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WHOLE NO. 332.

LITERATURE.

Return of the Arctic Expedition.

From News of the World, 5th Nov.

The following are interesting particulars of the voyage to the Polar Regions of the "Alert" and "Discovery," which safely returned to England last week:—

Between Melville Bay and the entrance to Smith Sound no ice was met; but on the 30th of July the pack was sighted off Cape Sabine, in latitude 78 deg. 41 min. Here the expedition was detained in Port Payer for several days; an attempt being made to proceed further northward by passing to the westward of the islands in Hayes Sound, but that opening not leading in the wished-for direction the ships returned. It is still uncertain whether a channel exists communicating with the western sea by Hayes Sound. The opening extends a considerable distance, but is narrowed by numerous icebergs, which prevent the ice from clearing out until late in the season. At last a start was made on the 6th of August, but before reaching the shore of Grinnell Land the ships were caught in the pack. After this date the progress to the northward was an incessant struggle with the ice; and although no single opportunity was lost, advance was only possible for short distances at a time whenever the wind or current forced land and water between the ice and land. So close was the ice that on every occasion the water channel by which the ships advanced very soon closed behind them, rendering it as difficult to return as to proceed north. On the 25th of August, after many hairbreadth escapes, a well-sheltered harbour was reached on the west side of Hall's Basin, north of Lady Franklin Sound in latitude 81 deg. 44 min. N. Here the "Discovery" was secured for the winter, a few miles north of Polaris Bay, which was in sight on the opposite side of the channel. The "Alert" pushing onward rounded the northeast point of "Grant Land" but instead of finding a continuous coastline leading 100 miles further towards the north, as every one had expected, found herself on the border of what was evidently a very extensive sea, with impenetrable ice on every side. No harbour being obtainable the ship was secured as far north as possible, inside a sheltering barrier of grounded ice, close to the land, and there she passed the winter; during her stay of eleven months no navigable channel of water permitting further advance to the northward ever presented itself. In lieu of finding an "open Polar sea," the ice was of most unusual age and thickness, resembling in a marked degree both in appearance and formation, low floating icebergs rather than ordinary salt-water ice. It has now been termed the "Sea of Ancient Ice"—The Palaeocrystic or Palaeocrystic Sea; and a stranded mass of ice broken away from an ice flow has been named a floeberg. Whereas ordinary ice is usually from 2 ft. to 10 ft. in thickness, that in the Polar Sea, in consequence of having so few outlets by which to escape to the southward in any appreciable quantity, gradually increases in age and thickness until it measures from 80 ft. to 120 ft., floating with its surface at the lowest part 15 ft. above the water-line. Strange as it may appear, this extraordinary thickness of the ice saved the ships from being driven on shore; for, owing to its great depth of flotation, on nearing the shallow beach it grounded and formed a barrier inside which the ship was comparatively safe. When two pieces of ordinary ice are driven one against the other and the edges broken up, the crushed pieces are raised by the pressure into a high, long wall-like ledge of ice. When two of the ancient floes of the Polar Sea meet, the intermediate lighter broken-up ice which may happen to be floating about them alone suffers; it is pressed up between the two closing masses to a great height, producing a chaotic wilderness of angular blocks of all shapes and sizes, varying in height up to 60 ft. above water, and frequently covering an area upwards of a mile in diameter. Such an ice road, which was sure to be continuous, destroyed all hopes of the Pole itself being reached by sledges. Nevertheless, it was determined by Captain Nares to advance as far as possible, and during the spring of this year a party, headed by Commander Markham and Lieutenant Parr, made a most gallant and determined attempt. They were absent 72 days from the

ship; and on the 12th of May succeeded in planting the British flag in latitude 82 deg. 20 min. 26 sec. N. From this position there was no appearance of land to the northward, but, curiously enough, the depth of water was found to be only 72 fathoms. Owing to the extraordinary nature of the pressed-up ice, a roadway had to be formed by pickaxes for nearly half the distance travelled before any advance could be safely made, even with light loads; this rendered it always necessary to drag the sledge loads forward by instalments, and, therefore, to journey over the same road several times. The advance was, consequently, very slow, and only averaged about one mile and a quarter daily. Although the distance made good was only 73 miles from the ship, 276 miles were travelled over to accomplish it.

