

shrinking year by year, and the day is not far distant when the flags of the European nations shall wave over every province of the land.

Not so, however, with the shadowy regions of ice which girdle the North Pole. Progress thither has been slow and difficult. Yet its explorers have been ever most persevering and brave. If Africa can boast of her Livingstone and Stanley, the Arctic has her Frobisher and her Franklin, to mention none other of the undaunted pioneers who penetrated her frosty solitudes only to be clasped in her icy arms, never to return. In tragic disappointment it surpasses in its history all other fields of discovery. Again and again have vessels, freighted with adventurous hearts, sailed forth for the north, and as the months and years passed by empty-handed, the weary eyes at home have watched in vain for their returning sail, and have wept for those who far away have found a grave of snow. It is this fatal uncertainty which enshrouds the polar regions with mystery. And yet some of the bravest have constantly turned their faces thither, and striven in their turn to penetrate the veil, only to meet with disappointment and to return, bearing back a few precious relics of the dead. Then they tell their tale, and by the firesides at home the recital of their escapes and trials stirs the hearts of the listeners. What a wonderful world have they seen! There the sun glows like a fiery ball in the midnight sky, though the light be dim, across the plains where there is never a tree or flower or blade of grass, where huge mountains of glistening ice slowly float in fantastic procession against the deep blue firmament, where no sound is heard save the shriek