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EVENING NEWS.

Saturday. March 10, 1877.

The Results of the Arctic Expedition of 1875-76.

(CONTINUED.)

Apart from the discoveries it made, and the controversies it has raised, the expedition presents us with many interesting details, among which we may mention the sporadical appearance of animal life observed in the extreme north, a phenomenon equally observed by Kane, Hayes and Hall in the South of Smith Sound. Kane and Nares found very little of animal life in the places where they wintered, but Stephenson, Hayes and Hall found comparatively great abundance. With reference to the extreme north, the *Discovery* appears in fact to have wintered in a sort of earthly paradise, for while its crew killed no less than fifty-four head of musk oxen in the course of the year, the *Alert* obtained only six. Nevertheless, Grant Land seems to be much more prolific in land animals than Franz-Josef Land, inasmuch as in the latter, with the exception of traces of foxes and hares, there was apparently an utter absence of land animals. The ice bears, which were found in great numbers, had there, as everywhere else, the adjacent Polar Sea as their peculiar home. The lack of animal life generally in the vicinity of the *Alert* shows that closely adjacent pack ice, and the consequent absence of open water, is a condition of life for birds, seals and bears.

The expedition discovered no land lying toward the north, and repudiates the existence of President's Land, which the Halifax expedition imagined it had discovered. In fact it frequently happens in the Arctic region that the vapery masses which collect at the horizon counterfeit the forms of distant elevated objects, because the inconsiderable height to which they are able to rise in the cold atmosphere lends a sharpness to their outlines. The American expedition may have been deceived by this condition of the atmosphere. On the other hand, the too frequent occurrence of low, vapory masses in the Polar region is often the reason why land close at hand, or only at a short distance, is often hidden from our view. Probably this may have been the case on the occasion of Beaumont's Greenland sledge expedition, so that Greenland, on the other side of Cape Britannia, in the sense of Petermann's hypothesis, stretches still further toward the north.

Nares asserts that long journeys over pack ice with a boat are impracticable, and he is perfectly right. Markham's unprofitable attempt to reach the North Pole over pack ice is similar to the endeavors of the Austro-Hungarian Expedition to force their way south from Franz-Josef Land with heavy sledges and boats, when, if it had not been for the navigable channels which enabled them to make their escape, they must inevitably have perished. Similar marches were attempted by Parry and Nordenskjeld, from Spitzbergen northward, and were equally unsuccessful.

The further the expedition went northward the larger they found the floes, until at last they arrived at a region where they are stated to have been from 50 to 120 feet thick. This statement has been erroneously interpreted. Nares makes no such statement respecting ice that has been regularly formed; he states rather that the maximum thickness of the ice formed by one season's undisturbed and continuous frost, according to observations made in winter quarters, was about six feet in thickness. This coincides with observations made in other parts of the Polar Sea, according to which we may assume the mean thickness of ice of progressive formation to be from seven to eight feet.

That there is everywhere a limit to the formation of ice, and no sea in which its thickness increases beyond this limit, is a fact that has been known since the beginning of the present century. J. Ross found regularly formed ice in the Bothia Gulf, 10 feet thick; Parry, on Melville Island, 7½ feet; Wrangel, in the Siberian Polar Sea, 9 feet; Koidewey, in East Greenland, 6½ feet. Hayes states that the thickness of the ice in Port Foulke is 9 feet 2 inches; in Smith Sound he estimates it much higher; but he limits it, nevertheless, for he says he never has seen a surface of ice formed by direct frost that exceeded a depth of 18 feet.

The reason why ice does not increase in thickness *ad infinitum* is very simple and easily explained. The intensity of the ice forming power is in an inverse ratio to the progressive thickness of the mas, and the force ceases to operate as soon as the thickness of the ice is such as to render it a non-conductor of the temperature of the air. The multiplication of the several layers, added to the increasing quantity of snow falling on its surface, sets a limit to the penetration of the cold. If ice regularly formed suffered no disturbance until it had attained its maximum thickness, we should find it of nearly the same moderate bulk everywhere in the Polar Sea. This, however, is not the case, for while regularly formed ice is only of moderate magnitude, we find ice-fields of very unequal thickness in various parts of the Polar Sea. They are the result of the various additions they have received from time to time, both on the surface and underneath, from pressure, and are distinguished by the term "old ice." It follows, therefore, that old ice will be found more especially on coasts which by their configuration offer the greatest resistance to the floating masses, so as to arrest their progress, and where there is consequently the greatest pressure. This appears to be the case to a very great extent in the Lincoln Sea, and hence the thickness, 50 to 120 feet, which the expedition is said to have observed there. These figures represent the total thickness of the floe, irrespective of the hummocks, and seeing that similar phenomena have been observed in other parts of the Polar Sea the discovery is not a new one. The ice we met with in the two German Polar expeditions, on the east coast of Greenland, in 1869-70, rose (we speak of the altitude of the hummocks) to from forty to eighty feet above the level of the sea. Its total thickness, therefore, could not have been less than that of the Lincoln Sea.

The English Expedition has introduced a new term, "floeberg," to distinguish different kinds of ice formations. At first I imagined this term was employed to designate one of those mountain masses, formed by immense pressure of small area but considerable height, which look like a chaotic mass formed of broken fragments, until I received a copy of the *Illustrated London News*, and found there a number of sketches of ice formations, furnished by one of the members of the expedition. I have never seen sketches of every kind of Polar ice that were more true to nature. Among them was a masterpiece representing an iceberg divided into two parts, and to my surprise I saw written underneath the word "floeberg." If all the "floebergs" which the expedition saw north of Cape Union were ice formations of the same kind they were not "floebergs" which they saw, but icebergs. Icebergs, as a rule, are not so steep and craggy by far as they are generally supposed to be; on the contrary, they present, for the most part no distinguishing feature beyond that of a confused mountain mass. Their characteristic feature is not that of any particular height, icebergs being generally from thirty to fifty feet above the surface of the water, but they are of simple contour, and are different from floe ice, both in color and structure. Icebergs of this kind, of moderate height and simple construction, covered with snow, are difficult to distinguish from so-called "floebergs." It was small icebergs, therefore, that the expedition saw north of Cape Union, the offspring of glaciers, such as are seen on the neighboring coasts. This conclusion, however, is based upon the presumed correctness of the sketches.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE

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