.”

“A single ship!” repeated Altamont. “I think you have forgotten the *Porpoise*, and yet she certainly did not get here overland,”

“Well, it would not be difficult to believe she had,” replied Hatteras, “to see on what she lies at present.”

“True, enough, Hatteras,” said Altamont, in a piqued tone; “but, after all, is not that better than being blown to atoms like the *Forward*?”

Hatteras was about to make some sharp retort, but Clawbonny interposed.

“It is not a question of ships, my friends,” he said, “but of a fresh sea.”

“It is no new sea,” returned Altamont; “it is in every Polar chart, and has a name already. It is called the Arctic Ocean, and I think it would be very inconvenient to alter its designation. Should we find out by and by, that, instead of being an ocean it is only a strait or gulf, it will be time enough to alter it then.”

“So be it,” said Hatteras.

“Very well, that is an understood thing, then,” said the Doctor, almost regretting that he had started a discussion so pregnant with national rivalries.

“Let us proceed with the continent where we find ourselves at present,” resumed Hatteras. “I am not aware that any name whatever has been affixed to it, even in the most recent charts.”

He looked at Altamont as he spoke, who met his gaze steadily, and said-

“Possibly you may be mistaken again, Hatteras.”

“Mistaken! What! This unknown continent, this virgin soil--”

“Has already a name,” replied Altamont, coolly.

Hatteras was silent, but his lip quivered.

“And what name has it, then?” asked the Doctor, rather astonished at Altamont’s affirmation.

“My dear Clawbonny,” replied the American, “it is the custom, not to say the right, of every navigator to christen the soil on which he is the first to set foot. It appears to me, therefore, that it is my privilege and duty on this occasion to exercise my prerogative, and-”

“But, sir,” interrupted Johnson, rather nettled at his *sang froid*.

“It would be a difficult matter to prove that the *Porpoise* did not come here, even supposing she reached this coast by land,” continued Altamont, without noticing Johnson’s protest.

“The fact is indisputable,” he added looking at Hatteras.

“I dispute the claim,” said the Englishman, restraining himself by a powerful effort. “To name a country, you must first discover it, I suppose, and that you certainly did not do. Besides, but for us, where would you have been, sir, at this moment, pray? Lying twenty feet deep under the snow.”

“And without me, sir,” retorted Altamont, hotly, “without me and my ship, where would you all be at this moment? Dead, from cold and hunger.”

“Come, come, friends,” said the Doctor, “don’t get to words, all that can be easily settled. Listen to me.”

“Mr. Hatteras,” said Altamont, “is welcome to name whatever territories he may discover, should he succeed in discovering any; but this continent belongs to me. I should not even consent to its having two names like Grinnell’s Land, which is also called Prince Albert’s Land, because it was discovered almost simultaneously by an Englishman and an American. This is quite another matter; my right of priority is incontestable. No ship before mine ever touched this shore, no foot before mine ever trod this soil. I have given it a name, and that name it shall keep.”

“And what is that name?” inquired the Doctor.

“New America,” replied Altamont.

Hatteras trembled with suppressed passion, but by a violent effort restrained himself.

“Can you prove to me,” said Altamont, “that an Englishman has set foot here before an American?”

Johnson and Bell said nothing, though quite as much offended as the captain by Altamont’s imperious tone. They felt that reply was impossible.

For a few minutes there was an awkward silence, which the Doctor broke by saying-

“My friends, the highest human law is justice. It includes all others. Let us be just, then, and don’t let any bad feeling get in among us. The priority of Altamont seems to me indisputable. We will take our revenge by and by, and England will get her full share in our future discoveries. Let the name New America stand for the continent itself, but I suppose Altamont has not yet disposed of all the bays, and capes, and headlands it contains, and I imagine there will be nothing to prevent us calling this bay Victoria Bay?”

“Nothing whatever, provided that yonder cape is called Cape Washington,” replied Altamont.

“You might choose a name, sir,” exclaimed Hatteras, almost beside himself with passion, “that is less offensive to an Englishman.”

“But not one which sounds so sweet to an American,” retorted Altamont, proudly.

“Come, come,” said the Doctor, “no discussion on that subject. An American has a perfect right to be proud of his great countryman! Let us honour genius wherever it is met with; and since Altamont has made his choice, let us take our turn next; let the captain--”

“Doctor!” interrupted Hatteras, “I have no wish that my name should figure anywhere on this continent, seeing that it belongs to America.”

“Is this your unalterable determination?” asked Clawbonny.

“It is.”

The Doctor did not insist further.

“Very well, we’ll have it to ourselves then,” he continued, turning to Johnson and Bell.

“We’ll leave our traces behind us. I propose that the island we see out there, about three miles away from the shore, should be called Isle Johnson, in honour of our boatswain,”

“Oh, Mr. Clawbonny,” began Johnson, in no little confusion.

“And that mountain that we discovered in the west we will call Bell Mount, if our carpenter is willing.”

“It is doing me too much honour,” replied Bell.

“It is simple justice,” returned the Doctor.

“Nothing could be better,” said Altamont.

“Now then, all we have to do is to christen our fort,” said the Doctor, “about that there will be no discussion, I hope, for it is neither to our gracious sovereign Queen Victoria, nor to Washington, that we owe our safety and shelter here, but to God, who brought about our meeting, and by so doing saved us all. Let our little fort be called Fort Providence.”

“Your remarks are just,” said Altamont; “no name could be more suitable.”

“Fort Providence,” added Johnson, “sounds well too. In our future excursions, then, we shall go by Cape Washington to Victoria Bay, and from thence to Fort Providence, where we shall find food and rest at Doctor’s House!”

“The business is settled then so far,” resumed the Doctor. “As our discoveries multiply we shall have other names to give; but I trust, friends, we shall have no disputes about them, for placed as we are, we need all the help and love we can give each other. Let us be strong by being united. Who knows what dangers yet we may have to brave, and what sufferings to endure before we see our native land once more. Let us be one in heart though five in number, and let us lay aside all feelings of rivalry. Such feelings are bad enough at all times, but among us they would be doubly wrong. You understand me, Altamont, and you, Hatteras?”

Neither of the captains replied, but the Doctor took no notice of their silence, and went on to speak of other things. Sundry expeditions were planned to forage for fresh food. It would soon be spring, and hares and partridges, foxes and bears would re-appear. So it was determined that part of every day should be spent in hunting and exploring this unknown continent of New America.

VIII. An Excursion To The North Of Victoria Bay

Next morning Clawbonny was out by dawn of day. Clambering up the steep, rocky wall, against which the Doctor's House leaned, he succeeded, though with considerable difficulty, in reaching the top, which he found terminated abruptly in a sort of truncated cone. From this elevation there was an extensive view over a vast tract of country, which was all disordered and convulsed as if it had undergone some volcanic commotion. Sea and land, as far as it was possible to distinguish one from the other, were covered with a sheet of ice.

A new project struck the Doctor's mind, which was soon matured and ripe for execution. He lost no time in going back to the snow house, and consulting over it with his companions.

"I have got an idea," he said; "I think of constructing a lighthouse on the top of that cone above our heads."

"A lighthouse!" they all exclaimed.

"Yes, a lighthouse. It would be a double advantage. It would be a beacon to guide us in distant excursions, and also serve to illumine our *plateau* in the long dreary winter months."

"There is no doubt," replied Altamont, "of its utility; but how would you contrive to make it?"

"With one of the lanterns out of the *Porpoise*."

"All right; but how will you feed your lamp? With seal oil?"

"No, seal oil would not give nearly sufficient light. It would scarcely be visible through the fog."

"Are you going to try to make gas out of our coal then?"

"No, not that either, for gas would not be strong enough; and, worse still, it would waste our combustibles."

"Well," replied Altamont; "I'm at a loss to see how you—"

"Oh, I'm prepared for everything after the mercury bullet, and the ice lens, and Fort Providence. I believe Mr. Clawbonny can do anything," exclaimed Johnson.

"Come, Clawbonny, tell us what your light is to be, then," said Altamont.

"That's soon told," replied Clawbonny. "I mean to have an electric light."

"An electric light?"

"Yes, why not? Haven't you a galvanic battery on board your ship?"

"Yes."

"Well, there will be no difficulty then in producing an electric light, and that will cost nothing, and be far brighter."

"First-rate?" said Johnson; "let us set to work at once."

"By all means. There is plenty of material. In an hour we can raise a pillar of ice ten feet high, and that is quite enough.

Away went the Doctor, followed by his companions, and the column was soon erected and crowned with a ship lantern. The conducting wires were properly adjusted within it, and the

pile with which they communicated fixed up in the sitting-room, where the warmth of the stove would protect it from the action of the frost.

As soon as it grew dark the experiment was made, and proved a complete success. An intense brilliant light streamed from the lantern and illumined the entire plateau and the plains beneath.

Johnson could not help clapping his hands, half beside himself with delight.

“Well, I declare, Mr. Clawbonny,” he exclaimed, “you’re our sun now.”

“One must be a little of everything, you know,” was Clawbonny’s modest reply.

It was too cold, however, even to stand admiring more than a minute, and the whole party were glad enough to get indoors again, and tuck themselves up in their warm blankets.

A regular course of life commenced now, though uncertain weather and frequent changes of temperature made it sometimes impracticable to venture outside the hut at all, and it was not till the Saturday after the installation, that a day came that was favourable enough for a hunting excursion; when Bell, and Altamont, and the Doctor determined to take advantage of it, and try to replenish their stock of provisions.

They started very early in the morning, each armed with a double-barrelled gun and plenty of powder and shot, a hatchet, and a snow knife.

The weather was cloudy, but Clawbonny put the galvanic battery in action before he left, and the bright rays of the electric light did duty for the glorious orb of day, and in truth was no bad substitute, for the light was equal to three thousand candles, or three hundred gas burners.

It was intensely cold, but dry, and there was little or no wind. The hunters set off in the direction of Cape Washington, and the hard snow so favoured their march, that in three hours they had gone fifteen miles, Duk jumping and barking beside them all the way. They kept as close to the coast as possible, but found no trace of human habitation and indeed scarcely a sign of animal life. A few snow birds, however, darting to and fro announced the approach of spring and the return of the animal creation. The sea was still entirely frozen over, but it was evident from the open breathing holes in the ice, that the seals had been quite recently on the surface. In one part the holes were so numerous, that the Doctor said to his companions that he had no doubt that when summer came, they would be seen there in hundreds, and would be easily captured, for on unfrequented shores they were not so difficult of approach. But once frightened them and they all vanish as if by enchantment, and never return to the spot again. “Inexperienced hunters,” he said, “have often lost a whole shoal by attacking them, *en masse*, with noisy shouts instead of singly and silently.”

“Is it for the oil or skin that they are mostly hunted?”

“Europeans hunt them for the skin, but the Esquimaux eat them. They live on seals, and nothing is so delicious to them as a piece of the flesh, dipped in the blood and oil. After all, cooking has a good deal to do with it, and I’ll bet you something I could dress you cutlets you would not turn up your nose at, unless for their black appearance.”

“We’ll set you to work on it,” said Bell, “and I’ll eat as much as you like to please you.”

“My good Bell, you mean to say to please yourself, but your voracity would never equal the Green-landers’, for they devour from ten to fifteen pounds of meat a day.”

“Fifteen pounds!” said Bell. “What stomachs!”

“Arctic stomachs,” replied the Doctor, “are prodigious; they can expand at will, and, I may add, contract at will; so that they can endure starvation quite as well as abundance. When an

Esquimaux sits down to dinner he is quite thin, and by the time he has finished, he is so corpulent you would hardly recognize him. But then we must remember that one meal sometimes has to last a whole day.”

“This voracity must be peculiar to the inhabitants of cold countries,” said Altamont.

“I think it is,” replied the Doctor. “In the Arctic regions people must eat enormously: it is not only one of the conditions of strength, but of existence. The Hudson’s Bay Company always reckoned on this account 8 lbs. of meat to each man a day, or 12 lbs. of fish, or 2 lbs. of pemmican.”

“Invigorating regimen, certainly!” said Bell.

“Not so much as you imagine, my friend. An Indian who guzzles like that can’t do a whit better day’s work than an Englishman, who has his pound of beef and pint of beer.”

“Things are best as they are, then, Mr. Clawbonny.”

“No doubt of it; and yet an Esquimaux meal may well astonish us. In Sir John Ross’s narrative, he states his surprise at the appetites of his guides. He tells us that two of them—just two mind-devoured a quarter of a buffalo in one morning. They cut the meat in long narrow strips, and the mode of eating was either for the one to bite off as much as his mouth could hold, and then pass it on to the other, or to leave the long ribbons of meat dangling from the mouth and devour them gradually like boa-constrictors, lying at full length on the ground.”

“Faugh!” exclaimed Bell, “what disgusting brutes!”

“Every man has his own fashion of dining,” remarked the philosophical American.

“Happily,” said the Doctor.

“Well, if eating is such an imperative necessity in these latitudes, it quite accounts for all the journals of Arctic travellers being so full of eating and drinking.”

“You are right,” returned the Doctor. “I have been struck by the same fact; but I think it arises not only from the necessity of full diet, but from the extreme difficulty sometimes in procuring it. The thought of food is always uppermost in the mind, and naturally finds mention in the narrative.”

“And yet,” said Altamont, “if my memory serves me right, in the coldest parts of Norway the peasants do not seem to need such substantial fare. Milk diet is their staple food, with eggs, and bread made of the bark of the birch-tree; a little salmon occasionally, but never meat; and still they are fine hardy fellows.”

“It is an affair of organization out of my power to explain,” replied Clawbonny; “but I have no doubt that if these same Norwegians were transplanted to Greenland, they would learn to eat like the Esquimaux by the second or third generation. Even if we ourselves were to remain in this blessed country long, we should be as bad as the Esquimaux, even if we escaped becoming regular gluttons.”

“I declare, Mr. Clawbonny, you make me feel hungry with talking so much about eating,” exclaimed Bell.

“Not I!” said Altamont. “It rather sickens me, and makes me loathe the sight of a seal. But, stop, I do believe we are going to have the chance of a dinner off one, for I am much mistaken if that’s not something alive lying on those lumps of ice yonder!”

“It is a walrus!” exclaimed the Doctor. “Be quiet, and let us get up to him.”

Clawbonny was right, it was a walrus of huge dimensions, disporting himself not more than two hundred yards away. The hunters separated, going in different directions, so as to surround the animal and cut off all retreat. They crept along cautiously behind the hummocks, and managed to get within a few paces of him unperceived, when they fired simultaneously.

The walrus rolled over, but speedily got up again, and tried to make his escape, but Altamont fell upon him with his hatchet, and cut off his dorsal fins. He made a desperate resistance, but was overpowered by his enemies, and soon lay dead, reddening the ice-field with his blood.

It was a fine animal, measuring more than fifteen feet in length, and would have been worth a good deal for the oil; but the hunters contented themselves with cutting off the most savoury parts, and left the rest to the ravens, which had just begun to make their appearance.

Night was drawing on, and it was time to think of returning to Fort Providence. The moon had not yet risen, but the sky was serene and cloudless, and already glittering with stars-magnificent stars.

“Come,” said the Doctor, “let us be off, for it is getting late. Our hunting has not been very successful; but still, if a man has found something for his supper, he need not grumble. Let us go the shortest road, however, and get quickly home without losing our way. The stars will guide us.”

They resolved to try a more direct route back by going further inland, and avoiding the windings of the coast; but, after some hours’ walking, they found themselves no nearer Doctor’s House, and it was evident that they must have lost their way. The question was raised whether to construct a hut and rest till morning, or proceed; but Clawbonny insisted on going on, as Hatteras and Johnson would be so uneasy.

“Duk will guide us,” he said; “he won’t go wrong. His instinct can dispense with star and compass. Just let us keep close behind him.”

They did well to trust to Duk, for very speedily a faint light appeared in the horizon almost like a star glimmering through the mist, which hung low above the ground.

“There’s our lighthouse!” exclaimed the Doctor.

“Do you think it is, Mr. Clawbonny?” said Bell.

“I’m certain of it! Come on faster.” The light became stronger the nearer they approached, and soon they were walking in a bright luminous track, leaving their long shadows behind them on the spotless snow.

Quickening their steps, they hastened forward, and in another half hour they were climbing the ascent to Fort Providence.

IX. Cold And Heat

Hatteras and Johnson had been getting somewhat uneasy at the prolonged absence of their companions, and were delighted to see them back safe and sound. The hunters were no less glad to find themselves once more in a warm shelter, for the temperature had fallen considerably as night drew on, and the thermometer outside was 73° below zero.

The poor hunters were half frozen, and so worn out that they could hardly drag their limbs along; but the stoves were roaring and crackling cheerily, and the big kitchen fire waiting to cook such game as might be brought in. Clawbonny donned his official apron again, and soon had his seal cutlets dressed and smoking on the table. By nine o'clock the whole party were enjoying a good supper, and Bell couldn't help exclaiming-

"Well, even at the risk of being taken for an Esquimaux, I must confess eating is the most important business if one has to winter in these regions. A good meal isn't to be sneezed at."

They all had their mouths crammed too full to speak, but the Doctor signified his agreement with Bell's views by an approving nod.

The cutlets were pronounced first-rate, and it seemed as if they were, for they were all eaten, to the very last morsel.

For dessert they had coffee, which the Doctor brewed himself in a French coffee-pot over spirits-of-wine. He never allowed anybody but himself to concoct this precious beverage; for he made a point of serving it boiling hot, always declaring it was not fit to drink unless it burnt his tongue. This evening he took it so scalding that Altamont exclaimed-

"You'll skin your throat!"

"Not a bit of it," was the Doctor's reply.

"Then your palate must be copper-sheathed," said Johnson.

"Not at all, friends. I advise you to copy my example. Many persons, and I am one, can drink coffee at a temperature of 131°."

"131°?" said Altamont; "why, that is hotter than the hand could bear!"

"Of course it is, Altamont, for the hand could not bear more than 122°, but the palate and tongue are less sensitive."

"You surprise me."

"Well, I will convince you it is fact," returned Clawbonny, and taking up a thermometer, he plunged it into the steaming coffee. He waited till the mercury rose as high as 131° and then withdrew it, and swallowed the liquid with evident gusto.

Bell tried to follow his example, but burnt his mouth severely.

"You are not used to it," said the Doctor, coolly.

"Can you tell us, Clawbonny," asked Altamont, "what is the highest temperature that the human body can bear?"

"Yes, several curious experiments have been made in that respect. I remember reading of some servant girls, in the town of Rochefoucauld, in France, who could stay ten minutes in a baker's large oven when the temperature was 300°, while potatoes and meat were cooking all round them."

“What girls!” exclaimed Altamont.

“Well, there is another case, where eight of our own countrymen- Fordyce, Banks, Solander, Blagdin, Home, Nooth, Lord Seaforth, and Captain Phillips-went into one as hot as 200°, where eggs and beef were frizzling.”

“And they were Englishmen!” said Bell, with a touch of national pride.

“Oh, the Americans could have done better than that,” said Altamont.

“They would have roasted,” returned the Doctor, laughing. “At all events they have never tried it, so I shall stand up for my countrymen. There is one more instance I recollect, and really it is so incredible, that it would be impossible to believe it, if it were not attested by unimpeachable evidence. The Duke of Ragusa and

Dr. Jung, a Frenchman and an Austrian, saw a Turk plunge into a bath at 170°.”

