

THE BARREN GROUND OF NORTHERN CANADA.

In the extreme north of Canada there is a triangle of land enclosed by the Arctic Sea, the Mackenzie River, and the Black River. The base of this triangle is formed by the coast line between the mouths of the two rivers, and its apex by the Great Slave Lake. On the shores of this lake the Hudson's Bay Company have two stations, Fort Resolution and Fort Reliance. The district of the lake has long served as a basis for Arctic exploration on the mainland, and the sterile region to the north is full of memories of Hearne, Mackenzie, Franklin, and Black. But although the courses of the two rivers and the outline of the Arctic coast have been made known by the efforts of these heroic adventurers and their successors, the interior country remains still practically unexplored.

During the two years Mr. Warburton Pike remained in northern Canada he made Fort Resolution his headquarters. From this point he undertook frequent excursions into the Barren Ground, in the course of which he endured dangers and hardships sufficient for a lifetime. From conversation with the officers of Hudson's Bay Company, he had heard of "a strange animal, a relic of an earlier age," that was still to be found roaming the Barren Ground. His informants could tell him nothing of the musk-ox, as the animal is named, from personal experience. All that was known had been gathered from the reports of Indians. Once or twice enthusiastic sportsmen had attempted to reach the musk-ox country, but they had been unsuccessful. "To try and penetrate this unknown land, to see the musk-ox, to find out as much as he could about their habits and the habits of the Indians who go in pursuit of them every year," this, Mr. Pike tells us in his preface, was the object of his journey.

His first expedition was undertaken in the autumn of the year 1889. Although it was very short,

it was so far successful that Mr. Pike is able to write: "September 27th was a red-letter day, marking the death of the first musk-ox." Naturally this first specimen made a great impression on Mr. Pike's mind, and he describes the appearance the animal presented with great precision:

"In crossing an occasional piece of level ground he walked with a curious rolling motion, probably accounted for by the waving of the long hair on the flanks; this hair reaches almost to the ground and gives the legs such an exaggerated appearance of shortness that, at first sight, one would declare the animal incapable of any rapid motion. The shaggy head was carried high, and when he finally pulled up at sight of us, within forty yards, with his neck slightly arched and a gleam of sunshine lighting up the huge white boss formed by the junction of the horns, he presented a most formidable appearance."

The first success was followed up by a winter expedition of five weeks' duration. Mr. Pike then returned to Fort Resolution for Christmas; but in the following summer he made a third expedition to the Barren Ground, in which he was accompanied by Mr. Mackinlay, who was in charge of the fort, and some other white men.

Late in the autumn of 1890 Mr. Pike formed the intention of crossing the Rockies, and so making his way to the Pacific. It was in carrying out this intention that Mr. Pike met with an experience which threatened to be deeply tragic, and which forms the culminating adventure of the narrative.

It is difficult to praise too much the brevity and strength of Mr. Pike's work. There is something Homeric in the directness and simplicity of his style. At the same time, by eschewing the pernicious habit of breaking up the narrative by the insertion of dates, he has avoided