

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FIRST AMERICAN ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS.

The first Grinnell Expedition under command of Lieutenant De Haven—After wintering near Beechey Island it returns safely to New York—Traces of Sir John Franklin's Expedition found—An Arctic Winter and its Horrors—Scurvy—The Expedition of Commander Inglefield, of the British Navy—He reaches Latitude  $78^{\circ} 28' 21''$ , about 140 miles farther north than had been previously attained—Lieutenant Osborn's Expedition.

IN 1850 an expedition was sent out by Mr. Henry Grinnell, a merchant of New York, in search of Sir John Franklin and his companions. Mr. Grinnell's expedition consisted of only two small brigs, the *Advance* of one hundred and forty tons, the *Rescue* of only ninety tons. The former had been engaged in the Havana trade, the latter was a new vessel built for the merchant service. Both were strengthened for the Arctic voyage at a heavy cost. The command was given to Lieutenant E. De Haven, a young naval officer, who accompanied the United States exploring expedition. The result has proved that a better choice could not have been made. His officers consisted of Mr. Murdoch, sailing-master; Dr. E. K. Kane, surgeon and naturalist; and Mr. Lovell, midshipman. The *Advance* had a crew of twelve men when she sailed; two of them complaining of sickness, and expressing a desire to return home, were left at the Danish settlement at Disco Island, on the coast of Greenland.

The expedition left New York on the 23d of May, 1850, and was absent a little more than sixteen months. They passed the eastern extremity of Newfoundland ten days after leaving Sandy Hook, and then sailed E. N. E., directly for Cape Comfort, on the coast of Greenland. The weather was generally fine, and only a single accident occurred on the voyage to that country of frost and snow. Off the coast of Labrador they met an iceberg making its way toward the tropics. The night was very dark, and as the huge voyager had no "light out," the *Advance* could not be censured for running foul. She was punished, however, by the loss of her

jib-boom, as she ran against the iceberg at the rate of seven or eight knots an hour.

The voyagers sailed along the southwest coast of Greenland, sometimes in the midst of broad acres of broken ice, as far as Whale Island.

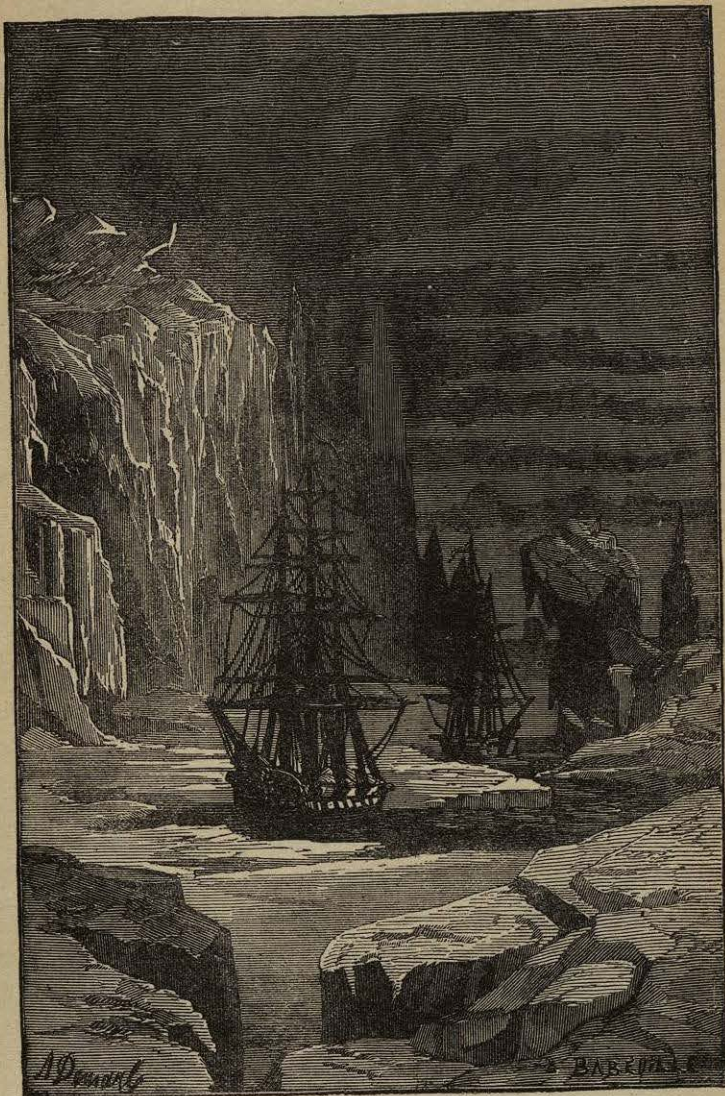
From Whale Island a boat, with two officers and four seamen, was sent to Disco Island, a distance of about twenty-six miles, to a Danish settlement there, to procure skin clothing and other articles necessary for use during the rigors of a polar winter.