“But that is not so astonishing as those servant girls, or our own countrymen,” said Johnson.

“I beg your pardon,” replied Clawbonny; “there is a great difference between plunging into hot air and hot water. Hot air produces perspiration, which protects the skin, but boiling water scalds. The *maximum* heat of baths is 107°, so that this Turk must have been an extraordinary fellow to endure such temperature.”

“What is the mean temperature, Mr. Clawbonny, of animated beings?” asked Johnson.

“That varies with the species,” replied the Doctor. “Birds have the highest, especially the duck and the hen. The mammalia come next, and human beings. The temperature of Englishmen averages 101°.”

“I am sure Mr. Altamont is going to claim a higher rate for his countrymen,” said Johnson, smiling.

“Well, sure enough, we’ve some precious hot ones among us, but as I never have put a thermometer down their throats to ascertain, I can’t give you statistics.”

“There is no sensible difference,” said the Doctor, “between men of different races when they are placed under the same conditions, whatever their food may be. I may almost say their temperature would be the same at the Equator as the Pole.”

“Then the heat of our bodies is the same here as in England,” replied Altamont.

“Just about it. The other species of mammalia are generally hotter than human beings. The horse, the hare, the elephant, the porpoise, and the tiger are nearly the same; but the cat, the squirrel, the rat, the panther, the sheep, the ox, the dog, the monkey, and the goat, are as high as 103°; and the pig is 104°.”

“Rather humiliating to us,” put in Altamont.

“Then come the amphibia and the fish,” resumed the Doctor, “whose temperature varies with that of the water. The serpent has a temperature of 86°, the frog 70°, and the shark several degrees less. Insects appear to have the temperature of air and water.”

“All this is very well,” interrupted Hatteras, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, “and we are obliged to the Doctor for his scientific information; but we are really talking as if we were going to brave the heat of the torrid zone. I think it would be far more reasonable to speak of cold, if the Doctor could tell us what is the lowest temperature on record.”

“I can enlighten you on that too,” replied the Doctor. “There are a great number of memorable winters, which appear to have come at intervals of about forty-one years. In 1364, the Rhone was frozen over as far as Arles; in 1408, the Danube was frozen throughout its entire extent, and the wolves crossed the Cattigut on firm ground; in 1509, the Adriatic and the Mediterranean were frozen at Venice and Marseilles, and the Baltic on the 10th of April; in 1608, all the cattle died in England from the cold; in 1789, the Thames was frozen as far as Gravesend; and the frightful winter of 1813 will long be remembered in France. The earliest and longest ever known in the present century was in 1829. So much for Europe.”

“But here, within the Polar circle, what is the lowest degree?” asked Altamont.

“My word!” said the Doctor. “I think we have experienced the lowest ourselves, for one day the thermometer was 72° below zero, and, if my memory serves me right, the lowest temperature mentioned hitherto by Arctic voyagers has been 61° at Melville Island, 65° at Port Felix, and 70° at Fort Reliance.”

“Yes,” said Hatteras, “it was the unusual severity of the winter that barred our progress, for it came on just at the worst time possible.”

“You were stopped, you say?” asked Altamont, looking fixedly at the captain.

“Yes, in our voyage west,” the Doctor hastened to reply.

“Then the maximum and minimum temperatures,” said Altamont, resuming the conversation, “are about 200° apart. So you see, my friends, we may make ourselves easy.”

“But if the sun were suddenly extinguished,” suggested Johnson, “would not the earth’s temperature be far lower?”

“There is no fear of such a catastrophe; but, even should it happen, the temperature would be scarcely any different.”

“That’s curious.”

“It is; but Fourier, a learned Frenchman, has proved the fact incontestably. If it were not the case, the difference between day and night would be far greater, as also the degree of cold at the Poles. But now I think, friends, we should be the better of a few hours’ sleep. Who has charge of the stove?”

“It is my turn to-night,” said Bell.

“Well, pray keep up a good fire, for it is a perishing night.”

“Trust me for that,” said Bell. “But do look out, the sky is all in a blaze.”

“Ay! it is a magnificent aurora,” replied the Doctor, going up to the window. “How beautiful! I never tire gazing at it.”

No more he ever did, though his companions had become so used to such displays that they hardly noticed them now. He soon followed the example of the others, however, and lay down on his bed beside the fire, leaving Bell to mount guard.

X. Winter Pleasures

It is a dreary affair to live at the Pole, for there is no going out for many long months, and nothing to break the weary monotony.

The day after the hunting excursion was dark and snowy, and Clawbonny could find no occupation except polishing up the ice walls of the hut as they became damp with the heat inside, and emptying out the snow which drifted into the long passage leading to the inner door. The "Snow- House" stood out well, defying storm and tempest, and the snow only seemed to increase the thickness of the walls.

The storehouses, too, did not give way the least; but though they were only a few yards off, it was found necessary to lay in enough provisions for the day, as very often the weather made it almost impossible to venture that short distance.

The unloading of the *Porpoise* turned out to have been a wise precaution, for she was slowly but surely being crashed to pieces by the silent, irresistible pressure around her. Still the Doctor was always hoping enough planks might be sufficiently sound to construct a small vessel to convey them back to England, but the right time to build had not come.

The five men were consequently compelled to spend the greater part of the day in complete idleness. Hatteras lolled on his bed absorbed in thought. Altamont smoked or dozed, and the Doctor took care not to disturb either of them, for he was in perpetual fear of a quarrel between them.

At meal times he always led the conversation away from irritating topics and sought, as far as possible, to instruct and interest all parties. Whenever he was not engaged with the preparation of his notes, he gave them dissertations on history, geography, or meteorology, handling his subject in an easy, though philosophical manner, drawing lessons from the most trivial incidents. His inexhaustible memory was never at a loss for fact or illustration when his good humour and geniality made him the life and soul of the little company. He was implicitly trusted by all, even by Hatteras, who cherished a deep affection for him.

Yet no man felt the compulsory confinement more painfully than Clawbonny. He longed ardently for the breaking up of the frost to resume his excursions though he dreaded the rivalry that might ensue between the two captains.

Yet things must come to a crisis soon or late, and meantime he resolved to use his best endeavors to bring both parties to a better mind, but to reconcile an American and an Englishman was no easy task. He and Johnson had many a talk on the subject, for the old sailor's views quite coincided with his own as to the difficult complications which awaited them in the future.

However, the bad weather continued, and leaving Fort Providence, even for an hour, was out of the question. Day and night they were pent up in these glittering ice-walls, and time hung heavily on their hands, at least on all but the Doctor's, and he always managed to find some occupation for himself.

"I declare," said Altamont, one evening; "life like this is not worth having. We might as well be some of those reptiles that sleep all the winter. But I suppose there is no help for it."

"I am afraid not," said the Doctor; "unfortunately we are too few in number to get up any amusement."

“Then you think if there were more of us, we should find more to do?”

“Of course: when whole ships’ crews have wintered here, they have managed to while away the time famously.”

“Well, I must say I should like to know how. It would need a vast amount of ingenuity to extract anything amusing out of our circumstances. I suppose they did not play at charades?”

“No, but they introduced the press and the theatre.”

“What? They had a newspaper?” exclaimed the American.

“They acted a comedy?” said Bell.

“That they did,” said the Doctor. “When Parry wintered at Melville Island, he started both amusements among his men, and they met with great success.”

“Well, I must confess, I should like to have been there,” returned Johnson; “for it must have been rather curious work.”

“Curious and amusing too, my good Johnson. Lieutenant Beechey was the theatre manager, and Captain Sabina chief editor of the newspaper called ‘The Winter Chronicle, or the Gazette of Northern Georgia.’ “

“Good titles,” said Altamont.

“The newspaper appeared daily from the 1st of November, 1819, to the 20th of March, 1820. It reported the different excursions, and hunting parties, and accidents, and adventures, and published amusing stories. No doubt the articles were not up to the ‘Spectator’ or the ‘Daily Telegraph,’ but the readers were neither critical nor *blasé*, and found great pleasure in their perusal.”

“My word!” said Altamont. “I should like to read some of the articles.”

“Would you? Well, you shall judge for yourself.”

“What! can you repeat them from memory?”

“No; but you had Parry’s *Voyages* on board the *Porpoise*, and I can read you his own narrative if you like.”

This proposition was so eagerly welcomed that the Doctor fetched the book forthwith, and soon found the passage in question.

“Here is a letter,” he said, “addressed to the editor.”

“ ‘Your proposition to establish a journal has been received by us with the greatest satisfaction. I am convinced that, under your direction, it will be a great source of amusement, and go a long way to lighten our hundred days of darkness.

“ ‘The interest I take in the matter myself has led me to study the effect of your announcement on my comrades, and I can testify, to use reporter’s language, that the thing has produced an immense sensation.

“ ‘The day after your prospectus appeared, there was an unusual and unprecedented demand for ink among us, and our green tablecloth was deluged with snippings and parings of quill-pens, to the injury of one of our servants, who got a piece driven right under his nail. I know for a fact that Sergeant Martin had no less than nine pen-knives to sharpen.

“It was quite a novel sight to see all the writing-desks brought out, which had not made their appearance for a couple of months, and judging by the reams of paper visible, more than one visit must have been made to the depths of the hold.

“I must not forget to tell you, that I believe attempts will be made to slip into your box sundry articles which are not altogether original, as they have been published already. I can declare that, no later than last night, I saw an author bending over his desk, holding a volume of the “Spectator” open with one hand, and thawing the frozen ink in his pen at the lamp with the other. I need not warn you to be on your guard against such tricks, for it would never do for us to have articles in our “Winter Chronicle” which our great-grandfathers read over their breakfast-tables a century ago.’ “

“Well, well,” said Altamont, “there is a good deal of clever humour in that writer. He must have been a sharp fellow.”

“You’re right. Here is an amusing catalogue of Arctic tribulations:-

“To go out in the morning for a walk, and the moment you put your foot outside the ship, find yourself immersed in the cook’s water-hole.

“To go out hunting, and fall in with a splendid reindeer, take aim, and find your gun has gone off with a flash in the pan, owing to damp powder.

“To set out on a march with a good supply of soft new bread in your pocket, and discover, when you want to eat, that it has frozen so hard that you would break your teeth if you attempted to bite it through.

“To rush from the table when it is reported that a wolf is in sight, and on coming back to find the cat has eaten your dinner.

“To be returning quietly home from a walk, absorbed in profitable meditation, and suddenly find yourself in the embrace of a bear.’

“We might supplement this list ourselves,” said the Doctor, “to almost any amount, for there is a sort of pleasure in enumerating troubles when one has got the better of them.”

“I declare,” said Altamont, “this ‘Winter Journal’ is an amusing affair. I wish we could subscribe to it.”

“Suppose we start one,” said Johnson.

“For us five!” exclaimed Clawbonny; “we might do for editors, but there would not be readers enough.”

“No, nor spectators enough, if we tried to get up a comedy,” added Altamont.

“Tell us some more about Captain Parry’s theatre,” said Johnson; “did they play new pieces?”

“Certainly. At first two volumes on board the ‘Hecla’ were gone through, but as there was a performance once a fortnight, this *repertoire* was soon exhausted. Then they had to improvise fresh plays; Parry himself composed one which had immense success. It was called ‘The North-West Passage, or the End of the Voyage.’ “

“A famous title,” said Altamont; “but I must confess, if I had chosen such a subject, I should have been at a loss for the *dénouement*.”

“You are right,” said Bell; “who can say what the end will be?”

“What does that matter?” replied Mr. Clawbonny. “Why should we trouble about the last act, while the first ones are going on well. Leave all that to Providence, friends; let us each play our own *rôle* as perfectly as we can, and since the *dénouement* belongs to the Great Author of all things, we will trust his skill. He will manage our affairs for us, never fear.”

“Well, we’d better go and dream about it,” said Johnson, “for it’s getting late, and it is time we went to bed,” said Johnson.

“You’re in a great hurry, old fellow,” replied the Doctor.

“Why would you sit up, Mr. Clawbonny? I am so comfortable in my bed, and then I always have such good dreams. I dream invariably of hot countries, so that I might almost say, half my life is spent in the tropics, and half at the North Pole.”

“You’re a happy man, Johnson,” said Altamont, “to be blessed with such a fortunate organization.”

“Indeed I am,” replied Johnson.

“Well, come, after that it would be positive cruelty to keep our good friend pining here,” said the Doctor, “his tropical sun awaits him, so let’s all go to bed.”

XI. Traces Of Bears

On the 26th of April during the night there was a sudden change in the weather. The thermometer fell several degrees, and the inmates of Doctor's House could hardly keep themselves warm even in their beds. Altamont had charge of the stove, and he found it needed careful replenishing to preserve the temperature at 50° above zero.

This increase of cold betokened the cessation of the stormy weather, and the Doctor hailed it gladly as the harbinger of his favourite hunting and exploring expeditions.

He rose early next morning, and climbed up to the top of the cone. The wind had shifted north, the air was clear, and the snow firm and smooth to the tread.

Before long the five companions had left Doctor's House, and were busily engaged in clearing the heavy masses of snow off the roof and sides, for the house was no longer distinguishable from the plateau, as the snow had drifted to a depth of full fifteen feet. It took two hours to remove the frozen snow, and restore the architectural form of the dwelling. At length the granite foundations appeared, and the storehouses and powder magazines were once more accessible.

But as, in so uncertain a climate, a storm might cut off their supplies any day, they wisely resolved to provide for any such emergency by carrying over a good stock of provisions to the kitchen; and then Clawbonny, Altamont, and Bell started off with their guns in search of game, for the want of fresh food began to be urgently felt.

The three companions went across the east side of the cone, right down into the centre of the far-stretching, snow-covered plain beneath, but they did not need to go far, for numerous traces of animals appeared on all sides within a circle of two miles round Fort Providence.

After gazing attentively at these traces for some minutes, the hunters looked at each other silently, and then the Doctor exclaimed:-

"Well, these are plain enough, I think!"

"Ay, only too plain," added Bell, "bears have been here!"

"First rate game!" said Altamont. "There's only one fault about it."

"And what is that?" asked Bell.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this-there are distinct traces of five bears, and five bears are rather too much for five men."

"Are you sure there are five?" said Clawbonny.

"Look and see for yourself. Here is one footprint, and there is another quite different. These claws are far wider apart than those; and see here, again, that paw belongs to a much smaller bear. I tell you, if you look carefully, you will see the marks of all five different bears distinctly."

"You're right," said Bell, after a close inspection.

"If that's the case, then," said the Doctor, "we must take care what we're about, and not be foolhardy, for these animals are starving after the severe winter, and they might be extremely dangerous to encounter and, since we are sure of their number--"

“And of their intentions, too,” put in Altamont.

“You think they have discovered our presence here?”

“No doubt of it, unless we have got into a bear-pass, but then, why should these footprints be in a circle round our fort? Look, these animals have come from the south-east, and stopped at this place, and commenced to reconnoitre the coast.”

“You’re right,” said the Doctor, “and, what’s more, it is certain that they have been here last night.”

“And other nights before that,” replied Altamont.

“I don’t think so,” rejoined Clawbonny. “It is more likely that they waited till the cessation of the tempest, and were on their way down to the bay, intending to catch seals, when they scented us.”

“Well, we can easily find out if they come tonight,” said Altamont.

“How?”

“By effacing all the marks in a given place, and if to-morrow, we find fresh ones, it will be evident that Fort Providence is the goal for which the bears are bound.”

“Very good, at any rate we shall know, then, what we have to expect.”

The three hunters set to work, and scraped the snow over till all the footprints were obliterated for a considerable distance.

“It is singular, though,” said Bell, “that bears could scent us all that way off; we have not been burning anything fat which might have attracted them.”

“Oh!” replied the Doctor, “bears are endowed with a wonderfully keen sense of smell, and a piercing sight; and, more than that, they are extremely intelligent, almost more so than any other animal. They have smelt something unusual; and, besides, who can tell whether they have not even found their way as far as our plateau during the tempest?”

“But then, why did they stop here last night?” asked Altamont.

“Well, that’s a question I can’t answer, but there is no doubt they will continue narrowing their circles, till they reach Fort Providence.”

“We shall soon see,” said Altamont.

“And, meantime, we had best go on,” added the Doctor, “and keep a sharp look out.”

But not a sign of anything living was visible, and after a time they returned to the snow-house.

Hatteras and Johnson were informed how matters stood, and it was resolved to maintain a vigilant watch. Night came, but nothing disturbed its calm splendour—nothing was heard to indicate approaching danger.

Next morning at early dawn, Hatteras and his companions, well armed, went out to reconnoitre the state of the snow. They found the same identical footmarks, but somewhat nearer. Evidently the enemy was bent on the siege of Fort Providence.

“But where can the bears be?” said Bell.

“Behind the icebergs watching us,” replied the Doctor. “Don’t let us expose ourselves imprudently.”

“What about going hunting, then?” asked Altamont.

“We must put it off for a day or two, I think, and rub out the marks again, and see if they are renewed to-morrow.”

The Doctor’s advice was followed, and they entrenched themselves for the present in the fort. The lighthouse was taken down, as it was not of actual use meantime, and might help to attract the bears. Each took it in turn to keep watch on the upper plateau.

The day passed without a sign of the enemy’s existence, and next morning, when they hurried eagerly out to examine the snow, judge their astonishment to find it wholly untouched!

“Capital!” exclaimed Altamont. “The bears are put off the scent; they have no perseverance, and have grown tired waiting for us. They are off, and a good riddance. Now let us start for a day’s hunting.”

“Softly, softly,” said the Doctor; “I’m not so sure they have gone. I think we had better wait one day more. It is evident the bears have not been here last night, at least on this side; but still-”

“Well, let us go right round the plateau, and see how things stand,” said the impatient Altamont.

“All right,” said Clawbonny. “Come along.”

Away they went, but it was impossible to scrutinize carefully a track of two miles, and no trace of the enemy was discoverable.

“Now, then, can’t we go hunting?” said Altamont.

“Wait till to-morrow,” urged the Doctor again.

His friend was very unwilling to delay, but yielded the point at last, and returned to the fort.

As on the preceding night, each man took his hour’s watch on the upper plateau. When it came to Altamont’s turn, and he had gone out to relieve Bell, Hatteras called his old companions round him. The Doctor left his desk and Johnson his cooking, and hastened to their captain’s side, supposing he wanted to talk over their perilous situation; but Hatteras never gave it a thought.

“My friends,” he said, “let us take advantage of the American’s absence to speak of business. There are things which cannot concern him, and with which I do not choose him to meddle.”

Johnson and Clawbonny looked at each other, wondering what the captain was driving at.

“I wish,” he continued, “to talk with you about our plans for the future.”

“All right! talk away while we are alone,” said the Doctor.

“In a month, or six weeks at the outside, the time for making distant excursions will come again. Have you thought of what we had better undertake in summer?”

“Have you, captain?” asked Johnson.

“Have I? I may say that not an hour of my life passes without revolving in my mind my one cherished purpose. I suppose not a man among you intends to retrace his steps?”

No one replied, and Hatteras went on to say-

“For my own part, even if I must go alone, I will push on to the North Pole. Never were men so near it before, for we are not more than 360 miles distant at most, and I will not lose such an opportunity without making every attempt to reach it, even though it be an impossibility. What are your views, Doctor?”

“Your own, Hatteras.”

“And yours, Johnson?”

“Like the Doctor’s.”

“And yours, Bell?”

