

seamen, and of the hardihood, heroism, and romance of their lives, what shall we say of our men-of-war—of them who tread the deck “where Blake and mighty Nelson fell?” It is difficult to name the Royal Navy without getting into heroics on the subject; and this is very far from the purpose at present in hand. It is to the quality of the romance and the adventurous character of naval life in its different departments, that an inquiry is at present instituted. And though our modern ironclad looks more like a floating gasometer than a craft fitted to “walk the waters like a thing of life;” though “boarding” and “cutting out” are now pretty much among the lost arts of naval warfare, and though victory in the sea-fights of the future will be due as much to science and engineering skill as to personal intrepidity and resource, yet it is certain that the romance of the navy did not pass away with the three-decker and the trim frigate. That romance has not vanished—it has only altered its character, and courage and naval genius have as full play in the new, as in the old condition of naval affairs.

But of all departments of naval enterprise, that of Arctic Discovery has been, and remains, the most fascinating, whether regarded from the point of view of the possible results to be gained, or the exceptional, even wonderful, conditions under which these results are often sought. The ambition of the Arctic explorer is not the gain desired by the merchantman, nor the glory of conquest which allures the naval commander. Discovery is his aim, and the passion for adventure in the remotest, most singular, and most dangerous of all the earth's seas, warms him in the pursuit of that object. The rarest and best of the qualities brought into play in naval life, are required in the highest perfection for the successful prosecution of his enterprise. The most indomitable courage, the most watchful foresight, the most skilful management of resources and of men, are required on the commander's part; while his officers and crew are called upon to observe the most perfect discipline, the most complete self-denial, and to undergo perhaps the hardest and most continuous exertion required of men under any conditions, and in any region of the globe. Yet the labours of Arctic voyagers are not wholly unrelieved by enjoyment. They have new lands to discover, new seas to penetrate; and, in their progress towards these ends, above and around them extends the most weird and wonderful scenery of the world. Blue ice-mountains that take the rosy hues of the dawn and the sunset, float around them; in the summer, the unsetting sun rolls round the heaven above them, from which the colours of the sunrise are seldom absent; and the sky shows them the strangest pictures of mirage, of double suns enclosed within circle and cross—the geometry of the polar heavens—of ghostly moon-haloes. The aurora, with its waving spears of many-coloured light, streams from horizon to zenith; the corona raises its luminous pyramid above the west long after sunset; the constellations shine with a jewelled lustre unknown in more