

ON FIRST SEEING THE ST. LAWRENCE.

BY CHAS. HENRY LUDERS.

BEYOND the grey autumnal meadows,
Past the thickets hung with gold and red,
Where the lands are mellowed by the hazes,
Flows a stream by mighty rivers fed.

Long I look upon its distant current,
Flashing 'mid empurpled fields of mist,
Like a flexile chain of burnished silver
On a cloth of silken amethyst.

How serenely flows the stately river
'Twixt its fertile shores so calmly blue;
Lo! it is a hand Divine that guides it,
As it guides the whole Creation through.

Thou and I are flowing down together,
Thou on liquid axes, I on steel;
But the morn will see my journey ended,
While thy constant passing 'twill reveal.

Yet, O river, that doth seem forever
Destined to pursue that shining way,
Thou one day shalt vanish into ether —
God has said that I shall live for aye.

—Ladies' Home Journal.

A FORAGER OF THE FLOATING FIELDS.

BY EDMUND COLLINS.

ONCE in every year, usually towards the first of March, the great fields of ice that form during the winter in extreme northern waters, break away from their moorings and go moving away towards southern latitudes. I suppose Nature provides that the great ocean tide from northern seas shall set more strongly towards the south in spring in order that the ice formed in winter may melt in summer, and the seas that wash the coast of Greenland be open. With the enormous fields in their southern excursion, come the great icebergs which later on get freed from the fields and menace life in the track of ocean ships. On these floes, too, millions of seals get a free passage to warmer waters, bringing forth their young on the cold, shiny, sea-blue pans of ice. But it gets more passengers than the seals.

There lives, as my readers know, in lands where the ground is white with snow two-thirds of the year, a small fox which prowls over the barren and rocky wastes winter and summer. In the summer he is a pale yellow, somewhat the color of the moss-covered regions where he has his den. While the snow is off the ground he can get food enough for himself and his family; but when the early, bitter winter begins to pipe over the naked wastes, all the animals upon which he preyed hide themselves in holes in the ground or in thick, warm places in the scrub woods, so that he is sorely pressed to find food, often scampering fifty or sixty miles over the hard snow during a night. Should a light gleam in some sheltered nook on these cold shores, how his little eyes glisten, how furtively he steals toward the house, avoiding any approach that shows the mark of human feet! Then should he, by his keen scent, come to know that any fowls are housed here, he will look everywhere for an opening to enter; and if he find none he will return a small way and

wait till the day comes. Should the day be fairly fine he becomes alert, watching for the release of the fowls from their house. Should he notice a human form, he crouches on the snow, feeling secure; for with the first winter drifts his coat turns as white as the snow itself. Nature in this way stands loyally by him, as she does by the weasel, the hare and the ptarmigan.

But at one period of winter, or rather in the early spring, the white foxes have a great joy in their hearts. How they long for the coming of the bright, early March morning! There is not a white fox whose heart does not thrill at the coming of this time, as it is a season of long marches and delightful scamperings under the cold, glary sun, with one continual round of feasting. For toward the first of March the great ice-floes heave in sight, draw nearer, and presently push their great, solid edges upon the land, completely blotting out the sea. Yesterday there was a limitless expanse of shiny blue or raging, tempest-beaten water; now there is only the unbroken ice-field, as solid under the foot as the eternal hills.

Then the white foxes come galloping over the snow from east, west, north and south; they crawl out of their burrows among the rocks or under the ridges, making their way for the coast. If the wind blows steadily in, and it looks like a breeze that has come to last for a good while, they have no hesitation in venturing forth. The Eskimo, wrapped in his sealskin clothes, and the fisherman, making ready his scalping knife and towlines, know that they should be abroad on the floe when they see the nimble-footed white fox running away from land. The first food usually in the way of this snowy Reynard is the sea birds, which are compelled to go upon the ice when the water is all closed up. They squat mopishly on the cold ice cakes, utterly bewildered and apparently having lost the use of their wings. Reynard come up, cuts their throats, and drinks the rich, warm blood; then scampers off again. Sometimes he returns to land, bringing with him a six pound northern diver, which he either carries and leaves in his den or hides till his foraging is ended. If he should find no sea birds, then he quests till he comes upon a covey of seals. If there are no young seals yet born he prowls about till they appear; then he gets many a rich feast.

But the "cats," as the tiny baby seals are called, grow very rapidly, and are soon too large a prey for the white enemy. Then appears another resource for the hungry little hunter. Far away across the blue, sun-drenched ice, and clear against the sky, his sharp eyes see a ship, a ship which, his instinct tells him, is manned by hunters who will soon provide him food. The stalwart seal hunter, with his gaff upon his shoulder and his sharp knife in his sheath, sees coveys of white foxes scurrying about, frequently stopping to observe his movements. When he strips the skin and blubber pelt off the white coat seal, he leaves the rest of the animal upon the ice; and as soon as he has departed Reynard falls to feasting.

In the early part of spring, these foxes seem more bold and are not frightened to be so far from land, for they know that the ice at this time usually presses hard against the shore. But as the season advances they get wary, and seem always to be in dread. Seal hunters tell me that their instinct is unerring in forecasting an off wind. Frequently in calm weather I have seen them scurrying for the land; and I have never known an off-wind not to follow. They are in deadly dread of getting away from reach of land, for the floe drifts to more southern waters, and there disperses and melts. Sometimes the seal-hunters see them in sore