

Melville Bay. Accordingly both ships proceeded at full speed to the westward, racing in company for Cape York, with only about a dozen icebergs in sight ahead, floating quietly on a calmly mirrored sea, to dispute our passage. As we passed out from the land the fog gradually dissolved and revealed a magnificent and unique panorama of the ice-capped mountains of Greenland, which give birth to the Upernivik Glacier, fronted by innumerable icebergs, and, at a long distance in advance, by the group of scattered black islets among which we had passed the previous night, and of which Kangitok is the northernmost.

At 1.30 A.M. of the 24th we ran into the pack at a distance of 70 miles from Kangitok. It consisted of open-sailing ice, from one to three feet, and occasionally four feet, in thickness. The floes were at first not larger than 250 yards in diameter, and very rotten, dividing readily, and opening a channel when accidentally struck by the ship. The reflection in the sky near the horizon denoted that while the ice was very open to the southward of us, it was apparently closer packed to the northward. About 6 A.M., when we had run 30 miles through the ice, it gradually became closer, and the floes larger, estimated as measuring one mile in diameter, and necessitated a discriminating choice to be made of the best channels. For 14 hours, during which time we ran 60 miles, the ice continued in much the same state, never close enough to suggest the probability of a barrier occurring, and yet keeping the look-out in the "Crow's Nest" fully employed. After 8 P.M. the channels of water became decidedly broader and more numerous, so I gradually altered course to the northward, steering directly for Cape York, the ice becoming more and more open as we advanced.

At 9.30 A.M. of the 25th July we sighted the high land north of Cape York, and at 11 o'clock, much to the astonishment of the Ice Quartermasters, who continually declared "It will ne'er be credited in Peterhead," we were fairly in the "north water," and able again to think about economising coal, having come through the middle ice in 34 hours without a check: but it is my duty to add, with not a few deep scratches along the water-line.

In consequence of our having made a successful voyage through the middle ice, it should not be too hastily concluded that a similar passage can always be commanded. The middle pack is justly dreaded by the most experienced ice navigators. Large icebergs and surface-ice, floating in water at various depths, when affected either by wind or an ocean current, move at different rates; hence, when in motion, as one passes the other, the lighter surface-ice, incapable of controlling its course, is readily torn in pieces by the heavy massive iceberg; therefore, a ship once entrapped in pack ice among icebergs, unless she has water space to allow her to move out of the way, is constantly in danger of being carried forcibly against a berg. On such occasions man is powerless, for he can take no possible means to save his vessel. Before steam vessels were used for ice navigation the masters of sailing ships, being unable to take full advantage of a favourable calm, very wisely seldom ventured to force their way through the middle ice, and chose, in preference, the chance of delay in making the safer passage through Melville Bay, where, by securing their vessel in dock in the fixed land ice, they ran less danger of being nipped whilst forcibly detained by the channels through the ice remaining closed.

At the latter end of July with an open season, indicated by the main pack not being met with nearer than fifty miles from the land, in about Latitude $73^{\circ} 20'$ and a continuous calm, to allow the northerly running current on the Greenland shore and the southerly running one on the western side of Baffin Bay to open up the ice, I believe a passage can always be made by a steam vessel, but, unless this favourable combination of circumstances is met with, so far as the scanty knowledge we at present possess enables us to judge, the passage must still be said to be doubtful.

Soon after sighting land, and getting clear of the drift ice, the "Discovery" parted company to communicate with the natives at Cape York, while the "Alert" proceeded towards the Carey Islands.

A vast collection of icebergs, many of them aground, were thickly crowded together off the Cape, and in lines parallel with the coast trending towards Conical Rock and Cape Atholl. In the offing they were less numerous, which I attribute to the southerly current which we experienced the following day on our passage to the Carey Islands, catching up and carrying with it to the southward those that drift out from the main body to the westward beyond the influence of the north-running current on the Greenland coast.

During the stay of the "Discovery" at Cape York, the natives were communicated with through Christian Petersen, Interpreter, and Hans the Esquimaux; but as the brother of the latter was absent on a hunting excursion for an uncertain period,

Middle
Pack.Arrive at
Cape York.Middle
passage
through
Baffin Bay."Discovery"
visits Cape
York.Icebergs off
Cape York.Cape York
Natives.