“Captain,” replied the carpenter, “it is true we have neither wives nor children waiting us in England, but, after all, it is one’s country- one’s native land! Have you no thoughts of returning home?”

“We can return after we have discovered the Pole quite as well as before, and even better. Our difficulties will not increase, for as we near the Pole we get away from the point of greatest cold. We have fuel and provisions enough. There is nothing to stop us, and we should be culpable, in my opinion, if we allowed ourselves to abandon the project.”

“Very well, captain, I’ll go along with you.”

“That’s right; I never doubted you,” said Hatteras. “We shall succeed, and England will have all the glory.”

“But there is an American among us!” said Johnson.

Hatteras could not repress an impatient exclamation.

“I know it!” he said, in a stern voice.

“We cannot leave him behind,” added the Doctor.

“No, we can’t,” repeated Hatteras, almost mechanically.

“And he will be sure to go too.”

“Yes, he will go too; but who will command?”

“You, captain.”

“And if you all obey my orders, will the Yankee refuse?”

“I shouldn’t think so; but suppose he should, what can be done?”

“He and I must fight it out, then.”

The three Englishmen looked at Hatteras, but said nothing. Then the Doctor asked how they were to go.

“By the coast, as far as possible,” was the reply.

“But what if we find open water, as is likely enough?”

“Well, we’ll go across it.”

“But we have no boat.”

Hatteras did not answer, and looked embarrassed.

“Perhaps,” suggested Bell, “we might make a ship out of some of the planks of the *Porpoise*.”

“Never!” exclaimed Hatteras, vehemently.

“Never!” said Johnson.

The Doctor shook his head. He understood the feeling of the captain.

“Never!” reiterated Hatteras. “A boat made out of an American ship would be an American!”

“But, captain--” began Johnson.

The Doctor made a sign to the old boatswain not to press the subject further, and resolved in his own mind to reserve the question for discussion at a more opportune moment. He managed to turn the conversation to other matters, till it abruptly terminated by the entrance of Altamont.

This ended the day, and the night passed quietly without the least disturbance. The bears had evidently disappeared.

XII. Imprisoned In Doctor's House

The first business next day was to arrange for a hunt. It was settled that Altamont, Bell, and Hatteras should form the party, while Clawbonny should go and explore as far as Isle Johnson, and make some hydrographic notes and Johnson should remain behind to keep house.

The three hunters soon completed their preparations. They armed themselves each with a double-barrelled revolver and a rifle, and took plenty of powder and shot. Each man also carried in his belt his indispensable snow knife and hatchet, and a small supply of pemmican in case night should surprise them before their return.

Thus equipped, they could go far, and might count on a good supply of game.

At eight o'clock they started, accompanied by Duk, who frisked and gambolled with delight. They went up the hill to the east, across the cone, and down into the plain below.

The Doctor next took his departure, after agreeing with Johnson on a signal of alarm in case of danger.

The old boatswain was left alone, but he had plenty to do. He began by unfastening the Greenland dogs, and letting them out for a run after their long, wearisome confinement. Then he attended to divers housekeeping matters. He had to replenish the stock of combustibles and provisions, to arrange the store-houses, to mend several broken utensils, to repair the rents in coverlets, and get new shoes ready for summer excursions. There was no lack of work, and the old sailor's nimble clever fingers could do anything.

While his hands were busy, his mind was occupied with the conversation of the preceding evening. He thought with regret over the captain's obstinacy, and yet he felt that there was something grand and even heroic in his determination that neither an American nor an American ship should first touch the Pole.

The hunters had been gone about an hour when Johnson suddenly heard the report of a gun.

"Capital!" he exclaimed. "They have found something, and pretty quickly too, for me to hear their guns so distinctly. The atmosphere must be very clear."

A second and a third shot followed.

"Bravo!" again exclaimed the boatswain; "they must have fallen in luck's way!"

But when three more shots came in rapid succession, the old man turned pale, and a horrible thought crossed his mind, which made him rush out and climb hastily to the top of the cone. He shuddered at the sight which met his eyes. The three hunters, followed by Duk, were tearing home at full speed, followed by the five huge bears! Their six balls had evidently taken no effect, and the terrible monsters were close on their heels. Hatteras, who brought up the rear, could only manage to keep off his pursuers by flinging down one article after another—first his cap, then his hatchet, and, finally, his gun. He knew that the inquisitive bears would stop and examine every object, sniffing all round it, and this gave him a little time, otherwise he could not have escaped, for these animals outstrip the fleetest horse, and one monster was so near that Hatteras had to brandish his knife vigorously, to ward off a tremendous blow of his paw.

At last, though panting and out of breath, the three men reached Johnson safely, and slid down the rock with him into the snow-house. The bears stopped short on the upper plateau, and Hatteras and his companions lost no time in barring and barricading them out.

“Here we are at last!” exclaimed Hatteras; “we can defend ourselves better now. It is five against five.”

“Four!” said Johnson in a frightened voice.

“How?”

“The Doctor!” replied Johnson, pointing to the empty sitting-room.

“Well, he is in Isle Johnson.”

“A bad job for him,” said Bell.

“But we can’t leave him to his fate, in this fashion,” said Altamont.

“No, let’s be off to find him at once,” replied Hatteras.

He opened the door, but soon shut it, narrowly escaping a bear’s hug.

“They are there!” he exclaimed.

“All?” asked Bell.

“The whole pack.”

Altamont rushed to the windows, and began to fill up the deep embrasure with blocks of ice, which he broke off the walls of the house.

His companions followed his example silently. Not a sound was heard but the low, deep growl of Duk.

To tell the simple truth, however, it was not their own danger that occupied their thoughts, but their absent friend, the Doctor’s. It was for him they trembled, not for themselves. Poor Clawbonny, so good and devoted as he had been to every member of the little colony! This was the first time they had been separated from him. Extreme peril, and most likely a frightful death awaited him, for he might return unsuspectingly to Fort Providence, and find himself in the power of these ferocious animals.

“And yet,” said Johnson, “unless I am much mistaken, he must be on guard. Your repeated shots cannot but have warned him. He must surely be aware that something unusual has happened.”

“But suppose he was too far away to hear them,” replied Altamont, “or has not understood the cause of them? It is ten chances to one but he’ll come quickly back, never imagining the danger. The bears are screened from sight by the crag completely.”

“We must get rid of them before he comes,” said Hatteras.

“But how?” asked Bell.

It was difficult to reply to this, for a sortie was out of the question. They had taken care to barricade the entrance passage, but the bears could easily find a way in if they chose. So it was thought advisable to keep a close watch on their movements outside, by listening attentively in each room, so as to be able to resist all attempts at invasion. They could hear them distinctly prowling about, growling and scraping the walls with their enormous paws.

However, some action must be taken speedily, for time was passing. Altamont resolved to try a port-hole through which he might fire on his assailants. He had soon scooped out a hole in

the wall, but his gun was hardly pushed through, when it was seized with irresistible force, and wrested from his grasp before he could even fire.

“Confound it!” he exclaimed, “we’re no match for them.”

And he hastened to stop up the breach as fast as possible.

This state of things had lasted upwards of an hour, and there seemed no prospect of a termination. The question of a *sortie* began now to be seriously discussed. There was little chance of success, as the bears could not be attacked separately, but Hatteras and his companions had grown so impatient, and it must be confessed were also so much ashamed of being kept in prison by beasts, that they would even have dared the risk if the captain had not suddenly thought of a new mode of defence.

He took Johnson’s furnace-poker, and thrust it into the stove while he made an opening in the snow wall, or rather a partial opening, for he left a thin sheet of ice on the outer side. As soon as the poker was red hot, he said to his comrades who stood eagerly watching him, wondering what he was going to do-

“This red-hot bar will keep off the bears when they try to get hold of it, and we shall be able easily to fire across it without letting them snatch away our guns.”

“A good idea,” said Bell, posting himself beside Altamont.

Hatteras withdrew the poker, and instantly plunged it in the wall. The melting snow made a loud hissing noise, and two bears ran and made a snatch at the glowing bar; but they fell back with a terrible howl, and at the same moment four shots resounded, one after the other.

“Hit!” exclaimed Altamont.

“Hit!” echoed Bell.

“Let us repeat the dose,” said Hatteras, carefully stopping up the opening meantime.

The poker was again thrust into the fire, and in a few minutes was ready for Hatteras to recommence operations.

Altamont and Bell reloaded their guns, and took their places; but this time the poker would not pass through.

“Confound the beasts!” exclaimed the impetuous American.

“What’s the matter?” asked Johnson.

“What’s the matter? Why, those plaguey animals are piling up block after block, intending to bury us alive!”

“Impossible!”

“Look for yourself; the poker can’t get through. I declare it is getting absurd now.”

It was worse than absurd, it was alarming. Things grew worse. It was evident that the bears meant to stifle their prey, for the sagacious animals were heaping up huge masses, which would make escape impossible.

“It is too bad,” said old Johnson, with a mortified look. “One might put up with men, but bears!”

Two hours elapsed without bringing any relief to the prisoners; to go out was impossible, and the thick walls excluded all sound. Altamont walked impatiently up and down full of

exasperation and excitement at finding himself worsted for once. Hatteras could think of nothing but the Doctor, and of the serious peril which threatened him.

“Oh, if Mr. Clawbonny were only here!” said Johnson.

“What could he do?” asked Altamont.

“Oh, he’d manage to get us out somehow.”

“How, pray?” said the American, crossly.

“If I knew that I should not need him. However, I know what his advice just now would be.”

“What?”

“To take some food; that can’t hurt us. What do you say, Mr. Altamont?”

“Oh, let’s eat, by all means, if that will please you, though we’re in a ridiculous, not to say humiliating, plight.”

“I’ll bet you we’ll find a way out after dinner.”

No one replied, but they seated themselves round the table.

Johnson, trained in Clawbonny’s school, tried to be brave and unconcerned about the danger, but he could scarcely manage it. His jokes stuck in his throat. Moreover, the whole party began to feel uncomfortable. The atmosphere was getting dense, for every opening was hermetically sealed. The stoves would hardly draw, and it was evident would soon go out altogether for want of oxygen.

Hatteras was the first to see their fresh danger, and he made no attempt to hide it from his companions.

“If that is the case,” said Altamont, “we must get out at all risks.”

“Yes,” replied Hatteras; “but let us wait till night. We will make a hole in the roof, and let in a provision of air, and then one of us can fire out of it on the bears.”

“It is the only thing we can do, I suppose,” said Altamont.

So it was agreed; but waiting was hard work, and Altamont could not refrain from giving vent to his impatience by thundering maledictions on the bears, and abusing the ill fate which had placed them in such an awkward and humbling predicament. “It was beasts versus men,” he said, “and certainly the men cut a pretty figure.”

XIII. The Mine

Night drew on, and the lamp in the sitting-room already began to burn dim for want of oxygen.

At eight o'clock the final arrangements were completed, and all that remained to do was to make an opening in the roof.

They had been working away at this for some minutes, and Bell was showing himself quite an adept in the business, when Johnson, who had been keeping watch in the sleeping room, came hurriedly in to his companions, pulling such a long face, that the captain asked immediately what was the matter?

"Nothing exactly," said the old sailor, "and yet—"

"Come, out with it!" exclaimed Altamont.

"Hush! don't you hear a peculiar noise?"

"Where?"

"Here, on this side, on the wall of the room."

Bell stopped working, and listened attentively like the rest. Johnson was right; a noise there certainly was on the side wall, as if some one were cutting the ice.

"Don't you hear it?" repeated Johnson.

"Hear it? Yes, plain enough," replied Altamont.

"Is it the bears?" asked Bell.

"Most assuredly."

"Well; they have changed their tactics," said old Johnson, "and given up the idea of suffocating us."

"Or may be they suppose we are suffocated by now," suggested the American, getting furious at his invisible enemies.

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

"Well, what of it?" returned Hatteras.

"We shall have a hand-to-hand struggle, that's all."

"And so much the better," added Altamont; "that's far more to my taste; I have had enough of invisible foes—let me see my antagonist, and then I can fight him."

"Ay," said Johnson; "but not with guns. They would be useless here."

"With knife and hatchet then," returned the American.

The noise increased, and it was evident that the point of attack was the angle of the wall formed by its junction with the cliff.

"They are hardly six feet off now," said the boatswain.

"Right, Johnson!" replied Altamont; "but we have time enough to be ready for them."

And seizing a hatchet, he placed himself in fighting attitude, planting his right foot firmly forward and throwing himself back.

Hatteras and the others followed his example, and Johnson took care to load a gun in case of necessity.

Every minute the sound came nearer, till at last only a thin coating separated them from their assailants.

Presently this gave way with a loud crack, and a huge dark mass rolled over into the room.

Altamont had already swung his hatchet to strike, when he was arrested by a well-known voice, exclaiming-

“For Heaven’s sake, stop!”

“The Doctor! the Doctor!” cried Johnson.

And the Doctor it actually was who had tumbled in among them in such undignified fashion.

“How do ye do, good friends?” he said, picking himself smartly up.

His companions stood stupefied for a moment, but joy soon loosened their tongues, and each rushed eagerly forward to welcome his old comrade with a loving embrace. Hatteras was for once fairly overcome with emotion, and positively hugged him like a child.

“And is it really you, Mr. Clawbonny?” said Johnson.

“Myself and nobody else, my old fellow. I assure you I have been far more uneasy about you than you could have been about me.”

“But how did you know we had been attacked by a troop of bears?” asked Altamont. “What we were most afraid of was that you would come quickly back to Fort Providence, never dreaming of danger.”

“Oh, I saw it all. Your repeated shots gave me the alarm. When you commenced firing I was beside the wreck of the *Porpoise*, but I climbed up a hummock, and discovered five bears close on your heels. Oh, how anxious I was for you! But when I saw you disappear down the cliff, while the bears stood hesitating on the edge, as if uncertain what to do, I felt sure that you had managed to get safely inside the house and barricade it. I crept cautiously nearer, sometimes going on all-fours, sometimes slipping between great blocks of ice, till I came at last quite close to our fort, and then I found the bears working away like beavers. They were prowling about the snow, and dragging enormous blocks of ice towards the house, piling them up like a wall, evidently intending to bury you alive. It is a lucky thing they did not take it into their heads to dash down the blocks from the summit of the cone, for you must have been crushed inevitably.”

“But what danger you were in, Mr. Clawbonny,” said Bell. “Any moment they might have turned round and attacked you.”

“They never thought of it even. Johnson’s Greenland dogs came in sight several times, but they did not take the trouble to go after them. No, they imagined themselves sure of a more savoury supper!”

“Thanks for the compliment!” said Altamont, laughing.

“Oh, there is nothing to be proud of. When I saw what the bears were up to, I determined to get back to you by some means or other. I waited till night, but as soon as it got dark I glided noiselessly along towards the powder-magazine. I had my reasons for choosing that point from which to work my way hither, and I speedily commenced operations with my snow-knife. A famous tool it is. For three mortal hours I have been hacking and heaving away, but here I am at last tired enough and starving, but still safe here.”

“To share our fate!” said Altamont.

“No, to save you all; but, for any sake, give me a biscuit and a bit of meat, for I feel sinking for want of food.”

A substantial meal was soon before him, but the vivacious little man could talk all the while he was eating, and was quite ready to answer any questions.

“Did you say *to save us*?” asked Bell.

“Most assuredly!” was the reply.

“Well, certainly, if you found your way in, we can find our way out by the same road.”

“A likely story, and leave the field clear for the whole pack to come in and find out our stores. Pretty havoc they would make!”

“No, we must stay here,” said Hatteras.

“Of course we must,” replied Clawbonny, “but we’ll get rid of the bears for all that.”

“I told you so,” said Johnson, rubbing his hands. “I knew nothing was hopeless if Mr. Clawbonny was here; he has always some expedient in his wise head.”

“My poor head is very empty, I fear, but by dint of rummaging perhaps I--”

“Doctor,” interrupted Altamont, “I suppose there is no fear of the bears getting in by the passage you have made?”

“No, I took care to stop up the opening thoroughly, and now we can reach the powder-magazine without letting them see us.”

“All right; and now will you let us have your plan of getting rid of these comical assailants?”

“My plan is quite simple, and part of the work is done already.”

“What do you mean?”

“You shall see. But I am forgetting that I brought a companion with me.”

“What do you say?” said Johnson.

“I have a companion to introduce to you,” replied the Doctor, going out again into the passage, and bringing back a dead fox, newly killed.

“I shot it this morning,” he continued, “and never did fox come more opportunely.”

“What on earth do you mean?” asked Altamont.

“I mean to blow up the bears *en masse* with 100 lbs of powder.”

“But where is the powder?” exclaimed his friend.

“In the magazine. This passage will lead to it. I made it purposely.”

“And where is the mine to be?” inquired Altamont.

“At the furthest point from the house and stores.”

“And how will you manage to entice the bears there, all to one spot?”

“I’ll undertake that business; but we have talked enough, let us set to work. We have a hundred feet more to add to our passage to-night, and that is no easy matter, but as there are five of us, we can take turns at it. Bell will begin, and we will lie down and sleep meantime.”

“Well, really,” said Johnson, “the more I think of it, the more feasible seems the Doctor’s plan.”

“It is a sure one, anyway,” said Clawbonny.

“So sure that I can feel the bear’s fur already on my shoulder. Well, come, let’s begin then.”

Away he went into the gloomy passage, followed by Bell, and in a few moments they had reached the powder-magazine, and stood among the well-arranged barrels. The Doctor pointed out to his companion the exact spot where he began excavating, and then left him to his task, at which he laboured diligently for about an hour, when Altamont came to relieve him. All the snow he had dug out was taken to the kitchen and melted, to prevent its taking up room.

The captain succeeded Altamont, and was followed by Johnson. In ten hours—that is to say, about eight in the morning—the gallery was entirely open.

With the first streak of day, the Doctor was up to reconnoitre the position of the enemy. The patient animals were still occupying their old position, prowling up and down and growling. The house had already almost disappeared beneath the piled-up blocks of ice, but even while he gazed a council of war seemed being held, which evidently resulted in the determination to alter the plan of action, for suddenly all the five bears began vigorously to pull down these same heaped-up blocks.

“What are they about?” asked Hatteras, who was standing beside him.

“Well, they look to me to be bent on demolishing their own work, and getting right down to us as fast as possible; but wait a bit, my gentlemen, we’ll demolish you first. However, we have not a minute to lose.”

Hastening away to the mine, he had the chamber where the powder was to be lodged enlarged the whole breadth and height of the sloping rock against which the wall leaned, till the upper part was about a foot thick, and had to be propped up to prevent its falling in. A strong stake was fixed firmly on the granite foundation, on the top of which the dead fox was fastened. A rope was attached to the lower part of the stake, sufficiently long to reach the powder stores.

“This is the bait,” he said, pointing to the dead fox, “and here is the mine,” he added, rolling in a keg of powder containing about 100 lbs.

“But, Doctor,” said Hatteras, “won’t that blow us up too, as well as the bears?”

“No, we shall be too far from the scene of explosion. Besides, our house is solid, and we can soon repair the walls even if they should get a bit shaken.”

“And how do you propose to manage?” asked Altamont.

“See! By hauling in this rope we lower the post which props up the roof, and make it give way, and bring up the dead fox to light, and I think you will agree with me that the bears are so famished with their long fasting, that they won’t lose much time in rushing towards their unexpected meal. Well, just at that very moment, I shall set fire to the mine, and blow up both the guests and the meal.”