When the expedition reached Melville Bay, which, on account of its fearful character, is also called the *Devil's Nip*, the voyagers began to witness more of the grandeur and perils of Arctic scenes. Icebergs of all dimensions came bearing down from the polar seas. They also encountered immense floes, with only narrow channels between, and at times their situation was exceedingly perilous. On one occasion, after heaving through fields of ice for five consecutive weeks, two immense floes, between which they were making their way, gradually approached each other, and for several hours they expected their vessels would be crushed. An immense cake of ice, six or eight feet thick, slid under the *Rescue*, lifting her almost "high and dry," and careening her partially upon her beam ends. By means of ice-anchors (large iron hooks) they kept her from capsizing. In this position they remained about sixty hours, when, with saws and axes, they succeeded in relieving her. The ice now opened a little, and they finally warped through into clear water. While they were thus confined, polar bears came around them in abundance, greedy for prey, and the seamen indulged a little in the perilous sports of the chase.

The open sea continued but a short time, when they again became entangled among bergs, floes and hummocks, and encountered the most fearful perils. Sometimes they anchored their vessels to icebergs and sometimes to floes, or masses of hummock. It was in this fearful region that they first encountered pack-ice, and there they were locked in from the 7th to the 23d of July. During that time they were joined by the yacht *Prince Albert*, commanded by Captain Forsyth, of the British Navy, and together the three vessels were anchored for a while to an immense piece of ice, in sight of the *Devil's Thumb*. That high, rocky peak, situated in latitude  $74^{\circ}$



22', was about thirty miles distant, and, with the dark hills adjacent, presented a strange aspect where all was white and glittering. From the Devil's Thumb the American vessels passed onward through the pack toward Sabine Island,



THE ADVANCE AND THE RESCUE IN A "LEAD" OF ICE.

while the Prince Albert essayed to make a more westerly course. They reached Cape York in the beginning of August.

At Cape Dudley Digges they were charmed by the sight of the Crimson Cliffs, spoken of by Captain Parry and other

Arctic navigators. These are lofty cliffs of dark brown stone covered with snow of a rich crimson color. This was the most northern point to which the expedition penetrated. The whole coast which they had passed from Disco to this cape is high, rugged and barren, only some of the low points, stretching into the sea, bearing a species of dwarf fir. Northeast from the cape rise the Arctic Highlands to an unknown altitude; and stretching away northward is the unexplored Smith's Sound, filled with impenetrable ice.

From Cape Dudley Digges, the Advance and Rescue made Wolstenholme Sound, and then changing their course to the southwest, emerged from the fields into the open waters of Lancaster Sound. Here, on the 18th of August, they encountered a tremendous gale, which lasted about twenty-four hours. The two vessels parted company during the storm and remained separate several days. Across Lancaster Sound the Advance made her way to Barrow's Straits, and on the 22d discovered the Prince Albert on the southern shore of the straits, near Leopold Island, a mass of lofty, precipitous rocks, dark and barren, and hooded and draped with snow.

The two vessels remained together a day or two, when they parted company, the Prince Albert to return home and the Advance to make further explorations. It was off Leopold Island, on the 22d of August, that the "mad Yankee" took the lead through the vast masses of floating ice.

From Leopold Island the Advance proceeded to the northwest, and on the 25th reached Cape Riley, another amorphous mass, not so regular and precipitate as Leopold Island, but more lofty. Here a strong tide, setting in to the shore, drifted the Advance toward the beach, where she stranded. Around her were small bergs and large masses of floating ice, all under the influence of the strong current. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when she struck. By diligent labor in removing everything from her deck to a small floe, she was so lightened that at four o'clock the next morning she floated, and soon everything was properly replaced.

