

PREFACE

THE material for this book has been gathered from the rich storehouse of Arctic Literature. The chief labour of its composition lay in elimination rather than construction. The great field I have endeavoured to present can hardly be brought with justice to the narrow bounds of a single cover, but I have conscientiously endeavoured to bring to the reader's mind an accurate record of brilliant deeds that go to make the history of the far North, and have let the explorers themselves tell the story of *how* these deeds have been accomplished.

Between the lines of their simple language describing stern facts or desperate realities, one reads the character and temperament of the adventurer; one gathers lessons of patience, self-sacrifice, and endurance unsurpassed in the history of mankind, and perhaps appreciates, for the first time, the splendid fibre of which he is made. Stripped of the conventions and luxuries of civilized life, he plunges into the great unknown to fight a relentless war against the greatest foes to his existence, — Cold, Starvation, and Death. Though he may fall by the wayside a victim to the Cause, or crawl home on hands and knees over the rough fastnesses of the frozen wilderness, famishing, — perhaps dying, — the record of his work lives on; the fundamental principles of great character do not perish, but stand through the centuries, a star of hope to the weary