“Capital! Capital!” shouted Johnson, who had been listening with intense interest.

Hatteras said nothing, for he had such absolute confidence in his friend that he wanted no further explanation. But Altamont must know the why and wherefore of everything.

“But Doctor,” he said, “can you reckon on your match so exactly that you can be quite sure it will fire the mine at the right moment?”

“I don’t need to reckon at all; that’s a difficulty easily got over.”

“Then you have a match a hundred feet long?”

“No.”

“You are simply going to lay a train of powder.”

“No, that might miss fire.”

“Well, there is no way then but for one of us to devote his life to the others, and go and light the powder himself.”

“I’m ready,” said Johnson, eagerly, “ready and willing.”

“Quite useless my brave fellow,” replied the Doctor, holding out his hand. “All our lives are precious, and they will be all spared, thank God!”

“Well, I give it up!” said the American. “I’ll make no more guesses.”

“I should like to know what is the good of learning physics,” said the Doctor, smiling, “if they can’t help a man at a pinch like this. Haven’t we an electric battery, and long enough lines attached to it to serve our purpose? We can fire our mine whenever we please in an instant, and without the slightest danger.”

“Hurrah!” exclaimed Johnson.

“Hurrah!” echoed the others, without heeding whether the enemy heard them or not.

The Doctor’s idea was immediately carried out, and the connecting lines uncoiled and laid down from the house to the chamber of the mine, one end of each remaining attached to the electric pile, and the other inserted into the keg of powder.

By nine o’clock everything was ready. It was high time, for the bears were furiously engaged in the work of demolition. Johnson was stationed in the powder-magazine, in charge of the cord which held the bait.

“Now,” said Clawbonny to his companions, “load your guns, in case our assailants are not killed. Stand beside Johnson, and the moment the explosion is over rush out.”

“All right,” said Altamont.

“And now we have done all we can to help ourselves. So may Heaven help us!”

Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell repaired to the powder-magazine, while the Doctor remained alone beside the pile.

Soon he heard Johnson’s voice in the distance calling out “Ready.”

“All right,” was the reply.

Johnson pulled his rope vigorously, and then rushed to the loop-hole to see the effect. The thin shell of ice had given way, and the body of the fox lay among the ruins. The bears were somewhat scared at first, but the next minute had eagerly rushed to seize the booty.

“Fire!” called out Johnson, and at once the electric spark was sent along the lines right into the keg of powder. A formidable explosion ensued; the house was shaken as if by an earthquake, and the walls cracked asunder. Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell hurried out with the guns, but they might spare their shot, for four of the bears lay dead, and the fifth, half roasted, though alive, was scampering away in terror as fast as his legs could carry him.

“Hurrah! Three cheers for Clawbonny,” they shouted and overwhelmed the Doctor with plaudits and thanks.

XIV. An Arctic Spring

The prisoners were free, and their joy found vent in the noisiest demonstrations. They employed the rest of the day in repairing the house, which had suffered greatly by the explosion. They cleared away the blocks piled up by the animals, and filled up the rents in the walls, working with might and main, enlivened by the many songs of old Johnson.

Next morning there was a singular rise in the temperature, the thermometer going up to 15° above zero.

This comparative heat lasted several days. In sheltered spots the glass rose as high as 31°, and symptoms of a thaw appeared.

The ice began to crack here and there, and jets of salt water were thrown up, like fountains in an English park. A few days later, the rain fell in torrents.

Thick vapour rose from the snow, giving promise of the speedy disappearance of these immense masses. The sun's pale disc became deeper in colour, and remained longer above the horizon. The night was scarcely longer than three hours.

Other tokens of spring's approach were manifest of equal significance, the birds were returning in flocks, and the air resounded with their deafening cries. Hares were seen on the shores of the bay, and mice in such abundance that their burrows completely honeycombed the ground.

The Doctor drew the attention of his companions to the fact, that almost all these animals were beginning to lose their white winter dress, and would soon put on summer attire, while nature was already providing mosses, and poppies, and saxifragas, and short grass for their sustenance. A new world lay beneath that melting snow.

But with these inoffensive animals came back their natural enemies. Foxes and wolves arrived in search of their prey, and dismal howls broke the silence of the short night.

Arctic wolves closely resemble dogs, and their barking would deceive the most practised ears; even the canine race themselves have been deceived by it. Indeed, it seems as if the wily animals employed this ruse to attract the dogs, and make them their prey. Several navigators have mentioned the fact, and the Doctor's own experience confirmed it. Johnson took care not to let his Greenlanders loose; of Duk there was little fear; nothing could take him in.

For about a fortnight hunting was the principal occupation. There was an abundant supply of fresh meat to be had. They shot partridges, ptarmigans, and snow ortolans, which are delicious eating. The hunters never went far from Fort Providence, for game was so plentiful that it seemed waiting their guns, and the whole bay presented an animated appearance.

The thaw, meanwhile, was making rapid progress. The thermometer stood steadily at 32° above zero, and the water ran down the mountain sides in cataracts, and dashed in torrents through the ravines.

The Doctor lost no time in clearing about an acre of ground, in which he sowed the seeds of anti-scorbutic plants. He just had the pleasure of seeing tiny little green leaves begin to sprout, when the cold returned in full force.

In a single night, the thermometer lost nearly 40°; it went down to 8° below zero. Everything was frozen—birds, quadrupeds, amphibia disappeared as if by magic; seal-holes reclosed, and the ice once more became hard as granite.

The change was most striking; it occurred on the 18th of May, during the night. The Doctor was rather disappointed at having all his work to do again, but Hatteras bore the grievance most unphilosophically, as it interfered with all his plans of speedy departure.

“Do you think we shall have a long spell of this weather, Mr. Clawbonny?” asked Johnson.

“No, my friend, I don’t; it is a last blow from the cold. You see these are his dominions, and he won’t be driven out without making some resistance.”

“He can defend himself pretty well,” said Bell, rubbing his face.

“Yes; but I ought to have waited, and not have wasted my seed like an ignoramus; and all the more as I could, if necessary, have made them sprout by the kitchen stoves.”

“But do you mean to say,” asked Altamont, “that you might have anticipated the sudden change?”

“Of course, and without being a wizard. I ought to have put my seed under the protection of Saint Paucratius and the other two saints, whose fête days fall this month.”

“Absurd! Pray tell me what they have to do with it? What influence can they possibly have on the temperature?”

“An immense one, if we are to believe horticulturists, who call them the patron saints of the frost.”

“And for what reason?”

“Because generally there is a periodical frost in the month of May, and it is coldest from the 11th to the 13th. That is the fact.”

“And how is it explained?”

“In two ways. Some say that a larger number of asteroids come between the earth and the sun at this time of year, and others that the mere melting of the snow necessarily absorbs a large amount of heat, and accounts for the low temperature. Both theories are plausible enough, but the fact remains whichever we accept, and I ought to have remembered it.”

The Doctor was right, for the cold lasted till the end of the month, and put an end to all their hunting expeditions. The old monotonous life in-doors recommenced, and was unmarked by any incident except a serious illness which suddenly attacked Bell. This was violent quinsy, but, under the Doctor’s skilful treatment, it was soon cured. Ice was the only remedy he employed, administered in small pieces, and in twenty- four hours Bell was himself again.

During this compulsory leisure, Clawbonny determined to have a talk with the captain on an important subject-the building of a sloop out of the planks of the *Porpoise*.

The Doctor hardly knew how to begin, as Hatteras had declared so vehemently that he would never consent to use a morsel of American wood; yet it was high time he were brought to reason, as June was at hand, the only season for distant expeditions, and they could not start without a ship.

He thought over it a long while, and at last drew the captain aside, and said in the kindest, gentlest way-

“Hatteras, do you believe I’m your friend?”

“Most certainly I do,” replied the captain, earnestly; “my best, indeed my only friend.”

“And if I give you a piece of advice without your asking, will you consider my motive is perfectly disinterested?”

“Yes, for I know you have never been actuated by self-interest. But what are you driving at?”

“Wait, Hatteras, I have one thing more to ask. Do you look on me as a true-hearted Englishman like yourself, anxious for his country’s glory?”

Hatteras looked surprised, but simply said-

“I do.”

“You desire to reach the North Pole,” the Doctor went on; “and I understand and share your ambition, but to achieve your object you must employ the right means.”

“Well, and have I not sacrificed everything for it?”

“No, Hatteras, you have not sacrificed your personal antipathies. Even at this very moment I know you are in the mood to refuse the indispensable conditions of reaching the pole.”

“Ah! it is the boat you want to talk about, and that man--”

“Hatteras, let us discuss the question calmly, and examine the case on all sides. The coast on which we find ourselves at present may terminate abruptly; we have no proof that it stretches right away to the pole; indeed, if your present information prove correct, we ought to come to an open sea during the summer months. Well, supposing we reach this Arctic Ocean and find it free from ice and easy to navigate, what shall we do if we have no ship?”

Hatteras made no reply.

“Tell me, now, would you like to find yourself only a few miles from the pole and not be able to get to it?”

Hatteras still said nothing, but buried his head in his hands.

“Besides,” continued the Doctor, “look at the question in its moral aspect. Here is an Englishman who sacrifices his fortune, and even his life, to win fresh glory for his country, but because the boat which bears him across an unknown ocean, or touches the new shore, happens to be made of the planks of an American vessel—a cast-away wreck of no use to anyone—will that lessen the honour of the discovery? If you yourself had found the hull of some wrecked vessel lying deserted on the shore, would you have hesitated to make use of it; and must not a sloop built by four Englishmen and manned by four Englishmen be English from keel to gunwale?”

Hatteras was still silent.

“No,” continued Clawbonny; “the real truth is, it is not the sloop you care about: it is the man.”

“Yes, Doctor, yes,” replied the captain. “It is this American I detest; I hate him with a thorough English hatred. Fate has thrown him in my path.”

“To save you!”

“To ruin me. He seems to defy me, and speaks as if he were lord and master. He thinks he has my destiny in his hands, and knows all my projects. Didn’t we see the man in his true colours when we were giving names to the different coasts? Has he ever avowed his object in coming so far north? You will never get out of my head that this man is not the leader of some expedition sent out by the American government.”

“Well, Hatteras, suppose it is so, does it follow that this expedition is to search for the North Pole? May it not be to find the North-West Passage? But anyway, Altamont is in complete

ignorance of our object, for neither Johnson, nor Bell, nor myself, have ever breathed a word to him about it, and I am sure you have not.”

“Well, let him always remain so.”

“He must be told in the end, for we can’t leave him here alone.”

“Why not? Can’t he stay here in Fort Providence?”

“He would never consent to that, Hatteras; and, moreover, to leave a man in that way, and not know whether we might find him safe when we came back, would be worse than imprudent: it would be inhuman. Altamont will come with us; he must come. But we need not disclose our projects; let us tell him nothing, but simply build a sloop for the ostensible purpose of making a survey of the coast.”

Hatteras could not bring himself to consent, but said-

“And suppose the man won’t allow his ship to be cut up?”

“In that case, you must take the law in your own hands, and build a vessel in spite of him.”

“I wish to goodness he would refuse, then!”

“He must be asked before he can refuse. I’ll undertake the asking,” said Clawbonny.

He kept his word, for that very same night, at supper, he managed to turn the conversation towards the subject of making excursions during summer for hydrographical purposes.

“You will join us, I suppose, Altamont,” he said.

“Of course,” replied the American. “We must know how far New America extends.”

Hatteras looked fixedly at his rival, but said nothing.

“And for that purpose,” continued Altamont, “we had better build a little ship out of the remains of the *Porpoise*. It is the best possible use we can make of her.”

“You hear, Bell,” said the Doctor, eagerly. “We’ll all set to work to-morrow morning.”

XV. The North-West Passage

Next morning, Altamont Bell and the Doctor repaired to the *Porpoise*. There was no lack of wood, for, shattered as the old "three-master" had been by the icebergs, she could still supply the principal parts of a new ship, and the carpenter began his task immediately.

In the end of May, the temperature again rose, and spring returned for good and all. Rain fell copiously, and before long the melting snow was running down every little slope in falls and cascades.

Hatteras could not contain his delight at these signs of a general thaw among the ice-fields, for an open sea would bring him liberty. At last he might hope to ascertain for himself whether his predecessors were correct in their assertions about a polar basin.

This was a frequent topic of thought and conversation with him, and one evening when he was going over all the old familiar arguments in support of his theory, Altamont took up the subject, and declared his opinion that the polar basin extended west as well as east. But it was impossible for the American and Englishman, to talk long about anything without coming to words, so intensely national were both. Dr. Kane was the first bone of contention on this occasion, for the jealous Englishman was unwilling to grant his rival the glory of being a discoverer, alleging his belief that though the brave adventurer had gone far north, it was by mere chance he had made a discovery.

"Chance!" interrupted Altamont, hotly. "Do you mean to assert that it is not to Kane's energy and science that we owe his great discovery?"

"I mean to say that Dr. Kane's name is not worth mentioning in a country made illustrious by such names as Parry, and Franklin, and Ross, and Belcher, and Penny; in a country where the seas opened the North- West Passage to an Englishman-McClure!"

"McClure!" exclaimed the American. "Well, if ever chance favoured anyone it was that McClure. Do you pretend to deny it?"

"I do," said Hatteras, becoming quite excited. "It was his courage and perseverance in remaining four whole winters among the ice."

"I believe that, don't I?" said Altamont, sneeringly. "He was caught among the bergs and could not get away; but didn't he after all abandon his ship, the *Investigator*, and try to get back home? Besides, putting the man aside, what is the value of his discovery? I maintain that the North-West Passage is still undiscovered, for not a single ship to this day has ever sailed from Behring's Straits to Baffin's Bay!"

The fact was indisputable, but Hatteras started to his feet, and said-

"I will not permit the honour of an English captain to be attacked in my presence any longer!"

"You will not permit!" echoed Altamont, also springing erect. "But these are facts, and it is out of your power to destroy them!"

"Sir!" shouted Hatteras, pale with rage.

"My friends!" interposed the Doctor; "pray be calm. This is a scientific point we are discussing."

But Hatteras was deaf to reason now, and said angrily-

“I’ll tell you the facts, sir.”

“And I’ll tell you,” retorted the irate American.

“Gentlemen,” said Clawbonny, in a firm tone; “allow me to speak, for I know the facts of the case as well as and perhaps better than you, and I can state them impartially.”

“Yes, yes!” cried Bell and Johnson, who had been anxiously watching the strife.

“Well, go on,” said Altamont, finding himself in the minority, while Hatteras simply made a sign of acquiescence, and resumed his seat.

The Doctor brought a chart and spread it out on the table, that his auditors might follow his narration intelligibly, and be able to judge the merits of McClure for themselves.

“It was in 1848,” he said, “that two vessels, the *Herald* and the *Plover*, were sent out in search of Franklin, but their efforts proving ineffectual, two others were despatched to assist them- the *Investigator*, in command of McClure, and the *Enterprise*, in command of Captain Collison. The *Investigator* arrived first in Behring’s Straits, and without waiting for her consort, set out with the declared purpose to find Franklin or the North-West Passage. The gallant young officer hoped to push north as far as Melville Sound, but just at the extremity of the Strait, he was stopped by an insurmountable barrier of ice, and forced to winter there. During the long, dreary months, however, he and his officers undertook a journey over the ice-field, to make sure of its communicating with Melville Sound.”

“Yes, but he did not get through,” said Altamont.

“Stop a bit,” replied Clawbonny; “as soon as a thaw set in, McClure renewed his attempt to bring his ship into Melville Sound, and had succeeded in getting within twenty miles, when contrary winds set in, and dragged her south with irresistible violence. This decided the captain to alter his course. He determined to go in a westerly direction; but after a fearful struggle with icebergs, he stuck fast in the first of the series of straits which end in Baffin’s Bay, and was obliged to winter in Mercy Bay. His provisions would only hold out eighteen months longer, but he would not give up. He set out on a sledge, and reached Melville Island, hoping to fall in with some ship or other, but all he found in Winter Harbour was a cairn, which contained a document, stating that Captain Austin’s lieutenant, McClintock, had been there the preceding year. McClure replaced this document by another, which stated his intention of returning to England by the North-West Passage he had discovered, by Lancaster Sound and Baffin’s Bay, and that in the event of his not being heard of, he might be looked for north or west of Melville Island. Then he went back to Mercy Bay with undaunted courage, to pass a third winter. By the beginning of March his stock of provisions was so reduced in consequence of the utter scarcity of game through the severity of the season, that McClure resolved to send half his men to England, either by Baffin’s Bay or by McKenzie River and Hudson’s Bay. The other half would manage to work the vessel to Europe. He kept all his best sailors, and selected for departure only those to whom a fourth winter would have been fatal. Everything was arranged for their leaving, and the day fixed, when McClure, who was out walking with Lieutenant Craswell, observed a man running towards them, flinging up his arms and gesticulating frantically, and on getting nearer recognized him as Lieutenant Prim, officer on board the *Herald*, one of the ships he had parted with in Behring’s Straits two years before.

Captain Kellett, the Commander, had reached Winter Harbour, and finding McClure’s document in the cairn, had dispatched his lieutenant in search of him. McClure accompanied him back, and arranged with the captain to send him his batch of invalids. Lieutenant Craswell took charge of these and conveyed them safely to Winter Harbour. Leaving them

there he went across the ice four hundred and seventy miles, and arrived at Isle Beechy, where, a few days afterwards, he took passage with twelve men on board the *Phoenix*, and reached London safely on the 7th of October, 1853, having traversed the whole extent between Behring's Straits and Cape Farewell."

"Well, if arriving on one side and leaving at the other is not going through, I don't know what is!" said Hatteras.

"Yes, but he went four hundred and seventy miles over ice-fields," objected Altamont.

"What of that?"

"Everything; that is the gist of the whole argument. It was not the *Investigator* that went through."

"No," replied Clawbonny, "for, at the close of the fourth winter, McClure was obliged to leave her among the ice."

"Well, in maritime expeditions the vessel has to get through, and not the man; and if ever the Northwest Passage is practicable, it will be for ships and not sledges. If a ship cannot go, a sloop must."

"A sloop!" exclaimed Hatteras, discovering a hidden meaning in the words.

"Altamont," said the Doctor, "your distinction is simply puerile, and in that respect we all consider that you are in the wrong."

"You may easily do that," returned the American. "It is four against one, but that will not prevent me from holding my own opinion."

"Keep it and welcome, but keep it to yourself, if you please, for the future," exclaimed Hatteras.

"And pray what right have you to speak to me like this, sir?" shouted Altamont, in a fury.

"My right as captain," returned Hatteras, equally angry.

"Am I to submit to your orders, then?"

"Most assuredly, and woe to you if--"

The Doctor did not allow him to proceed, for he really feared the two antagonists might come to blows. Bell and Johnson seconded his endeavours to make peace, and, after a few conciliatory words, Altamont turned on his heel, and walked carelessly away, whistling "Yankee Doodle." Hatteras went outside, and paced up and down with rapid strides. In about an hour he came back, and retired to bed without saying another word.

XVI. Arctic Arcadia

On the 29th of May, for the first time, the sun never set. His glowing disc just touched the boundary line of the horizon, and rose again immediately. The period was now entered when the day lasts twenty- four hours.

