

WRANGELL LAND.

Among the Whalers—The Icy Glories and Terrors of the Northern Ocean.

Conclusion of the Corwin's Cruise—Where is the Jeannette?

(New York Herald.)

On going northward from Point Barrow a very perceptible change was noticeable in the season. The clear cut outlines of distant mountains, covered with recent snow and having a certain kind of beauty constituting one of the glories of Arctic scenery, looked bleak and wintry; the former mid-night sun now disappears below the horizon, the last of him resembling the tap-hole of an iron furnace and flashing down to a mere point of light; the moon, owing to refraction, shows a diameter of unusual proportions; Polaris and the Dipper are just seen overhead, and magnificent auroras are of almost nightly occurrence. These phenomena alternate with snow squalls and violent gales from the northwest, during one of which we anchored under the lee of Cape Thompson, a stupendous rocky cliff many hundred feet in height, and one of the most remarkable places, from a geological point of view, that we have seen in the Arctic. The face of this craggy precipice is marked with different colored strata, bent and contorted into the most fantastic shapes, and the rock composing it abounds in fossil shells and trilobites. A mania for mountain climbing induced the writer to ascend to the summit, which was reached by way of a valley, after a hard scramble over ice and lichen-covered rocks, disturbing the little marmots, who scampered away to their holes at sight of a stranger intruder. The ascent made, the icy blast was creating a most lively interchange of ozone, its force being such that standing in an erect position at this dizzy height was extremely dangerous, and a look at the sea below was something fearful. Crawling cautiously to the edge of the cliff and reaching down a few feet a half-dozen or more fragments of rock were rolled down in rapid succession, causing the greatest consternation among the myriads of sea birds, who whirled away in a motley cloud, screaming to each other in ceaseless uproar. Finding a rare fossil ended the sport at the expense of the birds, and retreating from the dangerous position a more favorable one brought us face to face with the great voices of sea and sky and mountain of this northern land. The bubble and commotion of the sea below was something extraordinary, the spray being whirled up into "woolies" a hundred or more feet high. A windy sky, an unproductive waste seemingly interminable, and a hungry man trying to get up a factitious sentiment of the infinite and mysterious, complete the picture. At the moment it is distracting to resort to one's sketch book, for the somber tints of rock and ice of this vast solitude are such as to defy reproduction. Any attempt at doing so in this "ampler ether and diviner air" only results in frozen fingers and futile work. And somehow it seems that imagination does not here wander off into boundless space and carry us otherwise beyond ourselves. Another sentiment associated with a more purely physical influence, obtains the mastery. An appetite like that of an Arctic wolf would enjoy a bit of whale meat as a lickerish morsel, and we retrace our steps, thinking only of the delights of dinner.

WRANGELL LAND.

Soon after the grand sensation that had been in store for us so long—the most exciting day of the cruise—at last arrived. At half-past 12, while at lunch, the quartermaster, Nelson, sighted land, and on reporting it the rush on deck was general, such imperturbable individuals as the ship's cook and the grimy firemen participating in the eager desire to set eyes upon this new land. It was the much-talked of Wrangell Land. The land bore west-southwest forty miles; and consisted of snowy peaks and rounded hills, and ravines extending down its sides could be distinctly made out. During twenty minutes or more all the glasses on the ship were brought into requisition in order to gaze upon the strange land—a land whose existence the Russian Admiral Wrangell reported from accounts of natives, and which he tried unsuccessfully to find; a land that Capt. Kellett, of her Britannic majesty's ship Herald, in 1849, thought he saw, but which, under more favorable circumstances of weather and position, was not seen by the United States ship Vincennes; a land, in fact, that from the foregoing statements and from the imperfect account of whalers we had begun to regard as a myth.

Steaming through the drift ice toward the land, it was approached to within twenty miles, when, at 2 o'clock, the great barrier was reached. The ice was very large and heavy, and so high that when lying along side or it the view was so obstructed that it was necessary to ascend the rigging in order to see the land. Immense chasms and fissures ran through the ice in various directions. At spots great boulders were perched on the top of some little icy hillock, and vast blocks were tumbled confusedly together in such a manner as to make the way as impracticable as a passage through so many rocks. The dredge here brought up a few starfish in twenty-seven fathoms of water, the surface temperature of which was 30 degrees.

THE BACK TRACK.

After getting a sketch of the land from the masthead, the ship's bow was turned to the southeast, the captain deeming it imprudent and useless to remain longer amid

the ice, where he might at any moment be permanently embayed. Shortly after shaping our homeward course the thick atmosphere to the northward lifted, when the island that we had been trying to reach for the last two days could be seen through a rift in the clouds some forty miles distant over the intervening ice-pack. It was covered with recent snow, and stood boldly out on the horizon, bleak, inaccessible, God-forsaken. So ends the search. Although glad to escape the rigor of an Arctic winter, it was not without a tinge of regret that we took a last lingering look at the ice-bound and inexorable land, fully realizing at the time the joyous satisfaction that must animate the discoverer and explorer of an unknown country.

But a matter of more painful regret is the failure to get any tidings of the ill-fated whaler or of the Jeannette. From what we can conjecture regarding the whalers not the slightest hopes are entertained, the history of previous losses showing not a trace or clue of any vessel unfortunate enough to get imprisoned in the ice-pack, and Captain Jernigan, of the Tropic Bird, tells your correspondent that on the occasion of the loss of his ship in the ice she was crushed in such a manner that twenty-five minutes after her desertion no part was visible except a small piece of timber from the stern. Admitting the survival of any of these resolute and hardy men, it seems reasonable to infer that some of them would have reached the whaling fleet or the Corwin, whose latitude was at times sixty and a hundred miles northward of last year's position of the fleet.

