

It was then but five years since the departure of the Arctic expedition under Sir John Franklin; and hope was still cherished that he might return in safety. The 'Enterprise' and the 'Investigator' had but just returned from their unsuccessful expedition in search of him in 1848 and 1849, and had been refitted as speedily as possible to resume the search by way of Behring's Strait. Captain R. Collinson was appointed to the 'Enterprise,' as leader of the expedition, and Commander M'Clure, who had served as first lieutenant under Sir James Ross in the last expedition, to the 'Investigator.' It was probable that important intelligence might be obtained from the Esquimaux; the Admiralty therefore applied to the Moravian Missionary Society, with the request that one of their Labrador missionaries might accompany the expedition as interpreter.

Johann August Miertsching, who had been labouring five years in Labrador, was then on a visit to his relations in Germany. To him the proposal was made that he should undertake the office. He consented, and hence it is that our readers are about to make his acquaintance. His journal was published in Germany after his return; from that it is proposed to translate the more interesting passages, connecting them by a very brief narrative of the expedition. There was, as yet, no cabin for him in the 'Enterprise;' he was, therefore, transferred next day to the 'Investigator.'

By six o'clock on the morning of January 20th, the last farewells were spoken or looked, the last letters written, the anchors raised, and, with a favourable wind, the ships were under weigh. "Shall we ever see Europe again? and when?" These questions pressed involuntarily on the mind of the missionary as he stood on deck and gazed at the receding shore. "An Arctic expedition is so beset with hindrances and dangers. How long will the ice hold us imprisoned in the far North? Perhaps for two years or more—and perhaps for ever! But all is known to the God under whose protection we unworthy men commence this perilous voyage. He will deal with us according to his good pleasure."

Brother Miertsching was happily exempt from sea-sickness, and at once applied himself diligently to acquire the language of his new friends, in which task they willingly assisted him. But the sailors evidently contrasted strangely with the crew of the mission ship 'Harmony': their songs, dancing, and "skylarking" astonished him not a little; and they, if they chanced to overhear him in his cabin singing German hymns to his guitar, probably set him down for a very odd kind of "land-lubber," little imagining how many solid,

useful accomplishments he possessed—that, in fact, there were very few things he could not do. In time each learned better to appreciate the other. The journal offers little of interest during the first part of the voyage.

March 5th, the 'Investigator' crossed the Line, and the crew celebrated what our friend called "Neptune's feast," which he declined describing in his journal, because he "would much rather forget it."

Sunday, March 23rd.—"Glorious weather! How delightful it would be if we were all Christians! Not far from hence is the land of palm-trees, but unhappily there are there but few who break off branches, and go forth to meet the King of Glory."

The additional timber and iron required to withstand ice-shocks, and the heavy cargo of stores, retarded the speed of the ships; the 'Investigator' did not reach the Straits of Magellan until April 15th. There they met the 'Gorgon' war-steamer, which had come from Valparaiso to tow them through the straits, and learned from Captain Painter that the 'Enterprise,' which had not been seen since January 26th, had arrived two days before.

The green treeless hills of Patagonia came in view. On the shore appeared nearly three hundred of the gigantic natives, many on horseback. They are described as being clothed in long mantles of llama skins, having broad, well-formed faces, and long black hair. Even the women are six feet high. In Fortescue Bay, the 'Enterprise' was lying at anchor. Mr. Miertsching was invited by Captain Collinson to take possession of the new cabin which had been prepared for him. This, however, was not a positive command: Captain M'Clure evidently did not wish to part with him, and it was therefore decided that he should join the 'Enterprise' at the Sandwich Islands. The 'Gorgon' now took both vessels in tow; the stately Patagonians were succeeded by the diminutive, miserable-looking natives of Terra del Fuego. They endeavoured to approach in their bark canoes, which were about twelve feet long, each containing two men and three women, besides children. In the middle of each boat, on a flat stone, burned a small fire, which was tended by one of the women; the other two rowed: at each end of the boat sat the men. From time to time the women dived, returning to the surface with shell-fish, which, after being roasted at the little fire, were devoured by the men. Their only clothing was a small sealskin hung from their shoulders.

Their condition touched the heart of one voyager at least: the good Moravian asked

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