Next morning there was a magnificent halo; the monarch of day appeared surrounded by a luminous circle, radiant with all the prismatic colours. This phenomenon never lost its charm, for the Doctor, however frequently it occurred, and he always noted carefully down all particulars respecting it.

Before long the feathered tribes began to return, filling the air with their discordant cries. Flocks of bustards and Canadian geese from Florida or Arkansas came flying north with marvellous rapidity, bringing spring beneath their wings. The Doctor shot several, and among them one or two cranes and a solitary stork.

The snow was now fast melting, and the ice-fields were covered with "slush." All round the bay large pools had formed, between which the soil appeared as if some product of spring.

The Doctor recommenced his sowing, for he had plenty of seed; but he was surprised to find sorrel growing already between the half-dried stones, and even pale sickly heaths, trying to show their delicate pink blossoms.

At last it began to be really hot weather. On the 15th of June, the thermometer stood at 57° above zero. The Doctor scarcely believed his eyes, but it was a positive fact, and it was soon confirmed by the changed appearance of the country.

An excursion was made to Isle Johnson, but it turned out to be a barren little islet of no importance whatever, though it gave the old boatswain infinite pleasure to know that those sea girt rocks bore his name.

There was some danger of both house and stores melting, but happily this high temperature proved exceptional, the thermometer seldom averaging much above freezing point.

By the middle of June, the sloop had made good progress, and already presented a shapely appearance. As Bell and Johnson took the work of construction entirely on themselves, the others went hunting, and succeeded in killing several deer, in spite of its being difficult game to approach. Altamont adopted the Indian practice of crawling on all fours, and adjusting his gun and arms so as to simulate horns and deceive the timid animal, till he could get near enough to take good aim.

Their principal object of pursuit, however, was the musk-ox, which Parry had met with in such numbers in Melville Island; but not a solitary specimen was to be seen anywhere about Victoria Bay, and a distant excursion was, therefore, resolved upon, which would serve the double purpose of hunting and surveying the eastern coast.

The three hunters, accompanied by Duk, set out on Monday, the 17th of June, at six in the morning, each man armed with a double-barrelled gun, a hatchet and snow-knife, and provisions for several days.

It was a fine bright morning, and by ten o'clock they had gone twelve miles; but not a living thing had crossed their path, and the hunt threatened to turn out a mere excursion.

However, they went on in hope, after a good breakfast and half-an- hour's rest.

The ground was getting gradually lower, and presented a peculiar appearance from the snow, which lay here and there in ridges unmelted. At a distance it looked like the sea when a strong wind is lashing up the waves, and cresting them with a white foam.

Before long they reached a sort of glen, at the bottom of which was a winding river. It was almost completely thawed, and already the banks were clothed with a species of vegetation, as if the sun had done his best to fertilise the soil.

“I tell you what,” said the Doctor, “a few enterprising colonists might make a fine settlement here. With a little industry and perseverance wonders might be done in this country. Ah! if I am not much mistaken, it has some four-footed inhabitants already. Those frisky little fellows know the best spots to choose.”

“Hares! I declare. That’s jolly!” said Altamont, loading his gun.

“Stop!” cried the Doctor; “stop, you furious hunter. Let the poor little things alone; they are not thinking of running away. Look, they are actually coming to us, I do believe!”

He was right, for presently three or four young hares, gambolling away among the fresh moss and tiny heaths, came running about their legs so fearlessly and trustfully, that even Altamont was disarmed. They rubbed against the Doctor’s knees, and let him stroke them till the kind-hearted man could not help saying to Altamont-

“Why give shot to those who come for caresses? The death of these little beasts could do us no good.”

“You say what’s true, Clawbonny. Let them live!” replied Hatteras.

“And these ptarmigans too, I suppose, and these long-legged plovers,” added Altamont, as a whole covey of birds flew down among the hunters, never suspecting their danger. Duk could not tell what to make of it, and stood stupefied.

It was a strange and touching spectacle to see the pretty creatures; they flew on Clawbonny’s shoulders, and lay down at his feet as if inviting friendly caresses, and doing their utmost to welcome the strangers. The whole glen echoed with their joyous cries as they darted to and fro from all parts. The good Doctor seemed some mighty enchanter.

The hunters had continued their course along the banks of the river, when a sudden bend in the valley revealed a herd of deer, eight or ten in number, peacefully browsing on some lichens that lay half-buried in the snow. They were charming creatures, so graceful and gentle, male and female, both adorned with noble antlers, wide-spreading and deeply-notched. Their skin had already lost its winter whiteness, and began to assume the brown tint of summer. Strange to say, they appeared not a whit more afraid than the birds or hares.

The three men were now right in the centre of the herd, but not one made the least movement to run away. This time the worthy Doctor had far more difficulty in restraining Altamont’s impatience, for the mere sight of such magnificent animals roused his hunting instincts, and he became quite excited; while Hatteras, on the contrary, seemed really touched to see the splendid creatures rubbing their heads so affectionately and trustfully against the good Clawbonny, the friend of every living thing.

“But, I say,” exclaimed Altamont, “didn’t we come out expressly to hunt?”

“To hunt the musk-ox, and nothing else,” replied Clawbonny. “Besides, we shouldn’t know what to do with this game, even if we killed it; we have provisions enough. Let us for once enjoy the sight of men and animals in perfect amity.”

“It proves no human beings have been here before,” said Hatteras.

“True, and that proves something more, these animals are not of American origin.”

“How do you make that out?” said Altamont.

“Why, if they had been born in North America they would have known how to treat that mammiferous biped called man, and would have fled at the first glimpse of us. No, they are from the north, most likely from the untrodden wilds of Asia, so Altamont, you have no right to claim them as fellow-countrymen.”

“Oh! a hunter doesn’t examine his game so closely as all that. Everything is grist that comes to his mill.”

“All right. Calm yourself, my brave Nimrod! For my own part, I would rather never fire another shot than make one of these beautiful creatures afraid of me. See, even Duk fraternizes with them. Believe me, it is well to be kind where we can. Kindness is power.”

“Well, well, so be it,” said Altamont, not at all understanding such scruples. “But I should like to see what you would do if you had no weapon but kindness among a pack of bears or wolves! You wouldn’t make much of it.”

“I make no pretensions to charm wild beasts. I don’t believe much in Orpheus and his enchantments. Besides, bears and wolves would not come to us like these hares, and partridges, and deer.”

“Why not? They have never seen human beings either.”

“No but they are savage by nature,” said Clawbonny, “and ferocity, like wickedness, engenders suspicion. This is true of men as well as animals.”

They spent the whole day in the glen, which the Doctor christened “Arctic Arcadia,” and when evening came they lay down to rest in the hollow of a rock, which seemed as if expressly prepared for their accommodation.

XVII. Altamont's Revenge

Next morning, as the fine weather still continued, the hunters determined to have another search for the musk ox. It was only fair to give Altamont a chance, with the distinct understanding that he should have the right of firing, however fascinating the game they might meet. Besides, the flesh of the musk ox, though a little too highly impregnated with the smell, is savoury food, and the hunters would gladly carry back a few pounds of it to Fort Providence.

During the first part of the day, nothing occurred worth mentioning, but they noticed a considerable change in the aspect of the country, and appearances seemed to indicate that they were approaching a hilly region. This New America was evidently either a continent or an island of considerable extent.

Duk was running far ahead of his party when he stopped suddenly short, and began sniffing the ground as if he had caught scent of game. Next minute he rushed forward again with extreme rapidity, and was speedily out of sight. But loud distinct barking convinced the hunters that the faithful fellow had at last discovered the desired object.

They hurried onwards, and after an hour and a half's quick walking, found him standing in front of two formidable looking animals, and barking furiously. The Doctor recognized them at once as belonging to the musk ox, or *Ovibos* genus, as naturalists call it, by the very wide horns touching each other at their base, by the absence of muzzle, by the narrow square chanfrin resembling that of a sheep, and by the very short tail. Their hair was long and thickly matted, and mixed with fine brown, silky wool.

These singular-looking quadrupeds were not the least afraid of Duk, though extremely surprised; but at the first glimpse of the hunters they took flight, and it was no easy task to go after them, for half an hour's swift running brought them no nearer, and made the whole party so out of breath, that they were forced to come to a halt.

"Confound the beasts!" said Altamont.

"Yes, Altamont, I'll make them over to you," replied Clawbonny; "they are true Americans, and they don't appear to have a very favourable idea of their fellow countrymen."

"That proves our hunting prowess," rejoined Altamont.

Meantime the oxen finding themselves no longer pursued, had stopped short. Further pursuit was evidently useless. If they were to be captured at all they must be surrounded, and the plateau which they first happened to have reached, was very favourable for the purpose. Leaving Duk to worry them, they went down by the neighbouring ravines; and got to the one end of the plateau, where Altamont and the Doctor hid themselves behind projecting rocks, while Hatteras went on to the other end, intending to startle the animals by his sudden appearance, and drive them back towards his companions.

"I suppose you have no objection this time to bestow a few bullets on these gentry?" said Altamont.

"Oh, no, it is 'a fair field now and no favour,'" returned Clawbonny.

The oxen had begun to shake themselves impatiently at Duk, trying to kick him off, when Hatteras started up right in front of them, shouting and chasing them back. This was the signal for Altamont and the Doctor to rush forward and fire, but at the sight of two assailants,

the terrified animals wheeled round and attacked Hatteras. He met their onset with a firm, steady foot, and fired straight at their heads. But both his balls were powerless, and only served still further to madden the enraged beasts. They rushed upon the unfortunate man like furies, and threw him on the ground in an instant.

“He is a dead man!” exclaimed the Doctor, in despairing accents.

A tremendous struggle was going on in Altamont’s breast at the sight of his prostrate foe, and though his first impulse was to hasten to his help, he stopped short, battling with himself and his prejudices. But his hesitation scarcely lasted half a second, his better self conquered, and exclaiming,

“No, it would be cowardly!” he rushed forward with Clawbonny.

Hatteras full well understood how his rival felt, but would rather have died than have begged his intervention. However, he had hardly time to think about it, before Altamont was at his side.

He could not have held out much longer, for it was impossible to ward off the blows of horns and hoofs of two such powerful antagonists, and in a few minutes more he must have been torn to pieces. But suddenly two shots resounded, and Hatteras felt the balls graze his head.

“Courage!” shouted Altamont, flinging away his discharged weapon, and throwing himself right in front of the raging animals. One of them, shot to the heart, fell dead as he reached the spot, while the other dashed madly on Hatteras, and was about to gore the unfortunate captain with his horns, when Altamont plunged his snow knife far into the beast’s wide open jaws with one hand, with the other dealt him such a tremendous blow on the head with his hatchet, that the skull was completely split open.

It was done so quickly that it seemed like a flash of lightning, and all was over. The second ox lay dead, and Clawbonny shouted “Hurrah! hurrah!” Hatteras was saved.

He owed his life to the man he hated the most. What a storm of conflicting passions this must have roused in his soul! But where was the emotion he could not master?

However, his action was prompt, whatever his feeling might be. Without a moment’s hesitancy, he went up to his rival, and said in a grave voice-

“Altamont, you have saved my life!”

“You saved mine,” replied the American.

There was a moment’s silence, and then Altamont added-

“We’re quits, Hatteras.”

“No, Altamont,” said the captain; “when the Doctor dragged you out of your icy tomb, I did not know who you were; but you saved me at the peril of your own life, knowing quite well who I was.”

“Why, you are a fellow-creature at any rate, and whatever faults an American may have, he is no coward.”

“No, indeed,” said the Doctor. “He is a man, every inch as much as yourself, Hatteras.”

“And like me, he shall have part in the glory that awaits us.”

“The glory of reaching the North Pole?” asked Altamont.

“Yes,” replied Hatteras, proudly.

“I guessed right, then,” said Altamont.

“And you have actually dared to conceive such a project? Oh! it is grand; I tell you it is sublime even to think of it?”

“But tell me,” said Hatteras in a hurried manner; “you were not bound for the Pole then yourself?”

Altamont hesitated.

“Come, speak out, man,” urged the Doctor.

“Well, to tell the truth, I was not, and the truth is better than self-love. No, I had no such grand purpose in view. I was trying to clear the North-West Passage, and that was all.”

“Altamont,” said Hatteras, holding out his hand; “be our companion to glory, come with us and find the North Pole.”

The two men clasped hands in a warm, hearty grasp, and the bond of friendship between them was sealed.

When they turned to look for the Doctor they found him in tears.

“Ah! friends,” he said, wiping his eyes; “you have made me so happy, it is almost more than I can bear! You have sacrificed this miserable nationality for the sake of the common cause. You have said, ‘What does it matter if only the Pole is discovered, whether it is by an Englishman or an American?’ Why should we brag of being American or English, when we can boast that we are men?”

The good little man was beside himself with joy. He hugged the reconciled enemies to his bosom, and cemented their friendship by his own affection to both.

At last he grew calm after at least a twentieth embrace, and said-

“It is time I went to work now. Since I am no hunter, I must use my talents in another direction”

And he began to cut up the oxen so skilfully, that he seemed like a surgeon making a delicate autopsy.

His two companions looked on smiling. In a few minutes the adroit operator had cut off more than a hundred pounds of flesh. This he divided into three parts. Each man took one, and they retraced their steps to Fort Providence.

At ten o’clock they arrived at Doctor’s House, where Johnson and Bell had a good supper prepared for them.

But before sitting down to enjoy it, the Doctor exclaimed in a jubilant tone, and pointing to his two companions-

“My dear old Johnson, I took out an American and an Englishman with me, didn’t I?”

“Yes, Mr. Clawbonny.”

“Well, I bring back two brothers.”

This was joyous news to the sailors, and they shook hands warmly with Altamont; while the Doctor recounted all that had passed, and how the American captain had saved the English captain’s life. That night no five happier men could have been found than those that lay sleeping in the little snow house.

XVIII. Final Preparations

Next day the weather changed, the cold returned. Snow, and rain, and tempest came in quick succession for several days.

Bell had completed the sloop, and done his work well, for the little vessel was admirably adapted for the purpose contemplated, being high at the sides and partly decked so as to be able to stand a heavy sea, and yet light enough to be drawn on the sledge without overburdening the dogs.

At last a change of the greatest importance took place. The ice began to tremble in the centre of the bay, and the highest masses became loosened at their base ready to form icebergs, and drift away before the first gale; but Hatteras would not wait for the ice-fields to break up before he started. Since the journey must be made on land, he did not care whether the sea was open or not; and the day of departure was fixed for the 25th of June—Johnson and Bell undertaking the necessary repairs of the sledge.

On the 20th, finding there was space enough between the broken ice to allow the sloop to get through, it was determined to take her a trial trip to Cape Washington.

The sea was not quite open but it would have been impossible to go across on foot.

This short sail of six hours sufficiently tested the powers of the sloop, and proved her excellent qualities. In coming back they witnessed a curious sight; it was the chase of a seal by a gigantic bear. Mr. Bruin was too busily engaged to notice the vessel, or he would have pursued; he was intently watching beside a seal hole with the patience of a true hunter, or rather angler, for he was certainly fishing just then. He watched in absolute silence, without stirring or giving the least sign of life.

But all of a sudden there was a slight disturbance on the surface of the water in the hole, which announced the coming up of the amphibious animal to breathe. Instantly the bear lay flat on his belly with his two paws stretched round the opening.

Next minute up came the seal, but his head no sooner appeared above the water than the bear's paws closed about him like a vice, and dragged him right out. The poor seal struggled desperately, but could not free himself from the iron grasp of his enemy, who hugged him closer and closer till suffocation was complete. Then he carried him off to his den as if the weight were nothing, leaping lightly from pack to pack till he gained *terra firma* safely.

On the 22nd of June, Hatteras began to load the sledge. They put in 200 lbs. of salt meat, three cases of vegetables and preserved meat, besides lime-juice, and flour, and medicines. They also took 200 lbs. of powder and a stock of fire-arms. Including the sloop and the Halkett-boat, there was about 1500 lbs. weight, a heavy load for four dogs, and all the more as they would have to drag it every day, instead of only four days successively, like the dogs employed by the Esquimaux, who always keep a relay for their sledges. However, the distance to the Pole was not 150 miles at the outside, and they did not intend to go more than twelve miles a day, as they could do it comfortably in a month. Even if land failed them, they could always fall back on the sloop, and finish the journey without fatigue to men or dogs.

All the party were in excellent health, though they had lost flesh a little; but, by attending to the Doctor's wise counsels, they had weathered the winter without being attacked by any of the maladies incident to the climate.

Now, they were almost at their journey's end, and not one doubted of success, for a common bond of sympathy bound fast the five men, and made them strong to persevere.

On Sunday, the 23rd, all was ready, and it was resolved to devote the entire day to rest.

The dwellers on Fort Providence could not see the last day dawn without some emotion. It cost them a pang to leave the snow-hut which had served them in such good stead, and this hospitable shore where they had passed the winter. Take it altogether, they had spent very happy hours there, and the Doctor made a touching reference to the subject as they sat round the table at the evening meal, and did not forget to thank God for his manifest protection.

They retired early to rest, for they needed to be up betimes. So passed the last night in Fort Providence.

XIX. March To The North

Next day at early dawn, Hatteras gave the signal for departure. The well-fed and well-rested dogs were harnessed to the sledge. They had been having a good time of it all the winter, and might be expected to do good service during the summer.

It was six in the morning when the expedition started. After following the windings of the bay and going past Cape Washington, they struck into the direct route for the north, and by seven o'clock had lost sight of the lighthouse and Fort Providence.

During the first two days they made twenty miles in twelve hours, devoting the remainder of the time to rest and meals. The tent was quite sufficient protection during sleep.

The temperature began to rise. In many places the snow melted entirely away, and great patches of water appeared; here and there complete ponds, which a little stretch of imagination might easily convert into lakes. The travellers were often up to their knees, but they only laughed over it; and, indeed, the Doctor was rather glad of such unexpected baths.

“But for all that,” he said, “the water has no business to wet us here. It is an element which has no right to this country, except in a solid or vaporous state. Ice or vapour is all very well, but water- never!”

Hunting was not forgotten during the march, for fresh meat was a necessity. Altamont and Bell kept their guns loaded, and shot ptarmigans, guillemots, geese, and a few young hares; but, by degrees, birds and animals had been changing from trustfulness to fear, and had become so shy and difficult to approach, that very often, but for Duk, the hunters would have wasted their powder.

Hatteras advised them not to go more than a mile away, as there was not a day, nor even an hour, to lose, for three months of fine weather was the utmost they could count upon. Besides, the sledge was often coming to difficult places, when each man was needed to lend a helping hand.

On the third day they came to a lake, several acres in extent, and still entirely frozen over. The sun's rays had little access to it, owing to its situation, and the ice was so strong that it must have dated from some remote winter. It was strong enough to bear both the travellers and their sledge, and was covered with dry snow.

From this point the country became gradually lower, from which the Doctor concluded that it did not extend to the Pole, but that most probably this New America was an island.

Up to this time the expedition had been attended with no fatigue. The travellers had only suffered from the intense glare of the sun on the snow, which threatened them with snow-blindness. At another time of the year they might have avoided this by walking during the night, but at present there was no night at all. Happily the snow was beginning to melt, and the brilliancy would diminish as the process of dissolution advanced.

On the 28th of June the thermometer rose to 45°, and the rain fell in torrents. Hatteras and his companions, however, marched stoically on, and even hailed the downpour with delight, knowing that it would hasten the disappearance of the snow.