Near Cape Riley the Americans fell in with a portion of an English expedition, and there also the Rescue, left behind in the gale in Lancaster Sound, overtook the Advance. There was Captain Penny with the Sophia and Lady Franklin; the veteran Sir John Ross with the Felix, and Commodore Austin with the Resolute steamer. Together the navigators of both



nations explored the coast at and near Cape Riley, and on the 27th they saw in a cove on the shore of Beechey Island, or Beechey Cape, on the east side of the entrance to Wellington Channel, unmistakable evidence that Sir John Franklin and his companions were there in April, 1846. There they found many articles known to belong to the British Navy, and some that were the property of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, the ships under the command of Sir John. There lay, bleached to the whiteness of the surrounding snow, a piece of canvas with the name of the *Terror* marked upon it with indestructible charcoal. It was very faint, yet perfectly legible. Near it was a guide-board lying flat upon its face, having been prostrated by the wind. It had evidently been used to direct exploring parties to the vessels, or, rather, to the encampment on shore. The board was pine, thirteen inches in length and six and a half in breadth, and nailed to a boarding pike eight feet in length. It is supposed that the sudden opening of the ice caused Sir John to depart hastily, and in so doing this pike and its board were left behind. They also found a large number of tin canisters, such as are used for packing meats for a sea-voyage; an anvil block; remnants of clothing, which evinced by numerous patches and their threadbare character that they had been worn as long as the owners could keep them on; the remains of an India-rubber glove, lined with wool; some old sacks; a cask, or tub, partly filled with charcoal, and an unfinished rope-mat, which, like other fibrous fabrics, was bleached white.

But the most melancholy traces of the navigators were three graves in a little sheltered cove, each with a board at the head bearing the name of the sleeper below. These inscriptions testify positively when Sir John and his companions were there. The board at the head of the grave on the left has the following inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of JOHN TORRINGTON, who departed this life January 1st, A. D. 1846, on board her Majesty's ship *Terror*, aged 20 years."

On the centre one—"Sacred to the memory of JOHN HARTNELL, A. B., of her Majesty's ship *Erebus*; died January 4th, 1846, aged 25 years. 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways;' Haggai, chap. i., 5, 7."

On the right—"Sacred to the memory of W. BRAINE, R. M., of her Majesty's ship *Erebus*, who died April 3d, 1846, aged 32 years. 'Choose you this day whom you will serve;' Joshua, chap. xxiv., part of the 15th verse."

How much later than April 3d Sir John remained at Beechey cannot be determined. They saw evidences of his having gone northward, for sledge tracks in that direction were visible.

Leaving Beechey Cape, the expedition forced its way through the ice to Barrow's Inlet, where they narrowly escaped being frozen in for the winter. They endeavored to enter the inlet, for the purpose of making it their winter quarters, but were prevented by the mass of pack-ice at its entrance. It was on the 4th of September, 1850, when they arrived there, and after remaining seven or eight days, they abandoned the attempt to enter. On the right and left are seen the dark rocks at the entrance of the inlet, and in the centre of the frozen waters and the range of hills beyond. There was much smooth ice within the inlet, and while the vessels lay anchored to the "field," officers and crew exercised and amused themselves by skating. On the left of the inlet (indicated by the dark conical object), they discovered a cairn (a heap of stones with a cavity), eight or ten feet in height, which was erected by Captain Ommaney of the English expedition then in the polar waters. Within it he had placed two letters, for "Whom it might concern." Commander De Haven also deposited a letter there. The rocks, here, presented vast fissures made by the frost; and at the foot of the cliff on the right, that powerful agent had cast down vast heaps of débris.

From Barlow's Inlet, our expedition moved slowly westward, battling with the ice every rood of the way, until they reached Griffin's Island, at about 96° west longitude from Greenwich. This was attained on the 11th, and was the extreme westing made by the expedition. All beyond seemed impenetrable ice; and, despairing of making any further discoveries before the winter should set in, they resolved to return home. Turning eastward, they hoped to reach Davis' Strait by the southern route, before the cold and darkness came on; but they were doomed to disappointment. Near the entrance to Wellington Channel they became completely locked in by hummock-ice, and soon found themselves drifting with an irresistible tide up that channel toward the pole.

The summer day was drawing to a close; the diurnal visits of the pale sun were rapidly shortening, and soon the long polar night, with all its darkness and horrors, would fall upon them. Slowly they drifted in those vast fields of ice, whither,



or to what result, they knew not. Locked in the moving yet compact mass; liable at every moment to be crushed; far away from land; the mercury sinking daily lower and lower from the zero figure, toward the point where that metal freezes, they felt small hope of ever reaching home again. Yet they prepared for winter comforts and winter sports, as cheerfully as if lying safe in Barlow's Inlet. As the winter



LADY FRANKLIN.

advanced, the crews of both the vessels went on board the larger one. They unshipped the rudders of each, to prevent their being injured by the ice, covered the deck of the Advance with felt, prepared their stores, and made arrangements for enduring the long winter now upon them. Physical and mental activity being necessary for the preservation of health,

they daily exercised in the open air for several hours. They built ice huts, hunted the huge white bears and the little polar foxes, and when the darkness of the winter night had spread over them they arranged indoor amusements and employments.

