

parative safety, and the *Alert* was in greater jeopardy than before, as the floe to which she was anchored was every moment driven nearer and nearer to the berg, against which fragments of crushed ice were piling themselves in "most admired disorder." At last the crash came: the huge berg and the mighty floe collided with a force which, had the *Alert* been between them, must have crushed her like an egg-shell. Fortunately the nip just missed her; and when the sheltering floe broke up, it did so in such a manner that the ship, under the skilful handling of her crew, slid round the berg, and, with the *Discovery*, made fast in a small pool beyond it.

But the struggle had only begun. The ice was drifting rapidly southward; so, in order to make any way, it became necessary to ram the ships into the heaving, ever-shifting pack. For hours at a stretch the two captains never left the crow's nest at the mast-head, and it was only by their constant watchfulness that, more than once, one or other of the ships escaped a serious nip.

The *Discovery* seemed the better adapted for forcing a passage through the ice, so she generally led the way, steaming full speed at the opposing floes, and when necessary backing to strike a second blow. At each assault she cut through about twenty feet of ice, and it was found that floes of any thickness up to four feet yielded amiably to this treatment, but very hard or thick ice demanded a little more respect.