As they went along, the Doctor often picked up stones, both round ones and flat pebbles, as if worn away by the tide. He thought from this they must be near the Polar Basin, and yet far as the eye could reach was one interminable plain.

There was not a trace of houses, or huts, or cairns visible. It was evident that the Greenlanders had not pushed their way so far north, and yet the famished tribes would have found their account in coming, for the country abounded in game. Bears were frequently seen, and numerous herds of musk-oxen and deer.

On the 29th, Bell killed a fox and Altamont a musk-ox. These supplies of fresh food were very acceptable, and even the Doctor surveyed, with considerable satisfaction, the haunches of meat they managed to procure from time to time.

“Don’t let us stint ourselves,” he used to say on these occasions; “food is no unimportant matter in expeditions like ours.”

“Especially,” said Johnson, “when a meal depends on a lucky shot.”

“You’re right, Johnson; a man does not think so much about dinner when he knows the soup-pot is simmering by the kitchen-fire.”

On the 30th, they came to a district which seemed to have been upturned by some volcanic convulsion, so covered was it with cones and sharp lofty peaks.

A strong breeze from the south-east was blowing, which soon increased to a hurricane, sweeping over the rocks covered with snow and the huge masses, of ice, which took the forms of icebergs and hummocks, though on dry land.

The tempest was followed by damp, warm weather, which caused a regular thaw.

On all sides nothing could be heard but the noise of cracking ice and falling avalanches.

The travellers had to be very careful in avoiding hills, and even in speaking aloud, for the slightest agitation in the air might have caused a catastrophe. Indeed, the suddenness is the peculiar feature in Arctic avalanches, distinguishing them from those of Switzerland and Norway. Often the dislodgment of a block of ice is instantaneous, and not even a cannon-ball or thunderbolt could be more rapid in its descent. The loosening, the fall, and the crash happen almost simultaneously.

Happily, however, no accident befel any of the party, and three days afterwards they came to smooth, level ground again.

But here a new phenomenon met their gaze—a phenomenon which was long a subject of patient inquiry among the learned of both hemispheres. They came to a long chain of low hills which seemed to extend for miles, and were all covered on the eastern side with bright red snow.

It is easy to imagine the surprise and half-terrified exclamations of the little company at the sight of this long red curtain; but the Doctor hastened to reassure them, or rather to instruct them, as to the nature of this peculiar snow. He told them that this same red substance had been found in Switzerland, in the heart of the Alps, and that the colour proceeded solely from the presence of certain corpuscles, about the nature of which for a long time chemists could not agree. They could not decide whether these corpuscles were of animal or vegetable origin, but at last it was settled that they belonged to the family of fungi, being a sort of microscopic champignon of the species *Uredo*.

Turning the snow over with his iron-tipped staff, the Doctor found that the colouring matter measured nine feet deep. He pointed this out to his companions, that they might have some idea of the enormous number of these tiny mushrooms in a layer extending so many miles.

This phenomenon was none the less strange for being explained, for red is a colour seldom seen in nature over any considerable area. The reflection of the sun’s rays upon it produced

the most peculiar effect, lighting up men, and animals, and rocks with a fiery glow, as if proceeding from some flame within. When the snow melted it looked like blood, as the red particles do not decompose. It seemed to the travellers as if rivulets of blood were running among their feet.

The Doctor filled several bottles with this precious substance to examine at leisure, as he had only had a glimpse of the Crimson Cliffs in Baffin's Bay.

This Field of Blood, as he called it, took three hours to get over, and then the country resumed its usual aspect.

XX. Footprints In The Snow

On the fourth of July there was such an exceedingly dense fog, that it was very difficult to keep the straight course for the north. No misadventure, however, befel the party during the darkness, except the loss of Bell's snow-shoes. At Bell's suggestion, which fired the Doctor's inventive genius, torches were contrived, made of tow steeped in spirits-of-wine and fastened on the end of a stick, and these served somewhat to help them on, though they made but small progress; for, on the sixth, after the fog had cleared off, the Doctor took their bearings, and found that they had only been marching at the rate of eight miles a day.

Determined to make up for lost time, they rose next morning very early and started off, Bell and Altamont as usual going ahead of the rest and acting as scouts. Johnson and the others kept beside the sledge, and were soon nearly two miles behind the guides; but the weather was so dry and clear that all their movements could be distinctly observed.

"What now?" said Clawbonny, as he saw them make a sudden halt, and stoop down as if examining the ground.

"I was just wondering what they are about, myself," replied old Johnson.

"Perhaps they have come on the tracks of animals," suggested Hatteras.

"No," said Clawbonny, "it can't be that."

"Why not?"

"Because Duk would bark."

"Well, it is quite evident they are examining some sort of marks."

"Let's get on, then," said Hatteras; and, urging forward the dogs, they rejoined their companions in about twenty minutes, and shared their surprise at finding unmistakable fresh footprints of human beings in the snow, as plain as if only made the preceding day.

"They are Esquimaux footprints," said Hatteras.

"Do you think so?" asked Altamont.

"There is no doubt of it."

"But what do you make of this, then?" returned Altamont, pointing to another footmark repeated in several places. "Do you believe for a minute that was made by an Esquimaux?"

It was incontestably the print of a European boot-nails, sole, and heel clearly stamped in the snow. There was no room for doubt, and Hatteras exclaimed in amazement-

"Europeans here!"

"Evidently," said Johnson.

"And yet it is so improbable that we must take a second look before pronouncing an opinion," said Clawbonny.

But the longer he looked, the more apparent became the fact. Hatteras was chagrined beyond measure. A European here, so near the Pole!

The footprints extended for about a quarter of a mile, and then diverged to the west. Should the travellers follow them further?

“No,” said Hatteras, “let us go on.”

He was interrupted by an exclamation from the Doctor, who had just picked up an object that gave still more convincing proof of European origin. It was part of a pocket spy-glass!

“Well, if we still had any doubts about the footmarks, this settles the case at once, at any rate,” said Clawbonny.

“Forward!” exclaimed Hatteras so energetically, that instinctively each one obeyed, and the march was resumed forthwith.

The day wore away, but no further sign of the presence of suspected rivals was discovered, and they prepared to encamp for the night.

The tent was pitched in a ravine for shelter, as the sky was dark and threatening, and a violent north wind was blowing.

“I’m afraid we’ll have a bad night,” said Johnson.

“A pretty noisy one, I expect,” replied the Doctor, “but not cold. We had better take every precaution, and fasten down our tent with good big stones.”

“You are right, Mr. Clawbonny. If the hurricane swept away our tent, I don’t know where we should find it again.”

The tent held fast, but sleep was impossible, for the tempest was let loose and raged with tremendous violence.

“It seems to me,” said the Doctor, during a brief lull in the deafening roar,” as if I could hear the sound of collisions between icebergs and ice-fields. If we were near the sea, I could really believe there was a general break-up in the ice.”

“I can’t explain the noises any other way,” said Johnson.

“Can we have reached the coast, I wonder?” asked Hatteras.

“It is not impossible,” replied Clawbonny. “Listen! Do you hear that crash? That is certainly the sound of icebergs falling. We cannot be very far from the ocean.”

“Well, if it turn out to be so, I shall push right on over the ice- fields.”

“Oh, they’ll be all broken up after such a storm as this. We shall see what to-morrow, brings; but all I can say is, if any poor fellows are wandering about in a night like this, I pity them.

The storm lasted for ten hours, and the weary travellers anxiously watched for the morning. About daybreak its fury seemed to have spent itself, and Hatteras, accompanied by Bell and Altamont, ventured to leave the tent. They climbed a hill about three hundred feet high, which commanded a wide view. But what a metamorphosed region met their gaze! All the ice had completely vanished, the storm had chased away the winter, and stripped the soil everywhere of its snow covering.

But Hatteras scarcely bestowed a glance on surrounding objects; his eager gaze was bent on the northern horizon, which appeared shrouded in black mist.

“That may very likely be caused by the ocean,” suggested Clawbonny.

“You are right. The sea must be there,” was the reply.

“That tint is what we call the *blink* of open water,” said Johnson.

“Come on, then, to the sledge at once, and let us get to this unknown ocean,” exclaimed Hatteras.

Their few preparations were soon made, and the march resumed. Three hours afterwards they arrived at the coast, and shouted simultaneously, "The sea! the sea!"

"Ay, and open sea!" added Hatteras.

And so it was. The storm had opened wide the Polar Basin, and the loosened packs were drifting in all directions. The icebergs had weighed anchor, and were sailing out into the open sea.

This new ocean stretched far away out of sight, and not a single island or continent was visible.

On the east and west the coast formed two capes or headlands, which sloped gently down to the sea. In the centre, a projecting rock formed a small natural bay, sheltered on three sides, into which a wide river fell, bearing in its bosom the melted snows of winter.

After a careful survey of the coast, Hatteras determined to launch the sloop that very day, and to unpack the sledge, and get everything on board. The tent was soon put up, and a comfortable repast prepared. This important business despatched, work commenced; and all hands were so expeditious and willing, that by five o'clock nothing more remained to be done. The sloop lay rocking gracefully in the little bay, and all the cargo was on board except the tent, and what was required for the night's encampment.

The sight of the sloop suggested to Clawbonny the propriety of giving Altamont's name to the little bay. His proposition to that effect met with unanimous approval, and the port was forthwith dignified by the title of Altamont Harbour.

According to the Doctor's calculations the travellers were now only 9° distant from the Pole. They had gone over two hundred miles from Victoria Bay to Altamont Harbour, and were in latitude $87^{\circ} 5'$ and longitude $118^{\circ} 35'$.

XXI. The Open Sea

Next morning by eight o'clock all the remaining effects were on board, and the preparations for departure completed. But before starting the Doctor thought he would like to take a last look at the country and see if any further traces of the presence of strangers could be discovered, for the mysterious footmarks they had met with were never out of his thoughts. He climbed to the top of a height which commanded a view of the whole southern horizon, and took out his pocket telescope. But what was his astonishment, to find he could see nothing through it, not even neighbouring objects. He rubbed his eyes and looked again, but with no better result. Then he began to examine the telescope, the object glass was gone!

The object glass! This explained the whole mystery, foot-prints and all; and with a shout of surprise he hurried down the hill to impart his discovery to the wondering companions, who came running towards him, startled by his loud exclamation, and full of anxiety at his precipitate descent.

"Well, what is the matter now?" said Johnson.

The Doctor could hardly speak, he was so out of breath. At last he managed to gasp out-

"The tracks, footmarks, strangers."

"What?" said Hatteras, "strangers here?"

"No, no, the object glass; the object glass out of my telescope."

And he held out his spy-glass for them to look at.

"Ah! I see," said Altamont; "it is wanting."

"Yes."

"But then the footmarks?"

"They were ours, friends, just ours," exclaimed the Doctor. "We had lost ourselves in the fog, and been wandering in a circle."

"But the boot-marks," objected Hatteras.

"Bell's. He walked about a whole day after he had lost his snow shoes."

"So I did," said Bell.

The mistake was so evident, that they all laughed heartily, except Hatteras, though no one was more glad than he at the discovery.

A quarter of an hour afterwards the little sloop sailed out of Altamont Harbour, and commenced her voyage of discovery. The wind was favourable, but there was little of it, and the weather was positively warm.

The sloop was none the worse for the sledge journey. She was in first-rate trim, and easily managed. Johnson steered, the Doctor, Bell, and the American leaned back against the cargo, and Hatteras stood at the prow, his fixed, eager gaze bent steadily on that mysterious point towards which he felt drawn with irresistible power, like the magnetic needle to the Pole. He wished to be the first to descry any shore that might come in sight, and he had every right to the honour.

The water of this Polar Sea presented some peculiar features worth mentioning. In colour it was a faint ultramarine blue, and possessed such wonderful transparency that one seemed to gaze down into fathomless depths. These depths were lighted up, no doubt, by some electrical phenomenon, and so many varieties of living creatures were visible that the vessel seemed to be sailing over a vast aquarium.

Innumerable flocks of birds were flying over the surface of this marvellous ocean, darkening the sky like thick heavy storm-clouds. Water-fowl of every description were among them, from the albatross to the penguin, and all of gigantic proportions. Their cries were absolutely deafening, and some of them had such immense, wide-spreading wings, that they covered the sloop completely as they flew over. The Doctor thought himself a good naturalist, but he found his science greatly at fault, for many a species here was wholly unknown to any ornithological society.

The good little man was equally nonplussed when he looked at the water, for he saw the most wonderful medusæ, some so large that they looked like little islands floating about among Brobdignagian sea-weeds. And below the surface, what a spectacle met the eye! Myriads of fish of every species; young manati at play with each other; narwhals with their one strong weapon of defence, like the horn of a unicorn, chasing the timid seals; whales of every tribe, spouting out columns of water and mucilage, and filling the air with a peculiar whizzing noise; dolphins, seals, and walruses; sea-dogs and sea-horses, sea-bears and sea-elephants, quietly browsing on submarine pastures; and the Doctor could gaze at them all as easily and clearly as if they were in glass tanks in the Zoological Gardens.

There was a strange supernatural purity about the atmosphere. It seemed charged to overflowing with oxygen, and had a marvellous power of exhilaration, producing an almost intoxicating effect on the brain.

Towards evening, Hatteras and his companions lost sight of the coast. Night came on, though the sun remained just above the horizon; but it had the same influence on animated nature as in temperate zones. Birds, fish, and all the cetacea disappeared and perfect silence prevailed.

Since the departure from Altamont Harbour, the sloop had made one degree further north. The next day brought no signs of land; there was not even a speck on the horizon. The wind was still favourable, and the sea pretty calm. The birds and fishes returned as numerous as on the preceding day, and the Doctor leaning over the side of the vessel, could see the whales and the dolphins, and all the rest of the monsters of the deep, gradually coming up from the clear depths below. On the surface, far as the eye could reach, nothing was visible except a solitary iceberg here and there, and a few scattered floes.

Indeed, but little ice was met with anywhere. The sloop was ten degrees above the point of greatest cold, and consequently in the same temperature as Baffin's Bay and Disko. It was therefore not astonishing that the sea should be open in these summer months.

This is a fact of great practical value, for if ever the whalers can penetrate north as far as the Polar basin, they may be sure of an immediate cargo, as this part of the ocean seems the general reservoir of whales and seals, and every marine species.

The day wore on, but still nothing appeared on the horizon. Hatteras never left the prow of the ship, but stood, glass in hand, eagerly gazing into the distance with anxious, questioning eyes, and seeking to discover, in the colour of the water, the shape of the waves, and the breath of the wind, indications of approaching land.

XXII. Getting Near The Pole

Hour after hour passed away, and still Hatteras persevered in his weary watch, though his hopes appeared doomed to disappointment.

At length, about six in the evening, a dim, hazy, shapeless sort of mist seemed to rise far away between sea and sky. It was not a cloud, for it was constantly vanishing, and then reappearing next minute.

Hatteras was the first to notice this peculiar phenomenon; but after an hour's scrutiny through his telescope, he could make nothing of it.

All at once, however, some sure indication met his eye, and stretching out his arm to the horizon, he shouted, in a clear ringing voice--

“Land! land!”

His words produced an electrical effect on his companions, and every man rushed to his side.

“I see it, I see it,” said Clawbonny.

“Yes, yes, so do I!” exclaimed Johnson.

“It is a cloud,” said Altamont.

“Land! land!” repeated Hatteras, in tones of absolute conviction.

Even while he spoke the appearance vanished, and when it returned again the Doctor fancied he caught a gleam of light about the smoke for an instant.

“It is a volcano!” he exclaimed.

“A volcano?” repeated Altamont.

“Undoubtedly.”

“In so high a latitude?”

“Why not? Is not Iceland a volcanic island--indeed, almost made of volcanoes, one might say?”

“Well, has not our famous countryman, James Ross, affirmed the existence of two active volcanoes, the Erebus and the Terror, on the Southern Continent, in longitude 170° and latitude 78°? Why, then, should not volcanoes be found near the North Pole?”

“It is possible, certainly,” replied Altamont.

“Ah, now I see it distinctly,” exclaimed the Doctor. “It is a volcano!”

“Let us make right for it then,” said Hatteras.

It was impossible longer to doubt the proximity of the coast. In twenty-four hours, probably, the bold navigators might hope to set foot on its untrodden soil. But strange as it was, now that they were so near the goal of their voyage, no one showed the joy which might have been expected. Each man sat silent, absorbed in his own thoughts, wondering what sort of place this Pole must be. The birds seemed to shun it, for though it was evening, they were all flying towards the south with outspread wings. Was it, then, so inhospitable, that not so much as a sea-gull or a ptarmigan could find a shelter? The fish, too, even the large cetacea, were

hastening away through the transparent waters. What could cause this feeling either of repulsion or terror?

At last sleep overcame the tired men, and one after another dropped off, leaving Hatteras to keep watch.

He took the helm, and tried his best not to close his eyes, for he grudged losing precious time; but the slow motion of the vessel rocked him into a state of such irresistible somnolence that, in spite of himself, he was soon, like his companions, locked fast in deep slumber. He began to dream, and imagination brought back all the scenes of his past life. He dreamt of his ship, the *Forward*, and of the traitors that had burnt it. Again he felt all the agonies of disappointment and failure, and forgot his actual situation. Then the scene changed, and he saw himself at the Pole unfurling the Union Jack!

While memory and fancy were thus busied, an enormous cloud of an olive tinge had begun to darken sea and sky. A hurricane was at hand. The first blast of the tempest roused the captain and his companions, and they were on their feet in an instant, ready to meet it. The sea had risen tremendously, and the ship was tossing violently up and down on the billows. Hatteras took the helm again, and kept a firm hold of it, while Johnson and Bell baled out the water which was constantly dashing over the ship.

It was a difficult matter to preserve the right course, for the thick fog made it impossible to see more than a few yards off.

This sudden tempest might well seem to such excited men, a stern prohibition against further approach to the Pole; but it needed but a glance at their resolute faces to know that they would neither yield to winds nor waves, but go right on to the end.

For a whole day the struggle lasted, death threatening them each moment; but about six in the evening, just as the fury of the waves seemed at its highest pitch, there came a sudden calm. The wind was stilled as if miraculously, and the sea became smooth as glass.

Then came a most extraordinary inexplicable phenomenon.

The fog, without dispersing, became strangely luminous, and the sloop sailed along in a zone of electric light. Mast, sail, and rigging appeared pencilled in black against the phosphorescent sky with wondrous distinctness. The men were bathed in light, and their faces shone with a fiery glow.

“The volcano!” exclaimed Hatteras.

“Is it possible?” said Bell.

“No, no!” replied Clawbonny. “We should be suffocated with its flames so near.”

“Perhaps it is the reflection,” suggested Altamont.

“Not that much even, for then we must be near land, and in that case we should hear the noise of the eruption.”

“What is it, then?” asked the captain.

“It is a cosmical phenomenon,” replied the Doctor, “seldom met hitherto. If we go on, we shall soon get out of our luminous sphere and be back in the darkness and tempest again.”

“Well, let’s go on, come what may,” said Hatteras.

The Doctor was right. Gradually the fog began to lose its light, and then its transparency, and the howling wind was heard not far off. A few minutes more, and the little vessel was caught in a violent squall, and swept back into the cyclone.

But the hurricane had fortunately turned a point towards the south, and left the vessel free to run before the wind straight towards the Pole. There was imminent danger of her sinking, for she sped along at frenzied speed, and any sudden collision with rock or iceberg must have inevitably dashed her to pieces.

