

Or seeming ill. A year flew by, and stood
Before the cairn, a man with stern, sad face,
Writing dark words that all old hopes efface
From off the mournful leaf—Franklin was dead.
The Reaper Death had plucked his ripened head
Some months before. The ships were cast away,
Beleaguered by the hostile ice where they
Two years before were wintered. Hungry Death
Had breathed on many with his fatal breath,
And they had paled and died. And now the man
Who wrote was leading, as the only plan
Of safety, starving crews o'er barren snow,
Towards the South. Alas! How could they know!
How could they tell that as they strove to fly
Their doom, they would but starve, and freeze, and die!
That hunger through their wildly staring eye,
As through the window of his house would glare;
That gloom would thicken in the lonely air;
That they would fail and faint, and each chill morn
Find them more feeble, weary and forlorn!
That night the friendly would but veil in vain
Their sorrows and their fears, to flare again,
More fiercely for their rest; that they would wake,
But to renew their pain, while slowly break
Their hopes, their hearts; and as they toiled along,
Feebler the weak would grow, and weak the strong,
Falling to rise not, one by one, to die;
In faith, yet anguish, breathe their dying sigh!