

Farther down on the table was a dish of early potatoes, scraped and washed ready to cook, kept in countenance by plates of unbaked biscuit, dishes of raw green peas, unbaked pies, etc.

The deacon gave one hasty glance at Jessie, but beyond a grave anxious look in her eyes, her face expressed nothing of her feelings as she said: "I have done as you asked me, John; got as good a dinner as I could for your friends with the material there was here. If it does not suit you, please remember I am not used to provide my own wood, as Katie is, and that is the best I could do without."

For a moment the deacon was tempted to forget that he was a deacon and swear, but before he had time to speak, Ralph Brooks, a handsome young farmer, whose opinion the deacon valued very highly, said:

"You are fairly beat, deacon. You'd better give up." And as the deacon glanced sheepishly around at the men, and saw they were all beginning to smile broadly, he said:

"I reckon I'll have to, Ralph, and—and—I do give up."

Then he joined in the laugh that followed.

Before the room was quiet again, Mr. Brooks, pushing back his chair, said:

"Boys, I propose that we get some wood for Miss Jessie to cook this dinner with." And the cheerful way in which they accepted the proposition made the deacon ashamed of his momentary anger.

When, an hour and a half later, they again seated themselves at the table, he was honest enough to acknowledge to Jessie before them all that the lesson had been needed, and he would try to profit by it.

He did profit by it; for when, a couple of months later, Mrs. Lee was first able to walk out into the yard, the deacon with pardonable pride took her to see a large new woodshed, well stocked with hard wood and kindling, and told her as they stood there of the way Jessie got dinner for him, and how sorry he was that the woodshed had not been built years before.

A mile or so from the deacon's there is a cosy little house where Jessie cooks dinners for Mr. Brooks, and to his credit be it said, she has never been obliged to try the same experiment with him that she did with her brother-in-law. From the way that Deacon Lee laughs with her and her husband about the way she taught him to keep a supply of wood on hand, it is safe to say that he has forgiven her for the lesson.

THE FROZEN SOUTH.

The ice conditions naturally present the most interesting and characteristic features of the Antarctic regions. The voyager, on leaving the temperate zone to penetrate into the frozen waters of the Far South, would require to have a very considerable knowledge of navigation among ice as his chief equipment; and in order to make any length of stay there, he would need a vessel of more than ordinary strength, capable of withstanding an occasional "nip" from the battering-rams of the dangerous floes.

What is the life-history of these floating ice-islands and icebergs? They are all shed from the parent ice-cap that surrounds the Pole. Extremes of frost and the gradual projection of the ice-cap into the sea are the causes of their disruption. Here, for centuries perhaps, the great ice-cap grows and moves like a living thing. Each season a fresh layer of snow is added to its thickness, which the rays of the sun convert into ice more or less solid. Slowly the huge cumbersome mass moves over the lower lying lands and through the valleys towards the sea, grinding under its enormous weight rocks and boulders, which, from the cohesive nature of ice, it sometimes gathers up and conveys along with it; and this debris is eventually deposited on the sea bottom.

The coloring of the bergs is magnificent. The general mass closely resembles loaf sugar; the caves and crevices are of the deepest and purest azure blue; at night they emit a luminous glow, and there are reasons to believe that many are to some extent phosphorescent. Like the bergs of the Arctic Seas, they are bounded by perpendicular cliffs on all sides. Some of them are more than two miles and some as many as four miles in circumference, while bergs four miles in diameter have also been seen. They have a uniform height of about 175 feet, 90 per cent of their volume being submerged; but higher bergs are frequently met with, the highest seen by Cook having been estimated at from 300 to 400 feet. As they float northwards they become tilted and gradually lose their tabular appearance, until the warm waters dissolve them.

The bergs met with, especially in the lower latitudes, assume every conceivable form. The *Challenger* for instance saw one that was "gable-shaped, with a glorious open Gothic arch in the centre, and a separate spire over 200 feet high. It was like a gorgeous floating cathedral built of sapphires, set in frosted silver." Both Wilkes and Ross, among other voyagers, describe the exceeding beauty of these palaces, cathedrals, islands, which are carved out of solid ice sprinkled with snow, and that more reality may be given them are sometimes populated by penguins. Towards the Pole, however, the icebergs, not being so disintegrated, are uniformly tabular.

The drift-ice is not unusually to be met with at a lower latitude than 58 deg. S., but in the severe seasons of 1832 and 1840, ice-islands were observed in latitude 42 deg., and they have sometimes been seen 600 or 700 miles from the barrier. There was one immense floating island, reported to have been passed by twenty-one ships in December 1854 and January, February and March 1855. It was in the form of a hook, the longer shank of which was sixty miles and the shorter forty miles, enclosing a bay of open water forty miles in diameter; and its elevation in one case exceeded 300 feet. This stupendous ice-island, as it might be conceived, presented great dangers to navigation. One ship which sailed into the bay was fortunate enough to secure a safe retreat, but an emigrant ship, the *Guiding Star*, was embayed and lost with all hands.

The pack-ice is of deep blue color, and is always characteristic; it consists for the most part of heavy floe ice, much worn by the sea, broken up and pressed and heaped together so as to present the most irregular shaped masses. The pack of the Antarctic seas are far more broken up, in consequence of the violent storms, than in the Arctic regions, where the sea is usually more tranquil. The vicinity of the pack is indicated to the navigator by a beautiful meteorological phenomenon called the "ice-blink," which is seen above it, and may be described as presenting a clear band of white reflection, sometimes bounded above by a dark cloud.

Ross contended for six weeks, trying to penetrate the pack to the south of Cape Horn; but his ships were so constantly beset and carried backward by the current flowing north that eventually, after experiencing many perils, he abandoned the attempt. We may gather some idea of the dangers he must have encountered when we remember that the huge Antarctic icebergs are constantly colliding and disintegrating. The drift-ice, too, is tossed about by the waves like so many floating timbers, contact with any large body of which might prove fatal to any unfortified ship. The sudden, fierce gales peculiar to these regions, alternating with the still more dangerous calms—when the ship floats helpless amongst the ice—present fresh dangers to be faced by the navigator, and the frequent thick weather and heavy, blinding falls of snow add to his embarrassment. The free movement of his ship is further impeded by the rapidity with which the young ice forms to obstruct his passage, rendering frequent short "tacks" necessary in the small open spaces of water, and the free handling of the icy ropes is almost impossible when the waves congeal as they fall on the decks, and have to be cut away with hatchets. A storm in the pack, in fact, or an ensuing dead calm, are the most dangerous positions in which an Antarctic voyager can be placed.

From the fact that these high southern lands, unlike those in the antipodal regions, can be approached from all sides at every season of the year, we might reasonably have supposed that they would not have been for so long unexplored had any commensurate advantage to trade or shipping been anticipated. Our considerable knowledge of the Arctic regions is due, not to any special claims for their scientific exploration, but chiefly to the fact that whilst there was a North-East and a North-West Passage to explore, or a short-cut across the Pole to China and Japan to discover, commerce persistently endeavored to break through the barriers of the Frozen North. In the Antarctic, on the other hand, commerce has concerned itself only with the sealing and whaling produce.

To the natural sciences it offers an area of almost virgin ground, and, until it has been systematically explored, and some knowledge of it obtained by synchronous observations, none of these sciences can be properly equipped for a thorough investigation into the cosmogony of the globe. It may be a long time yet before the nations recognize how much their progress is regulated by, and dependent on, the advance of science; but we are sure there will always be found men who will impress on the public the paramount importance of investigating the unknown continent of the Far South.—*Good Words*.

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