But not a man on board counselled prudence. They were intoxicated with the danger, and no speed could be quick enough to satisfy their longing impatience to reach the unknown.

At last they began evidently to near the coast. Strange symptoms were manifest in the air; the fog suddenly rent like a curtain torn by the wind; and for an instant, like a flash of lightning, an immense column of flame was seen on the horizon.

“The volcano! the volcano!” was the simultaneous exclamation.

But the words had hardly passed their lips before the fantastic vision had vanished. The wind suddenly changed to south-east, and drove the ship back again from the land.

“Confound it!” said Hatteras; “we weren’t three miles from the coast.”

However, resistance was impossible. All that could be done was to keep tacking; but every few minutes the little sloop would be thrown on her side, though she righted herself again immediately obedient to the helm.

As Hatteras stood with dishevelled hair, grasping the helm as if welded to his hand, he seemed the animating soul of the ship.

All at once, a fearful sight met his gaze.

Scarcely twenty yards in front was a great block of ice coming right towards them, mounting and falling on the stormy billows, ready to overturn at any moment and crush them in its descent.

But this was not the only danger that threatened the bold navigators. The iceberg was packed with white bears, huddling close together, and evidently beside themselves with terror.

The iceberg made frightful lurches, sometimes inclining at such a sharp angle that the animals rolled pell-mell over each other and set up a loud growling, which mingled with the roar of the elements and made a terrible concert.

For a quarter of an hour, which seemed a whole century, the sloop sailed on in this formidable company, sometimes a few yards distant and sometimes near enough to touch. The Greenland dogs trembled for fear, but Duk was quite imperturbable. At last the iceberg lost ground, and got driven by the wind further and further away till it disappeared in the fog, only at intervals betraying its presence by the ominous growls of its equipage.

The storm now burst forth with redoubled fury. The little barque was lifted bodily out of the water, and whirled round and round with the most frightful rapidity. Mast and sail were torn off, and went flying away through the darkness like some large white bird. A whirlpool began to form among the waves, drawing down the ship gradually by its irresistible suction.

Deeper and deeper she sank, whizzing round at such tremendous speed that to the poor fellows on board, the water seemed motionless. All five men stood erect, gazing at each other in speechless terror. But suddenly the ship rose perpendicularly, her prow went above the edge of the vortex, and getting out of the centre of attraction by her own velocity, she escaped at a tangent from the circumference, and was thrown far beyond, swift as a ball from a cannon’s mouth.

Altamont, the Doctor, Johnson, and Bell were pitched flat on the planks. When they got up, Hatteras had disappeared!

It was two o'clock in the morning.

XXIII. The English Flag

For a few seconds they seemed stupefied, and then a cry of "Hatteras!" broke from every lip. On all sides, nothing was visible but the tempestuous ocean. Duk barked desperately, and Bell could hardly keep him from leaping into the waves.

"Take the helm, Altamont," said the Doctor, "and let us try our utmost to find our poor captain."

Johnson and Bell seized the oars, and rowed about for more than an hour; but their search was vain- Hatteras was lost!

Lost! and so near the Pole, just as he had caught sight of the goal!

The Doctor called, and shouted, and fired signals, and Duk made piteous lamentations; but there was no response. Clawbonny could bear up no longer; he buried his head in his hands, and fairly wept aloud.

At such a distance from the coast, it was impossible Hatteras could reach it alive, without an oar or even so much as a spar to help him; if ever he touched the haven of his desire, it would be as a swollen, mutilated corpse!

Longer search was useless, and nothing remained but to resume the route north. The tempest was dying out, and about five in the morning on the 11th of July, the wind fell, and the sea gradually became calm. The sky recovered its polar clearness, and less than three miles away the land appeared in all its grandeur.

The new continent was only an island, or rather a volcano, fixed like a lighthouse on the North Pole of the world.

The mountain was in full activity, pouring out a mass of burning stones and glowing rock. At every fresh eruption there was a convulsive heaving within, as if some mighty giant were respiring, and the masses ejected were thrown up high into the air amidst jets of bright flame, streams of lava rolling down the sides in impetuous torrents. In one part, serpents of fire seemed writhing and wriggling amongst smoking rocks, and in another the glowing liquid fell in cascades, in the midst of purple vapour, into a river of fire below, formed of a thousand igneous streams, which emptied itself into the sea, the waters hissing and seething like a boiling cauldron.

Apparently there was only one crater to the volcano, out of which the columns of fire issued, streaked with forked lightning. Electricity seemed to have something to do with this magnificent panorama.

Above the panting flames waved an immense plume-shaped cloud of smoke, red at its base and black at its summit. It rose with incomparable majesty, and unrolled in thick volumes.

The sky was ash-colour to a great height, and it was evident that the darkness that had prevailed while the tempest lasted, which had seemed quite inexplicable to the Doctor, was owing to the columns of cinders overspreading the sun like a thick curtain. He remembered a similar phenomenon which occurred in the Barbadoes, where the whole island was plunged in profound obscurity by the mass of cinders ejected from the crater of Isle St. Vincent.

This enormous ignivomous rock in the middle of the sea was six thousand feet high, just about the altitude of Hecla.

It seemed to rise gradually out of the water as the boat got nearer. There was no trace of vegetation, indeed there was no shore; the rock ran straight down to the sea.

“Can we land?” said the Doctor.

“The wind is carrying us right to it,” said Altamont. “But I don’t see an inch of land to set our foot upon.”

“It seems so at this distance,” said Johnson; “but we shall be sure to find some place to run in our boat at, and that is all we want.”

“Let us go on, then,” said Clawbonny, dejectedly.

He had no heart now for anything. The North Pole was indeed before his eyes, but not the man who had discovered it.

As they got nearer the island, which was not more than eight or ten miles in circumference, the navigators noticed a tiny fiord, just large enough to harbour their boat, and made towards it immediately. They feared their captain’s dead body would meet their eyes on the coast, and yet it seemed difficult for a corpse to lie on it, for there was no shore, and the sea broke on steep rocks, which were covered with cinders above watermark.

At last the little sloop glided gently into the narrow opening between two sandbanks just visible above the water, where she would be safe from the violence of the breakers; but before she could be moored, Duk began howling and barking again in the most piteous manner, as if calling on the cruel sea and stony rocks to yield up his lost master. The Doctor tried to calm him by caresses, but in vain. The faithful beast, as if he would represent the captain, sprang on shore with a tremendous bound, sending a cloud of cinders after him.

“Duk! Duk!” called Clawbonny.

But Duk had already disappeared.

After the sloop was made fast, they all got out and went after him. Altamont was just going to climb to the top of a pile of stones, when the Doctor exclaimed, “Listen!”

Duk was barking vehemently some distance off, but his bark seemed full of grief rather than fury.

“Has he come on the track of some animal, do you think?” asked Johnson.

“No, no!” said Clawbonny, shuddering. “His bark is too sorrowful; it is the dog’s tear. He has found the body of Hatteras.”

They all four rushed forward, in spite of the blinding cinder-dust, and came to the far-end of a fiord, where they discovered the dog barking round a corpse wrapped in the British flag!

“Hatteras! Hatteras!” cried the Doctor, throwing himself on the body of his friend. But next minute he started up with an indescribable cry, and shouted, “Alive! alive!”

“Yes!” said a feeble voice; “yes, alive at the North Pole, on *Queen’s Island*.”

“Hurrah for England!” shouted all with one accord.

“And for America!” added Clawbonny, holding out one hand to Hatteras and the other to Altamont.

Duk was not behind with his hurrah, which was worth quite as much as the others.

For a few minutes the joy of recovery of their captain filled all their hearts, and the poor fellows could not restrain their tears.

The Doctor found, on examination, that he was not seriously hurt. The wind threw him on the coast where landing was perilous work, but, after being driven back more than once into the sea, the hardy sailor had managed to scramble on to a rock, and gradually to hoist himself above the waves.

Then he must have become insensible, for he remembered nothing more except rolling himself in his flag. He only awoke to consciousness with the loud barking and caresses of his faithful Duk.

After a little, Hatteras was able to stand up supported by the Doctor, and tried to get back to the sloop.

He kept exclaiming, "The Pole! the North Pole!"

"You are happy now?" said his friend.

"Yes, happy! And are not you? Isn't it joy to find yourself here! The ground we tread is round the Pole! The air we breathe is the air that blows round the Pole! The sea we have crossed is the sea which washes the Pole! Oh! the North Pole! the North Pole!"

He had become quite delirious with excitement, and fever burned in his veins. His eyes shone with unnatural brilliancy, and his brain seemed on fire. Perfect rest was what he most needed, for the Doctor found it impossible to quiet him.

A place of encampment must therefore be fixed upon immediately.

Altamont speedily discovered a grotto composed of rocks, which had so fallen as to form a sort of cave. Johnson and Bell carried in provisions, and gave the dogs their liberty.

About eleven o'clock, breakfast, or rather dinner, was ready, consisting of pemmican, salt meat, and smoking-hot tea and coffee.

But Hatteras would do nothing till the exact position of the island was ascertained; so the Doctor and Altamont set to work with their instruments, and found that the exact latitude of the grotto was $89^{\circ} 59' 15''$. The longitude was of little importance, for all the meridians blended a few hundred feet higher.

The 90° of lat. was then only about three quarters of a mile off, or just about the summit of the volcano.

When the result was communicated to Hatteras, he desired that a formal document might be drawn up to attest the fact, and two copies made, one of which should be deposited on a cairn on the island.

Clawbonny was the scribe, and indited the following document, a copy of which is now among the archives of the Royal Geographical Society of London:-

"On this 11th day of July, 1861, in North latitude $89^{\circ} 59' 15''$ was discovered *Queen's* Island at the North Pole, by Captain Hatteras, Commander of the brig *Forward* of Liverpool, who signs this, as also all his companions.

"Whoever may find this document is requested to forward it to the Admiralty.

"(Signed) JOHN HATTERAS, Commander
of the *Forward*

"DR. CLAWBONNY

"ALTAMONT, Commander of the *Porpoise*

“JOHNSON, Boatswain

“BELL, Carpenter.”

“And now, friends, come to table,” said the Doctor, merrily.

Coming to table was just squatting on the ground.

“But who,” said Clawbonny, “would not give all the tables and dining-rooms in the world to dine at 89° 59' and 15" N. lat.?”

It was an exciting occasion this first meal at the Pole! What neither ancients nor moderns, neither Europeans, nor Americans, nor Asiatics had been able to accomplish was now achieved, and all past sufferings and perils were forgotten in the glow of success.

“But, after all,” said Johnson, after toasts to Hatteras and the North Pole had been enthusiastically drunk, “what is there so very special about the North Pole? Will you tell me, Mr. Clawbonny?”

“Just this, my good Johnson. It is the only point of the globe that is motionless; all the other points are revolving with extreme rapidity.”

“But I don't see that we are any more motionless here than at Liverpool.”

“Because in both cases you are a party concerned, both in the motion and the rest; but the fact is certain.”

Clawbonny then went on to describe the diurnal and annual motions of the earth—the one round its own axis, the extremities of which are the poles, which is accomplished in twenty-four hours, and the other round the sun, which takes a whole year.

Bell and Johnson listened half incredulously, and couldn't see why the earth could not have been allowed to keep still, till Altamont informed them that they would then have had neither day nor night, nor spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

“Ay, and worse still,” said Clawbonny, “if the motion chanced to be interrupted, we should fall right into the sun in sixty-four and a half days.”

“What! take sixty-four and a half days, to fall?” exclaimed Johnson.

“Yes, we are ninety-five millions of miles off. But when I say the Pole is motionless, it is not strictly true; it is only so in comparison with the rest of the globe, for it has a certain movement of its own, and completes a circle in about twenty-six thousand years. This comes from the precession of the equinoxes.”

A long and learned talk was started on this subject between Altamont and the Doctor, simplified, however, as much as possible for the benefit of Bell and Johnson.

Hatteras took no part in it, and even when they went on to speculate about the earth's centre, and discussed several of the theories that had been advanced respecting it, he seemed not to hear; it was evident his thoughts were far away.

Among other opinions put forth was one in our own days, which greatly excited Altamont's surprise. It was held that there was an immense opening at the poles which led into the heart of the earth, and that it was out of the opening that the light of the *Aurora Borealis* streamed. This was gravely stated, and Captain Synness, a countryman of our own, actually proposed that Sir Humphrey Davy, Humboldt, and Arago should undertake an expedition through it, but they refused.”

“And quite right too,” said Altamont.

“So say I; but you see, my friends, what absurdities imagination has conjured up about these regions, and how, sooner or later, the simple reality comes to light.”

XXIV. Mount Hatteras

After this conversation they all made themselves as comfortable as they could, and lay down to sleep.

All, except Hatteras; and why could this extraordinary man not sleep like the others?

Was not the purpose of his life attained now? Had he not realized his most daring project? Why could he not rest? Indeed, might not one have supposed that, after the strain his nervous system had undergone, he would long for rest?

But no, he grew more and more excited, and it was not the thought of returning that so affected him. Was he bent on going farther still? Had his passion for travel no limits? Was the world too small for him now he had circumnavigated it.

Whatever might be the cause, he could not sleep; yet this first night at the Pole was clear and calm. The isle was absolutely uninhabited-not a bird was to be seen in this burning atmosphere, not an animal on these scoriae-covered rocks, not a fish in these seething waters. Next morning, when Altamont, and the others awoke, Hatteras was gone. Feeling uneasy at his absence, they hurried out of the grotto in search of him.

There he was standing on a rock, gazing fixedly at the top of the mountain. His instruments were in his hand, and he was evidently calculating the exact longitude and latitude.

The Doctor went towards him and spoke, but it was long before he could rouse him from his absorbing contemplations. At last the captain seemed to understand, and Clawbonny said, while he examined him with a keen scrutinizing glance-

“Let us go round the island. Here we are, all ready for our last excursion.”

“The last!” repeated Hatteras, as if in a dream. “Yes!, the last truly, but,” he added, with more animation, “the most wonderful.”

He pressed both hands on his brow as he spoke, as if to calm the inward tumult.

Just then Altamont and the others came up, and their appearance seemed to dispel the hallucinations under which he was labouring.

“My friends,” he said, in a voice full of emotion, “thanks for your courage, thanks for your perseverance, thanks for your superhuman efforts, through which we are permitted to set our feet on this soil.”

“Captain,” said Johnson, “we have only obeyed orders to you alone belongs the honour.”

“No, no!” exclaimed Hatteras, with a violent outburst of emotion, “to all of you as much as to me! To Altamont as much as any of us, as much as the Doctor himself! Oh, let my heart break in your hands, it cannot contain its joy and gratitude any longer.”

He grasped the hands of his brave companions as he spoke, and paced up and down as if he had lost all self-control.

“We have only done our duty as Englishmen,” said Bell.

“And as friends,” added Clawbonny.

“Yes, but all did not do it,” replied Hatteras “some gave way. However, we must pardon them-pardon both the traitors and those who were led away by them. Poor fellows! I forgive them. You hear me, Doctor?”

“Yes,” replied Clawbonny, beginning to be seriously uneasy at his friend’s excitement.

“I have no wish, therefore,” continued the captain, “that they should lose the little fortune they came so far to seek. No, the original agreement is to remain unaltered, and they shall be rich-if they ever see England again.”

It would have been difficult not to have been touched by the pathetic tone of voice in which Hatteras said this.

“But, captain,” interrupted Johnson, trying to joke, “one would think you were making your will!”

“Perhaps I am,” said Hatteras, gravely.

“And yet you have a long bright career of glory before you!”

“Who knows?” was the reply.

No one answered, and the Doctor did not dare to guess his meaning; but Hatteras soon made them understand it, for presently he said, in a hurried, agitated manner, as if he could scarcely command himself-

“Friends, listen to me. We have done much already, but much yet remains to be done.”

His companions heard him with profound astonishment.

“Yes,” he resumed, “we are close to the Pole, but we are not on it.”

“How do you make that out,” said Altamont.

“Yes,” replied Hatteras, with vehemence, “I said an Englishman should plant his foot on the Pole of the world! I said it, and an Englishman shall.”

“What!” cried Clawbonny.

“We are still 45” from the unknown point,” resumed Hatteras, with increasing animation, “and to that point I shall go.”

“But it is on the summit of the volcano,” said the Doctor.

“I shall go.”

“It is an inaccessible cone!”

“I shall go.”

“But it is a yawning fiery crater!”

“I shall go.”

The tone of absolute determination in which Hatteras pronounced these words it is impossible to describe.

His friends were stupefied, and gazed in terror at the blazing mountain.

At last the Doctor recovered himself, and began to urge and entreat Hatteras to renounce his project. He tried every means his heart dictated, from humble supplications to friendly threats; but he could gain nothing-a sort of frenzy had come over the captain, an absolute monomania about the Pole.

Nothing but violent measures would keep him back from destruction, but the Doctor was unwilling to employ these unless driven to extremity.

He trusted, moreover, that physical impossibilities, insuperable obstacles would bar his further progress, and meantime finding all protestations were useless, he simply said-

“Very well, since you are bent on it, we’ll go too.”

“Yes,” replied Hatteras, “half-way up the mountain, but not a step beyond. You know you have to carry back to England the duplicate of the document in the cairn--”

“Yes; but--”

“It is settled,” said Hatteras, in an imperious tone; “and since the prayers of a friend will not suffice, the captain commands.”

The Doctor did not insist longer, and a few minutes after the little band set out, accompanied by Duk.

It was about eight o’clock when they commenced their difficult ascent; the sky was splendid, and the thermometer stood at 52°.

Hatteras and his dog went first, closely followed by the others.

“I am afraid,” said Johnson to the Doctor.

“No, no, there’s nothing to be afraid of; we are here.”

This singular little island appeared to be of recent formation, and was evidently the product of successive volcanic eruptions. The rocks were all lying loose on the top of each other, and it was a marvel how they preserved their equilibrium. Strictly speaking, the mountain was only a heap of stones thrown down from a height, and the mass of rocks which composed the island had evidently come out of the bowels of the earth.

The earth, indeed, may be compared to a vast cauldron of spherical form, in which, under the influence of a central fire, immense quantities of vapours are generated, which would explode the globe but for the safety-valves outside.

These safety-valves are volcanoes, when one closes another opens; and at the Poles where the crust of the earth is thinner, owing to its being flattened, it is not surprising that a volcano should be suddenly formed by the upheaving of some part of the ocean-bed.

The Doctor, while following Hatteras, was closely following all the peculiarities of the island, and he was further confirmed in his opinion as to its recent formation by the absence of water. Had it existed for centuries, the thermal springs would have flowed from its bosom.

As they got higher, the ascent became more and more difficult, for the flanks of the mountain were almost perpendicular, and it required the utmost care to keep them from falling. Clouds of scorïæ and ashes would whirl round them repeatedly, threatening them with asphyxia, or torrents of lava would bar their passage. In parts where these torrents ran horizontally, the outside had become hardened; while underneath was the boiling lava, and every step the travellers took had first to be tested with the iron-tipped staff to avoid being suddenly plunged into the scalding liquid.

At intervals large fragments of red-hot rock were thrown up from the crater, and burst in the air like bomb-shells, scattering the debris to enormous distances in all directions.

Hatteras, however, climbed up the steepest ascents with surprising agility, disdainful of the help of his staff.

