

familiar skies. Then the very trials and hardships of the unearthly cruise draw officers and men together in close fellowship and friendship, and the best traits of character are brought strongly out under enterprises and sufferings in which the safety of each depends upon the faithfulness of all.

Such, faintly shadowed forth, are some of the chief conditions under which Arctic exploration is prosecuted; and, as we think of them, we recall the quaint but eloquent words in which old Samuel Purchas—parson of St Martin's, by Ludgate, London, and compiler of a most curious and valuable collection of voyages—speaks of the character and the labours of Polar explorers: "How shall I," says this old writer, with simple but kindly and eloquent feeling—"How shall I admire your heroicke courage, ye marine worthies, beyond all names of worthinesse! that neyther dread so long eyther presence or absence of the sunne; nor those foggy mysts, tempestuous winds, cold blasts, snowes and hagle in the ayre; nor the unequal seas, which might amaze the hearer, and amaze the beholder, where the Tritons and Neptune's selfe would quake with chilling feare, to behold such monstrous icie ilands rending themselves with terrour of their own massiness, and disdayning otherwise both the sea's sovereigntie, and the sunne's hottest violence, mustering themselves in those watery plaines where they hold a continual civill warre, and, rushing one upon another, make windes and waves give backe; seeming to rend the ears of others while they rend themselves with crashing and splitting their congealed armours."

It is a little singular that no department of naval achievement and adventure is at once so fascinating, so romantic in itself, and yet so unfamiliar to the million readers of England, as the department of Exploration, Adventure, and Discovery in the Polar Seas. This anomaly it is now proposed to do away with. It is to trace the history of every famous Arctic expedition that has left British or foreign shores, from the earliest times to our own; to note the gradual progress of the successive discoveries in the Polar seas, where yet much remains to be discovered; and to record the stirring adventures, disastrous reverses, triumphant successes, and deeds of heroic courage and perseverance, in the very face of death under a hundred forms at once, for which the annals of Arctic discovery are illustrious—that is the purpose of the present work.