Before the end of October, the sun made its appearance for the last time, and the awful polar night closed in. Early in November they wholly abandoned the Rescue, and both crews made the Advance their permanent winter home. The cold soon became intense; the mercury congealed, and the spirit thermometer indicated  $46^{\circ}$  below zero. Its average range was  $30^{\circ}$  to  $35^{\circ}$ . They had drifted helplessly up Wellington Channel, almost to the latitude from whence Captain Penny saw an open sea. All this while the immense fields of hummock-ice were moving, and the vessels were in hourly danger of being crushed and destroyed. At length, while drifting through Barrow's Straits, the congealed mass, as if crushed together by the opposite shores, became more compact, and the Advance was elevated almost seven feet by the stern, and keeled two feet eight inches starboard. In this position she remained, with very little alteration, for five consecutive months; for, soon after entering Baffin Bay in the midst of the winter, the ice became frozen in one immense tract, covering millions of acres. Thus frozen in, sometimes more than a hundred miles from land, they drifted slowly along the southwest coast of Baffin Bay, a distance of more than a thousand miles from Wellington Channel. For eleven weeks that dreary night continued, and during that time the disc of the sun was never seen above the horizon. Yet nature was not wholly forbidding in aspect. Sometimes the Aurora Borealis would flash up still farther northward; and sometimes Aurora Parhelia—mock suns and mock moons—would appear in varied beauty in the starry sky. Brilliant, too, were the northern constellations; and when the moon was at its full, it made its stately circuit in the heavens, without descending below the horizon, and lighted up the vast piles of ice with a pale lustre, almost as great as the morning twilights of more genial skies.

Around the vessels the crews built a wall of ice; and in ice huts they stowed away their cordage and stores, to make room for exercise on the decks. They organized a theatrical company, and amused themselves and the officers with comedy



well performed. Behind the pieces of hummock each actor learned his part, and by means of calico they transformed themselves into female characters, as occasion required. These dramas were acted on the deck of the *Advance*, sometimes while the thermometer indicated  $30^{\circ}$  below zero, and actors and audiences highly enjoyed the fun. They also went in parties during that long night, fully armed, to hunt the polar bear, the grim monarch of the frozen north, on which occasions they often encountered perilous adventures. They played at foot-ball, and exercised themselves in drawing sledges, heavily laden with provisions. Five hours of each twenty-four they thus exercised in the open air, and once a week each man washed his whole body in cold snow-water. Serious sickness was consequently avoided, and the scurvy, which attacked them, soon yielded to remedies.

Often during that fearful night they expected the disaster of having their vessels crushed. All through November and December, before the ice became fast, they slept in their clothes, with knapsacks on their backs, and sledges upon the ice, laden with stores, not knowing at what moment the vessels might be demolished, and themselves forced to leave them, and make their way toward land. On the 8th of December and the 23d of January, they actually lowered their boats and stood upon the ice, for the crushing masses were making the timbers of the gallant vessel creak and its decks to rise in the centre. They were then ninety miles from land, and hope hardly whispered an encouraging idea of life being sustained. On the latter occasion, when officers and crew stood upon the ice, with the ropes of their provision sledges in their hands, a terrible snow-drift came from the northeast, and intense darkness shrouded them. Had the vessel then been crushed, all must have perished.

Early in February the northern horizon began to be streaked with gorgeous twilight, the herald of the approaching king of day; and on the 18th the disc of the sun first appeared above the horizon. As its golden rim rose above the glittering snow-drifts and piles of ice, three hearty cheers went up from those hardy mariners. Day after day it rose higher and higher, and while the pallid faces of the voyagers, bleached during that long night, darkened by its beams, the vast masses of ice began to yield to its fervid influence. The scurvy disappeared, and from that time until their arrival