In the autumn of last year, the "Alert" was secured in winter quarters. On the 14th of October, two days after the sun had bid the expedition good-bye for an absence of 142 days, the travellers returned from their cold and arduous journey of 20 days' duration. Owing to a very heavy snowstorm, which, by protecting the sloppy ice from the intense frost, caused very wet travelling, a number of people were frost-bitten in the feet, and three amputations were necessary—one officer and two of the men being the sufferers. Lieutenant Aldrich, engaged in pioneering the way for the main party, which was led by Commander Markham, on the 27th of September advanced three miles beyond Sir Edward Parry's most northern position, and from a mountain 2,000 ft. high sighted land towards the W. N. W., extending to latitude 83 deg. 7 min. No land was seen to the northward. Thus within four months of leaving England the mystery concerning the "open Polar sea" was cleared up. Owing to the high latitude attained—both the "Alert" and "Discovery" wintering further North than any ships had previously—the darkness of the winter was of longer duration and greater intensity than had ever before been experienced. By this date last year they had already lost sight of the sun for several days; it was passed by all with much cheerfulness and in hopeful spirits, penny readings, theatricals, and songs in character, &c., being kept up regularly once a week, and a school on the lower deck being well attended by nearly all the crew, the officers being the teachers. The cold experienced during the early spring was considerably greater than that in more southerly regions, and quite put an end to the idea that a warm country exists at the Pole, teeming with life. With the return of the sun on the 29th of February, after its long absence of nearly five months, preparations were made for the sledging campaign. On the 12th of March Mr. Egerton and Lieut. Rawson, accompanied by Peterson and the dog sledge, started from the "Alert" to open communication with the "Discovery" but, unhappily, on the second day the latter was taken ill when the temperature was 40 deg. below zero. The camp was immediately pitched, but no improvement taking place, the two officers were obliged to return to the ship. At the utmost risk and a noble disregard of themselves, they succeeded in retaining heat in the poor fellow's body by alternately lying one at a time along-side of him, while the other by exercise was recovering his warmth, and thus managed to bring him alive to the ship; but both feet were very badly frost-bitten, and he ultimately sank from exhaustion two months afterwards. During the following week the same two officers accompanied by Simmons, seaman of the "Alert," and Regan, of the "Discovery," in similar weather—the usual weather experienced by Arctic travellers in the early spring—succeeded in reaching the "Discovery," and relieving the doubt and anxiety of all on board her with regard to the proceedings and position of the "Alert."

SUFFERING OF THE ARCTIC VOYAGERS.

From conversation with the officers and men it is feared that the poor fellows who succumbed suffered greatly before death mercifully put an end to their misery. It was found necessary to drag them for many miles on sledges. Throughout this mournful journey the officers worked like slaves, dragging the sledges along, and encouraging the men in every possible way. On reaching the vessel some of them, to

sustain or restore the little animation left in them, were hung by the heels from the rigging. Poor Peterson, the interpreter, as already announced, survived forty days after amputation of fore part of both feet, which had been severely frost-bitten. He bore up bravely under the most terrible sufferings. The graves were dug by the officers, and the dead were buried with all honours. A few of the crew were effected by surgery; the men appeared very reluctant to believe it was really that disease, and used all the liniment brought out to bandage their swollen legs. But this, of course, they found no remedy, and were forced to give in, and submit to the proper treatment. An officer's foot was frost-bitten, and his great toe had to be amputated. During the whole of the time the vessels were in winter quarters each man was compelled to take two hours' exercise daily, as it was considered almost impossible to keep the men in good health without it. For this purpose a path half a mile in length was made on the ice; but as it was, of course, pitch dark, the question arose how to prevent the going and returning parties from coming into collision. An ingenious expedient was hit upon—mounds of empty preserved meat tins were placed at intervals of three yards down the centre of the path, thus forming a sort of a wall between the moving lines of walkers. The effect of the wind on the face, even when protected, was likened to a sharp knife slowly cutting its way into the flesh. One night an exciting scene took place on board of the "Alert." About midnight, the engineers were called up by the officer on duty to get up steam instantly to allow the vessel to shift her moorings to avoid an enormous berg, which was slowly and majestically crushing its way towards them. No time was lost in "casting off," and the "Alert" escaped by not more than one hundred yards, the large "hummock" to which she had been moored, which itself must have weighed a thousand tons, being completely submerged by the monster. The officers are all in a sorry plight for clothes, every thing they took with them, with the exception of furs and seal-skins, being lamentably threadbare. No animals of any kind, with the exception of the ship's dog "Nellie" and a favourite cat, have been brought home.