WHERE IS THE JEANNETTE?

As to Jeannette, nothing has been learned that can in any way cause the slightest apprehension for the safety of her officers and crew. So far as it is possible to ascertain, she has never been seen by any of the whalers at any time since entering the Arctic, and the fact of the Corwin's not falling in with her implies only that a revenue cutter is unable to go as far in one season as another vessel starting nearly a twelve month ahead of her. It is possible that Captain De Long may have followed up to its termination the pocket in the ice which late in the season makes to the northward of Herald Island, and that his vessel is embayed in the ice a considerable distance north of any point reached by the Corwin; or he may, in the event of having found the ice navigation to the eastward too difficult and dangerous, have gone to the west of Wrangell Land and wintered. Another hypothesis is that on encountering the heavy ice-field that makes down to the southward and eastward from Wrangell Land to below latitude sixty-nine, the Jeannette may have been stopped, just as the Corwin was on two occasions, and, being obliged to keep near the Asiatic coast, may by this route have reached either Wrangell Land, the New Siberian Islands, or the Polynia, an open sea, thus prolonging her voyage to a very high latitude.

"THAT SHE BLOWS!"

The past summer has been an exceptional season for the whalers, and having seen a great deal of them during our search unusual opportunities have offered to study the whale fishery, so called, in all its different phases. How strange that this mammoth animal—not a fish in any sense of the term, but a fishlike animal with completely aquatic habits—should still be classed in the popular mind as among the fishes. Its distinguishing characteristics of the mammalia, a four-chambered heart pumping thirty-six gallons of hot blood at each pulsation through an enormous aorta of one foot in diameter; its extensive nervous system, so great that when struck near the tail by a harpoon two seconds must elapse before the sensation is conveyed to and reflected from the nerve centres, or in other words it is two seconds before the whale feels that he is struck; its manner of sucking the young from a pair of teats situated on the labia of the vagina, all characterize it as possessing an organization of the highest interest to naturalists.

Among the men engaged in whaling are many shrewd, intelligent, energetic fellows whose rough exterior often conceals some good and sterling qualities. We have always found them generous, prompt, and obliging, especially when asked for information. An interesting study it is to see some old whaler in the distance, a great cloud of smoke issuing from her try works, and to go on board, when the first thing noticeable among the men and running about the deck is a large number of pigs, who are usually fed on coconuts, large supplies of which are usually in at the South Sea Island. Being shown into the cabin, and while partaking of its hospitalities, the skipper in real Bunby style producing his chart in order to designate a particular locality, puts his broad thumb upon the spot, which from the space covered may be any where within a radius of two or three hundred miles of the space intended. He asks us:

"When be you a goin, down to Frisco?" an interrogation that is partly answered by another from us to when he intends leaving the Arctic, to which he replies:

"I want one more whale, then I'm going down to Plover bay to bile out. I call'te to git down thar by 1st October."

Just before leaving we pause a few minutes to see the men at their unsavory work, when it is evident that the France idea in regard to the inodorousness of money, *Qu'importe la source et n'est-ce pas* is aptest in mind, for he remarks:

"It's nasty business, but when you've sold your oil I tell you what, them twenty-dollar gold pieces look mighty nice."

On board one vessel the captain has his family, consisting of a wife and daughter. The former a native of Cape Cod, has been to sea twelve years; feels uncomfortable ashore, and has considerable snap and go, judging from her talk to the old man, who said he wanted but two more whales.

"What but two?" said she, emphatically, "you want all you can get; you want to fill everything chuck full and the cabin full of bone if you get it."

Occasionally we meet some fellow who has had bad luck, perhaps not a whale for six weeks, and, on reporting to him where we have seen whales, he goes there and finds the coveted game. On more than one occasion has this information led to fortunate results.

Where many whales are killed it is no uncommon sight to pass their floating carcasses, which afford a perfect saturnalia for the sea birds and bears, and when business has been lively blubber-logged whalers can be seen at anchor, or others, as I have seen with two whales made fast alongside, and the crew all asleep, being gorged and exhausted with slaughter. As it is, the poor whales are sadly persecuted, and when not killed outright often escape with fearful wounds. They have been found on the coast of Asia having in their bodies marked harpoons which had been thrust into them in Greenland twelve years previously, and I have seen at King's Island a reunited fracture of a rib that had doubtless been broken by a bomb lance. Also a strangely shaped stone spear head taken from a whale captured in the vicinity of Herald Island, a circumstance that may have some bearing upon the problem as to whether Wrangell Land is inhabited or not, for the dart in question is different from any used by any of the Esquimaux known to us.

The eyesight of the Czar is said to have greatly improved by a simple remedy consisting of a glaznoi douche, or eye fountain, throwing a tiny jet of delicate spray a yard and a half into the air. The temperature of the water is fixed at 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and the spray is allowed to beat against the eyelids for ninety seconds, night and morning. The remedy seems at first sight ridiculously simple, but it has for several years been successfully employed in Russia. For the literary man or jaded beauty, going with weak and weary eyes to rest, there is said to be nothing more refreshing than to bend for a minute or two over a glaznoi douche. The eyes recover strength in an amazing manner from the fine but powerful impact of the invigorating spray, and there is none of that depressive reaction succeeding the use of tonics.

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