home not a man suffered from sickness. As they slowly drifted through Davis' Straits, and the ice gave indications of breaking up, the voyagers made preparations for sailing. The *Rescue* was reoccupied (May 13th, 1851), and her stone-post, which had been broken by the ice in Barrow's Straits, was repaired. To accomplish this they were obliged to dig away the ice, which was from twelve to fourteen feet thick around her. They reshipped their rudders, removed the felt covering, placed their stores on deck, and then patiently awaited the disruption of the ice. This event was very sudden and appalling. It began to give way on the 5th of June, and in the space of twenty minutes the whole mass, as far as the eye could reach, became one vast field of moving floes. On the 10th of June they emerged into open water, a little south of the Arctic Circle, in latitude  $65^{\circ} 30'$ . They immediately repaired to Godhaven, on the coast of Greenland, where they refitted, and, unappalled by the perils through which they had just passed, they once more turned their prows northward to encounter anew the ice squadrons of Baffin Bay. Again they traversed the coast of Greenland to about the  $73^{\text{d}}$  degree, when they bore to the westward, and on the 7th and 8th of July passed the English whaling fleet near the Dutch Islands. Onward they pressed through the accumulating ice to Baffin Island, where, on the 11th, they were joined by the *Prince Albert*, then out upon another cruise. They continued in company until the 3d of August, when the *Albert* departed for the westward, determined to try the more southern passage. Here again the expedition encountered vast fields of hummock-ice, and were subjected to the most imminent perils. The floating ice, as if moved by adverse currents, tumbled in huge masses, and reared upon the sides of the sturdy little vessels like monsters of the deep intent upon destruction. These masses broke in the bulwarks, and sometimes fell over upon the decks with terrible force, like rocks rolled over a plain by mountain torrents. The noise was fearful; so deafening that the mariners could scarcely hear each other's voices. The sounds of these rolling masses, together with the rending of the icebergs floating near, and the vast floes, produced a din like the discharge of a thousand pieces of ordnance upon a field of battle.

Finding the north and west closed against further progress



by impenetrable ice, the brave De Haven was balked, and turning his vessels homeward they came out into an open sea, somewhat crippled, but not a plank seriously started. During a storm off the banks of Newfoundland, a thousand miles from New York, the vessels parted company. The Advance arrived safely at the navy yard at Brooklyn on the 30th of September, and the Rescue joined her there a few days afterward. Toward the close of October the government resigned the vessels into the hands of Mr. Grinnell to be used in other service, but with the stipulation that they were to be subject to the order of the Secretary of the Navy in the spring if required for another expedition in search of Sir John Franklin.

In 1852 Commander Inglefield set out on an expedition in the English steamer Isabel from Fair Island. On the 30th day of July the expedition first saw the snowy mountains of Greenland. Several Danish settlements were visited, and then it proceeded to Smith's Sound, the upper or northern continuation of Baffin Bay. The western shore of this body of water, which forms a part of the polar ocean, was composed of a high range of ice-covered mountains, which were called after the Prince of Wales. The extreme northern point of these mountains was named Victoria Head in honor of the British Queen. The most northern point discovered by Captain Inglefield on the eastern shore of this sea was named by him after the Danish monarch Frederick VII. This steamer reached latitude  $78^{\circ} 28' 21''$ , about 140 miles farther north than had been attained by any previous navigator. Not having discovered any traces of Sir John Franklin Captain Inglefield returned after an absence of precisely four months from the day of starting. Another expedition in search of Sir John Franklin started in 1850 under instructions of the British Admiralty. It was commanded by Lieutenant Sherard Osborn, and consisted of the steam-vessels Pioneer and Intrepid, and returned to England in October, 1851. Other British expeditions were commanded by Sir John Richardson and Captain William Kennedy.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SECOND GRINNELL EXPEDITION, COMMANDED BY DR. E. K. KANE.

Two Winters in the Arctic Region, the first in Latitude  $78^{\circ} 37'$ , Longitude  $70^{\circ} 40'$ —A Sledge Expedition from here pushes as far as Cape Constitution in Washington Land, Latitude  $81^{\circ} 27'$ , and finds Kennedy Channel free from Ice, abounding with Animal Life, and opening in a great Polar Sea—Safe Return to the United States in 1855.

OF the several expeditions sent out in 1853 the most important was that fitted out by Mr. Grinnell, of New York, Mr. Peabody, of London, and others, and commanded by Dr. E. K. Kane.

Dr. Kane received his orders from the Navy Department at Washington to conduct an expedition into the Arctic regions in search of the great English navigator. The ship Advance, in which he had formerly sailed, was placed under his command. His party numbered seventeen picked men. The brig sailed from the port of New York on the 30th of May, 1853, and in eighteen days arrived at St. John's, Newfoundland. After providing themselves at this place with an additional stock of fresh meat, and a valuable team of Esquimau dogs, they steered for the coast of Greenland.

On the 1st of July Dr. Kane entered the harbor of Fisker-noes, one of the Danish settlements of Greenland. Some fresh provisions were here obtained, and an Esquimau hunter of superior skill was enlisted in the service of the party.

Proceeding on from this point the other Danish settlements of Greenland were successively visited—Lichtenfels, Sukkertoppen, Proven, Upernavik, at the last of which places the first Grinnell expedition of 1851 had rested after its winter drift. At length they reached Yotlik, the most northern point in Greenland inhabited by human beings. Beyond this the coast may be regarded as having been until that period unexplored. From Yotlik Dr. Kane steered northward toward Baffin Islands, which he found then clear of ice, and