AFFECTING STORY OF CHARLES WILLIAM PAUL.

There is something peculiarly melancholy about the fate of Charles William Paul, one of the four men whose lives have been gallantly laid down in this grand enterprise. Paul, a seaman gunner, was a native of Plymouth, and perhaps the most powerful man in the expedition. He was originally one of the crew of the "Valorous," but volunteered to join the "Discovery" at Godhavn, and when the first-named ship returned to Devonport, on Aug. 29th, 1875, after an absence of three months, an affecting incident occurred. Paul's father and sister went off in a boat to greet him on his return, taking with them as a treat after his rough northern cruise, a leg of mutton and other fresh provisions. Seeing how naturally great would be the disappointment of the old man and his daughter, a sailor of the "Valorous" went down the ship's side into the boat and gently broke the news to them that "Charlie" had gone on board the "Discovery" for longer and harder service in the Arctic regions. This determined funeral had sent home, as a present to console those who were anxiously expecting him, a miniature model of a kayak, which he had made in his leisure hours. The father and sister have now heard sadder tidings of the brave fellow, whose hardships, voluntarily endured, are past, and who sleeps in peace amid the stormy desolation of the frozen sea.

THE PEOPLE OF DISCO ISLAND.

There are about 96 people in the port of Disco Island. The population is composed principally of Danes and Esquimaux, and is, generally speaking, a mixed race. The inspector of North Greenland has his residence here. The occupation of the people consists in catching seals, which abound there, for the oil and skins. The harbor is a commodious one, and here we remained 14 days. The houses of Disco are built of wood and painted black. Some of the poorer people live in hovels built of turf. The island is situated in lat. about 70 deg., and its area is nearly 50 miles square. Directly after we arrived a salute was fired from three small brass cannons in front of the inspector's house. The present inspector is a Danish officer, named Smith. There is a school very well conducted, with about 16 children in attendance. The school-master also conducts the religious services on

Sundays in the Church which is of Lutheran denomination. A pastor comes from Upernivik, which is farther north, whenever any of the more important religious ceremonies are to be performed, such as marriages and christenings. There we stayed about ten days, made a few excursions into the mountains and exchanged the customary civilities with the governor. The people are generally very quiet and well-conducted. We left Disco at 1 o'clock in the evening of the 16 of July last year. Next morning we arrived at Kitenbanto, about 30 miles from Weigat. Here the "Discovery" took in 30 tons of coal. Both ships sent a party on a shooting expedition to a loomery, a name given to a place frequented by guillemots and other wild birds. They shot a considerable number of these, and they also sent a party to visit a glacier, returning about dark o'clock next morning. It was now light all through the 24 hours.

THE BLUBBER-EATING ESQUIMAUX.

Proceeding North through Hall's Bay, we arrived on the 25th of July at Cape York. We saw a number of Arctic Highlanders, a race of Esquimaux, who came in dog-sledges over the ice floes to the ships surrounded by ice. One of our boats harpooned a narwhal. We gave a lot of skin and blubber to the Esquimaux. Those we met were very barbarous in their habits. They devoured the blubber greedily, and it was usual for one of them to cram his mouth to its fullest extent, and then spit out whatever his mouth did not contain. They wear an upper garment made of seal-skin, with trousers of bear-skin. They never had met with any Europeans previously, as far as we could ascertain, and they were ever coming in their boats, but generally live on the flesh of seals and bears.

DOCK BUILDING ON THE ICE.