He arrived before long at a circular rock, a sort of plateau about ten feet wide. A river of boiling lava surrounded it, except in one part, where it forked away to a higher rock, leaving a narrow passage, through which Hatteras fearlessly passed.

Here he stopped, and his companions managed to rejoin him. He seemed to be measuring with his eye the distance he had yet to get over. Horizontally, he was not more than two hundred yards from the top of the crater, but vertically he had nearly three times that distance to traverse.

The ascent had occupied three hours already. Hatteras showed no signs of fatigue, while the others were almost spent.

The summit of the volcano appeared inaccessible, and the Doctor determined at any price to prevent Hatteras from attempting to proceed. He tried gentle means first, but the captain's excitement was fast becoming delirium. During their ascent, symptoms of insanity had become more and more marked, and no one could be surprised who knew anything of his previous history.

"Hatteras," said the Doctor, "it is enough! we cannot go further!"

"Stop, then," he replied, in a strangely altered voice; "I am going higher."

"No, it is useless; you are at the Pole already."

"No, no! higher, higher!"

"My friend, do you know who is speaking to you? It is I, Doctor Clawbonny."

"Higher, higher!" repeated the madman.

"Very well, we shall not allow it-that is all."

He had hardly uttered the words before Hatteras, by a superhuman effort, sprang over the boiling lava, and was beyond the reach of his companions.

A cry of horror burst from every lip, for they thought the poor captain must have perished in that fiery gulf; but there he was safe on the other side, accompanied by his faithful Duk, who would not leave him.

He speedily disappeared behind a curtain of smoke, and they heard his voice growing fainter in the distance, shouting-

"To the north! to the north! to the top of Mount Hatteras! Remember Mount Hatteras!"

All pursuit of him was out of the question; it was impossible to leap across the fiery torrent, and equally impossible to get round it. Altamont, indeed, was mad enough to make an attempt, and would certainly have lost his life if the others had not held him back by main force.

"Hatteras! Hatteras!" shouted the Doctor, but no response was heard save the faint bark of Duk.

At intervals, however, a glimpse of him could be caught through the clouds of smoke and showers of ashes. Sometimes his head, sometimes his arm appeared; then he was out of sight again, and a few minutes later was seen higher up clinging to the rocks. His size constantly decreased with the fantastic rapidity of objects rising upwards in the air. In half-an-hour he was only half his size.

The air was full of the deep rumbling noise of the volcano, and the mountain shook and trembled. From time to time a loud fall was heard behind, and the travellers would see some enormous rock rebounding from the heights to engulf itself in the polar basin below.

Hatteras did not even turn once to look back, but marched straight on, carrying his country's flag attached to his staff. His terrified friends watched every movement, and saw him gradually decrease to microscopic dimensions, while Duk looked no larger than a big rat.

Then came a moment of intense anxiety, for the wind beat down on them an immense sheet of flame, and they could see nothing but the red glare. A cry of agony escaped the Doctor; but an instant afterwards Hatteras reappeared, waving his flag.

For a whole hour this fearful spectacle went on—an hour of battle with unsteady loose rocks and quagmires of ashes, where the foolhardy climber sank up to his waist. Sometimes they saw him hoist himself up by leaning knees and loins against the rocks in narrow, intricate winding paths, and sometimes he would be hanging on by both hands to some sharp crag, swinging to and fro like a withered tuft.

At last he reached the summit of the mountain, the mouth of the crater. Here the Doctor hoped the infatuated man would stop, at any rate, and would, perhaps, recover his senses, and expose himself to no more danger than the descent involved.

Once more he shouted—

“Hatteras! Hatteras!”

There was such a pathos of entreaty in his tone that Altamont felt moved to his inmost soul.

“I'll save him yet!” he exclaimed; and before Clawbonny could hinder him, he had cleared with a bound the torrent of fire, and was out of sight among the rocks.

Meantime, Hatteras had mounted a rock which overhung the crater, and stood waving his flag amidst showers of stones which rained down on him. Duk was by his side; but the poor beast was growing dizzy in such close proximity to the abyss.

Hatteras balanced his staff in one hand, and with the other sought to find the precise mathematical point where all the meridians of the globe meet, the point on which it was his sublime purpose to plant his foot.

All at once the rock gave way, and he disappeared. A cry of horror broke from his companions, and rang to the top of the mountain. Clawbonny thought his friend had perished, and lay buried for ever in the depths of the volcano. A second—only a second, though it seemed an age—elapsed, and there was Altamont and the dog holding the ill-fated Hatteras! Man and dog had caught him at the very moment when he disappeared in the abyss.

Hatteras was saved! Saved in spite of himself; and half-an-hour later he lay unconscious in the arms of his despairing companions.

When he came to himself, the Doctor looked at him in speechless anguish, for there was no glance of recognition in his eye. It was the eye of a blind man, who gazes without seeing.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Johnson; “he is blind!”

“No,” replied Clawbonny, “no! My poor friends, we have only saved the body of Hatteras; his soul is left behind on the top of the volcano. His reason is gone!”

“Insane!” exclaimed Johnson and Altamont, in consternation.

“Insane!” replied the Doctor, and the big tears ran down his cheeks.

XXV. Return South

Three hours after this sad *dénouement* of the adventures of Captain Hatteras, the whole party were back once more in the grotto.

Clawbonny was asked his opinion as to what was best to be done.

“Well, friends,” he said, “we cannot stay longer in this island; the sea is open, and we have enough provisions. We ought to start at once, and get back without the least delay to Fort Providence, where we must winter.”

“That is my opinion, too,” said Altamont. “The wind is favourable, so to-morrow we will get to sea.”

The day passed in profound dejection. The insanity of the captain was a bad omen and when they began to talk over the return voyage, their hearts failed them for fear. They missed the intrepid spirit of their leader.

However, like brave men, they prepared to battle anew with the elements and with themselves, if ever they felt inclined to give way.

Next morning they made all ready to sail, and brought the tent and all its belongings on board.

But before leaving these rocks, never to return, the Doctor carrying out the intentions of Hatteras, had a cairn erected on the very spot where the poor fellow had jumped ashore. It was made of great blocks placed one on the top of the other, so as to be a landmark perfectly visible while the eruptions of the volcano left it undisturbed. On one of the side stones, Bell chiselled the simple inscription-

JOHN HATTERAS.

The duplicate of the document attesting the discovery of the North Pole was enclosed in a tinned iron cylinder, and deposited in the cairn, to remain as a silent witness among those desert rocks.

This done, the four men and the captain, a poor body without a soul, set out on the return voyage, accompanied by the faithful Duk, who had become sad and downcast. A new sail was manufactured out of the tent, and about ten o'clock, the little sloop sailed out before the wind.

She made a quick passage, finding abundance of open water. It was certainly easier to get away from the Pole than to get to it.

But Hatteras knew nothing that was passing around him. He lay full length in the boat, perfectly silent, with lifeless eye and folded arms, and Duk lying at his feet. Clawbonny frequently addressed him, but could elicit no reply.

On the 15th they sighted Altamont Harbour, but as the sea was open all along the coast, they determined to go round to Victoria Bay by water, instead of crossing New America in the sledge.

The voyage was easy and rapid. In a week they accomplished what had taken a fortnight in the sledge, and on the 23rd they cast anchor in Victoria Bay.

As soon as the sloop was made fast, they all hastened to Fort Providence. But what a scene of devastation met their eyes! Doctor's House, stores, powder-magazine, fortifications, all had melted away, and the provisions had been ransacked by devouring animals.

The navigators had almost come to the end of their supplies, and had been reckoning on replenishing their stores at Fort Providence. The impossibility of wintering there now was evident, and they decided to get to Baffin's Bay by the shortest route.

"We have no alternative," said Clawbonny; "Baffin's Bay is not more than six hundred miles distant. We can sail as long as there is water enough under our sloop, and get to Jones' Sound, and then on to the Danish settlements."

"Yes," said Altamont; "let us collect what food remains, and be off at once."

After a thorough search, a few cases of pemmican were found scattered here and there, and two barrels of preserved meat, altogether enough for six weeks, and a good supply of powder. It was soon collected and brought on board, and the remainder of the day was employed in caulking the sloop and putting her in good trim.

Next morning they put out once more to sea. The voyage presented no great difficulties, the drift-ice being easily avoided; but still the Doctor thought it advisable, in case of possible delays, to limit the rations to one-half. This was no great hardship, as there was not much work for anyone to do, and all were in perfect health.

Besides, they found a little shooting, and brought down ducks, and geese, and guillemots, or sea turtledoves. Water they were able to supply themselves with in abundance, from the fresh-water icebergs they constantly fell in with as they kept near the coast, not daring to venture out to the open sea in so frail a barque.

At that time of the year, the thermometer was already constantly below freezing point. The frequent rains changed to snow, and the weather became gloomy. Each day the sun dipped lower below the horizon, and on the 30th, for a few minutes, he was out of sight altogether.

However, the little sloop sailed steadily on without stopping an instant. They knew what fatigues and obstacles a land journey involved, if they should be forced to adopt it, and no time was to be lost, for soon the open water would harden to firm ground; already the young ice had begun to form. In these high latitudes there is neither spring nor autumn; winter follows close on the heels of summer.

On the 31st the first stars glimmered overhead, and from that time forwards there was continual fog, which considerably impeded navigation.

The Doctor became very uneasy at these multiplied indications of approaching winter. He knew the difficulties Sir John Ross had to contend with after he left his ship to try and reach Baffin's Bay, and how, after all, he was compelled to return and pass a fourth winter on board. It was bad enough with shelter and food and fuel, but if any such calamity befell the survivors of the *Forward*, if they were obliged to stop or return, they were lost.

The Doctor said nothing of his anxieties to his companions, but only urged them to get as far east as possible.

At last, after thirty days' tolerably quick sailing, and after battling for forty-eight hours against the increasing drift ice, and risking the frail sloop a hundred times, the navigators saw themselves blocked in on all sides. Further progress was impossible, for the sea was frozen in every direction, and the thermometer was only 15° above zero.

Altamont made a reckoning with scrupulous precision, and found they were in 77°15' latitude, and 85° 2' longitude.

“This is our exact position then,” said the Doctor. “We are in South Lincoln, just at Cape Eden, and are entering Jones’ Sound. With a little more good luck, we should have found open water right to Baffin’s Bay. But we must not grumble. If my poor Hatteras had found as navigable a sea at first, he would have soon reached the Pole. His men would not have deserted him, and his brain would not have given way under the pressure of terrible trial.”

“I suppose, then,” said Altamont, “our only course is to leave the sloop, and get by sledge to the east coast of Lincoln.”

“Yes; but I think we should go through Jones’ Sound, and get to South Devon instead of crossing Lincoln.”

“Why?”

“Because the nearer we get to Lancaster Sound, the more chance we have of meeting whalers.”

“You are right; but I question whether the ice is firm enough to make it practicable.”

“We’ll try,” replied Clawbonny.

The little vessel was unloaded, and the sledge put together again. All the parts were in good condition, so the next day the dogs were harnessed, and they started off along the coast to reach the ice-field; but Altamont’s opinion proved right. They could not get through Jones’ Sound, and were obliged to follow the coast to Lincoln.

At last, on the 24th, they set foot on North Devon.

“Now,” said Clawbonny, “we have only to cross this, and get to Cape Warender at the entrance to Lancaster Sound.”

But the weather became frightful, and very cold. The snow-storms and tempests returned with winter violence, and the travellers felt too weak to contend with them. Their stock of provisions was almost exhausted, and rations had to be reduced now to a third, that the dogs might have food enough to keep them in working condition.

The nature of the ground added greatly to the fatigue. North Devon is extremely wild and rugged, and the path across the Trauter mountains is through difficult gorges. The whole party-men, and dogs, and sledge alike-were frequently forced to stop, for they could not struggle on against the fury of the elements. More than once despair crept over the brave little band, hardy as they were, and used to Polar sufferings. Though scarcely aware of it themselves, they were completely worn out, physically and mentally.

It was not till the 30th of August that they emerged from these wild mountains into a plain, which seemed to have been upturned and convulsed by volcanic action at some distant period.

Here it was absolutely necessary to take a few days’ rest, for the travellers could not drag one foot after the other, and two of the dogs had died from exhaustion. None of the party felt equal to put up the tent, so they took shelter behind an iceberg.

Provisions were now so reduced, that, notwithstanding their scanty rations, there was only enough left for one week. Starvation stared the poor fellows in the face.

Altamont, who had displayed great unselfishness and devotion to the others, roused his sinking energies, and determined to go out and find food for his comrades.

He took his gun, called Duk, and went off almost unnoticed by the rest.

He had been absent about an hour, and only once during that time had they heard the report of his gun; and now he was coming back empty-handed, but running as if terrified.

“What is the matter?” asked the Doctor.

“Down there, under the snow!” said Altamont, speaking as if scared, and pointing in a particular direction.

“What?”

“A whole party of men!”

“Alive?”

“Dead-frozen-and even-”

He did not finish the sentence, but a look of unspeakable horror came over his face.

The Doctor and the others were so roused by this incident, that they managed to get up and drag themselves after Altamont towards the place he indicated.

They soon arrived, at a narrow part at the bottom of a ravine, and what a spectacle met their gaze! Dead bodies, already stiff, lay half-buried in a winding-sheet of snow. A leg visible here, an arm there, and yonder shrunken hands and rigid faces, stamped with the expression of rage and despair.

The Doctor stooped down to look at them more closely, but instantly started back pale and agitated, while Duk barked ominously.

“Horrible, horrible!” he said.

“What is it?” asked Johnson.

“Don’t you recognize them?”

“What do you mean?”

“Look and see!”

It was evident this ravine had been but recently the scene of a fearful straggle with cold, and despair, and starvation, for by certain horrible remains it was manifest that the poor wretches had been feeding on human flesh, perhaps while still warm and palpitating; and among them the Doctor recognized Shandon, Pen, and the ill-fated crew of the *Forward!* Their strength had failed; provisions had come to an end; their boat had been broken, perhaps by an avalanche or engulfed in some abyss, and they could not take advantage of the open sea; or perhaps they had lost their way in wandering over these unknown continents. Moreover, men who set out under the excitement of a revolt were not likely to remain long united. The leader of a rebellion has but a doubtful power, and no doubt Shandon’s authority had been soon cast off.

Be that as it might, it was evident the crew had come through agonies of suffering and despair before this last terrible catastrophe, but the secret of their miseries is buried with them beneath the polar snows.

“Come away! come away!” said the Doctor, dragging his companions from the scene. Horror gave them momentary strength, and they resumed their march without stopping a minute longer.

XXVI. Conclusion

It would be useless to enumerate all the misfortunes which befell the survivors of the expedition. Even the men themselves were never able to give any detailed narrative of the events which occurred during the week subsequent to the horrible discovery related in the last chapter. However, on the 9th of September, by superhuman exertions, they arrived at last at Cape Horsburg, the extreme point of North Devon.

They were absolutely starving. For forty-eight hours they had tasted nothing, and their last meal had been off the flesh of their last Esquimaux dog. Bell could go no further, and Johnson felt himself dying.

They were on the shore of Baffin's Bay, now half-frozen over; that is to say, on the road to Europe, and three miles off the waves were dashing noiselessly on the sharp edges of the ice-field.

Here they must wait their chance of a whaler appearing; and for how long?

But Heaven pitied the poor fellows, for the very next day Altamont distinctly perceived a sail on the horizon. Every one knows the torturing suspense that follows such an appearance, and the agonizing dread lest it should prove a false hope. The vessel seems alternately to approach and recede, and too often just at the very moment when the poor castaways think they are saved, the sail begins to disappear, and is soon out of sight.

The Doctor and his companions went through all these experiences. They had succeeded in reaching the western boundary of the ice-field by carrying and pushing each other along, and they watched the ship gradually fade away from view without observing them, in spite of their loud cries for help.

Just then a happy inspiration came to the Doctor. His fertile genius, which had served him many a time in such good stead, supplied him with one last idea!

A floe driven by the current struck against the icefield, and Clawbonny exclaimed, pointing to it-

"This floe!"

His companions could not understand what he meant.

"Let us embark on it! let us embark on it!"

"Oh! Mr. Clawbonny, Mr. Clawbonny," said Johnson, pressing his hand.

Bell, assisted by Altamont, hurried to the sledge, and brought back one of the poles, which he stuck fast on the ice like a mast, and fastened it with ropes. The tent was torn up to furnish a sail, and as soon as the frail raft was ready the poor fellows jumped upon it, and sailed out to the open sea.

Two hours later, after unheard-of exertions, the survivors of the *Forward* were picked up by the *Hans Christian*, a Danish whaler, on her way to Davis' Straits. They were more like spectres than human beings, and the sight of their sufferings was enough. It told its own tale; but the captain received them with such hearty sympathy, and lavished on them such care and kindness, that he succeeded in keeping them alive.

Ten days afterwards, Clawbonny, Johnson, Bell, Altamont, and Captain Hatteras landed at Korsam, in Zealand, an island belonging to Denmark. They took the steamer to Kiel, and

from there proceeded by Altona and Hamburg to London, where they arrived on the 13th of the same month, scarcely recovered after their long sufferings.

The first care of Clawbonny was to request the Royal Geographical Society to receive a communication from him. He was accordingly admitted to the next *séance*, and one can imagine the astonishment of the learned assembly and the enthusiastic applause produced by the reading of Hatteras' document.

The English have a passion for geographical discovery, from the lord to the cockney, from the merchant down to the dock labourer, and the news of this grand discovery speedily flashed along the telegraph wires, throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom. Hatteras was lauded as a martyr by all the newspapers, and every Englishman felt proud of him.

The Doctor and his companions had the honour of being presented to the Queen by the Lord Chancellor, and they were feted and "lionized" in all quarters.

The Government confirmed the names of "Queen's Island," "Mount Hatteras," and "Altamont Harbour."

Altamont would not part from his companions in misery and glory, but followed them to Liverpool, where they were joyously welcomed back, after being so long supposed dead and buried beneath the eternal snows.

But Dr. Clawbonny would never allow that any honour was due to himself. He claimed all the merit of the discovery for his unfortunate captain, and in the narrative of his voyage, published the next year under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society, he places John Hatteras on a level with the most illustrious navigators, and makes him the compeer of all the brave, daring men who have sacrificed themselves for the progress of science.

The insanity of this poor victim of a sublime passion was of a mild type, and he lived quietly at Sten Cottage, a private asylum near Liverpool, where the Doctor himself had placed him. He never spoke, and understood nothing that was said to him; reason and speech had fled together. The only tie that connected him with the outside world was his friendship for Duk, who was allowed to remain with him.

For a considerable time the captain had been in the habit of walking in the garden for hours, accompanied by his faithful dog, who watched him with sad, wistful eyes, but his promenade was always in one direction in a particular part of the garden. When he got to the end of this path, he would stop and begin to walk backwards. If anyone stopped him he would point with his finger towards a certain part of the sky, but let anyone attempt to turn him round, and he became angry, while Duk, as if sharing his master's sentiments, would bark furiously.

The Doctor, who often visited his afflicted friend, noticed this strange proceeding one day, and soon understood the reason of it. He saw how it was that he paced so constantly in a given direction, as if under the influence of some magnetic force.

This was the secret: John Hatteras invariably walked towards the North.

THE END

I'm Julie, the woman who runs [Global Grey](#) - the website where this ebook was published. These are my own formatted editions, and I hope you enjoyed reading this particular one.

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