

THE OLD WHALE-FISHERMAN.

THE class of men particularly suited to the whale fishery are the adventurous and daring, and yet they must have self-command and prompt judgment in danger. These qualities made them the best men that could be selected for Arctic discovery, and the more so as their mode of life made them familiar with the ice. In every expedition to those regions were to be found one or more of them; they were better paid than the rest of the crew, being allowed seven pounds a month; hence their nickname of "Seven Pounders" on board the ship.

In the expedition to which I belonged we had several "Seven Pounders," and amongst them one

whom I shall call Jackson. He had passed the middle period of life, in fact, he was sixty years of age, but retained great strength and activity.

While we were fitting in England, "old Jackson" could not be kept sober; he paid no attention either to threats or promises, and to such a pitch did he permit his excesses to arrive, that the first days at sea found him without his extra grog,

and in his hammock with the horrors of delirium tremens. He, however, recovered under the skilful treatment of our surgeon, and was once more at his post, every inch a sailor. At first it was determined to leave him behind; but all who knew him said that they never heard of his being drunk in salt water, and so it proved.

Not one of our quartermasters could steer the ship in the ice lanes so well as Jackson. He was always merry and good-tempered, and willing to oblige. In the most intense cold of an Arctic winter, he would come on deck, and go over the side to work on the floe ice in his shirt-sleeves, and these often rolled up above the elbow. The man was not given to bad

language, but his general tone was far from that of one who had ever a single thought for the future, at least so we judged at that time.

We reached the realms of zero, and were busily employed in picking our way through the lanes, or open spaces of water between the detached floes, when it came on to blow furiously, and we sought shelter by making the ship fast to a large iceberg that had grounded near the shore.

Jackson was sent to fix the ice anchor in the berg, the boat being manned by six of the best men. He reached the iceberg, and having "landed" thereon, prepared to fix the bent iron in the frozen surface by cutting a hole slanting outwards by means of an ice-axe which he carried with him. He had given

several blows, when a loud crack was heard, and a large portion detached itself from the main body, falling over towards the boat, and carrying with it Jackson and the anchor. For a moment we gave up all hope for his life, and even for the safety of his comrades.

Another boat's crew was immediately called away to their assistance. The spray cleared off, and we were greatly re-



lieved to find the cutter was safe; we could see two men struggling in the water, while those in safety were reaching a helping hand to their companions. Jackson had disappeared; one of the men, however, was reaching after something with the boat-hook, and after several attempts, he succeeded in fishing up the motionless body of poor Jackson.

A few minutes sufficed to see the whole party alongside the ship, and many a helping hand brought them on board. It was found that Jackson had received a severe blow on the head; the doctor declared he was suffering from concussion of the brain, and was in a very dangerous state. With prompt