Gradually we got the north of Hayes Sound, and reached Cape Fraser where we were delayed a few days by the ice. After that we crossed the channel, which is called Kennedy's Channel, to the east side, and entered Petermann Fjord. In a few days we left that, and entered over the channel, again arriving at a commodious harbor on the 25th of August. From the moment that we entered the ice, said one who bore a most onerous part in the exploit, we felt as if we were fighting our lives. A crush in the pack of an iceberg might have put an end to us here. Immediately on entering the harbor we commenced unloading the ships, landing boats and stores, and spare arms, and were fighting our way for the winter. The first day we landed we shot a herd of 11 musk oxen. A few days after the frost set in and the sea was frozen around the ship. One could walk on the ice all around. In about a week after we saw a large number of musk oxen, and shot about 40 of them, as well as some more in the spring. The harbor is surrounded by hills, about 2,000 feet in height. We could land close to the ship's side, and as soon as the ice could bear it we commenced to build our houses upon it. We also built a magnetic observatory, and an ice theatre, but, first of all, a snugly built hut, and a small cabin of coal-burned, painted with ice, and our stock who worked as blacksmith had a very nice time of it; but he made a good many holes in the wall, as whenever he wanted to cool the iron he had only to thrust it into the ice.

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SUN.—AMUSEMENT DURING THE LONG WINTER.—AN ICE THEATRE.—A SKATING RINK.

The theatre was 60 feet long by 27 broad. It had a green room as well as a stage. From time to time during the winter plays were produced by officers and men alternately. The entertainments were varied by songs and recitations, not a few of them being original. On the 5th of Nov. we had a bonfire on the ice, burning the "guy" according to the usual custom. We had rockets, and blue lights, &c., and waited ourselves in every possible way. The sun disappeared after the 17th of October. During the winter we also constructed a skating rink. We cleared away the snow in a circle of 8 or 7 feet in diameter, and made a hole in the ice through which we drew the water in buckets and poured it on the rough ice. We always kept a fire-hole in the ice near the ship. From time to time this gradually closed, and it had then to be sawn with ice saws or blasted with gun powder. The dogs lived on the open ice all winter. The changes in the temperature are very rapid and remarkable.

CHRISTMAS LOCKED IN AMONG THE ICEBERGS.

And now a few words as to the manner in which we kept Christmas. First of all we had in the morning the "Christmas" service in the usual manner. A sergeant of marines, a mate and three others went around the ship singing carols suited to the occasion, and made a special stay outside the captain's cabin on the lower deck. In the forenoon the prayers were read, and after that the captain and officers visited the mess in the lower deck, tasted the pudding, inspected the decorations which had been made, and so on. Then the boxes of presents given by friends in England were brought out, the names of those for whom each box was intended having been previously distributed by the captain.

Load, ringing cheers, which sounded strange enough in that lonely place, were given for the dinners, some of them very dear to men who were far away from their homes. Cheers were also given for the captain and for absent comrades. In the Alert a choir was formed and the "voiced beef of old England" had its virtues again praised. The men had their dinner at twelve o'clock, and the officers dined at five. With regard to the "absent comrades," I may explain that when the Alert left the officer, Mr. Rawson, with seven of our men, went in her with sledges in order to bring back news of her whereabouts, if possible, but they were prevented from doing so by the ice not being in a fit state for travelling. We had a sumptuous dinner on Christmas day. We had brought fish, beef and mutton from England, which we hung up on one of the masts, and it was soon as hard as a brick and perfectly preserved. We also brought some sheep from England, and they were killed from time to time. When we arrived at Discovery Bay, as we called it, six of them were alive, but on being put ashore they were worried by the dogs and had to be slaughtered. During the winter the men had to fetch ice from a berg about half a mile distant from the ship in order to melt in fresh water. This used to be brought in sledges. The sun returned on the 12th of February. From November till December, with the exception of the starlight and occasionally the moonlight, we were in darkness. It used not to be dense by any means, but at the same time you could easily pass a friend and not know him.

RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUN.

On the day the sun was to rise we had calculated that it would be about twelve o'clock, and all hands went to the top of the hills to see him rising. This sight was, however, prevented by the mist and fog. We did not see the sun for several days after. About June the weather was beginning to get warmer and the sun had some power. The ice houses melted very rapidly. I have seen the thermometer at 120 deg. in the sun. About the first of August an officer arrived from the Alert overland, reporting that she had come south and was ten miles off, and that further progress was obstructed by ice. Captain Nares, now resolved to return home this year if possible. The North Greenland party, which had gone further north, now returned also, and reported that there was still land to the north of them, but they were prevented by the mist and fog. We did not see the sun for several days after. About June the weather was beginning to get warmer and the sun had some power. 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