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DAY. OCTOBER 27,

AN ICE-BOUND SHORE.

Cruising along the Edge of "the Pack"
Off Wrangel Land.

"Hove to" in an Arctic Gale—The
Corwin's Misadventures.

Aboriginal Merchant Middlemen of Two
Continents.

[SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BULLETIN.]

STEAMER CORWIN, ARCTIC OCEAN
(BETWEEN HERALD SHOALS AND POINT HOPE),
September 3, 1881.

On the morning of August 27th, having taken a full supply of coal and water on board, and put the ship in as good condition as possible, we left Plover Bay and turned once more toward Wrangel Land.

In passing Marcus Bay, a short distance up the coast from Plover Bay, the Captain wished to make a landing to give some instructions to our Tschukchi interpreter and dog-driver, who lives here, concerning the dogs and sleds that were left at Tapkan. The weather was too thick, however, to allow this, and the ship was put on her course for the western Diomed Island, where we arrived, against a stiff head wind and through thick fog, shortly after noon on the 28th. We lay at anchor for a few hours, while the wind from the Arctic came dashing and swirling over the island in squally gusts.

A DIOMEDE-ESKIMAU VILLAGE.

In the meantime, while waiting to see whether the wind would moderate before going on through the strait, we went ashore and greatly enjoyed a stroll through the streets and houses of the curious Eskimau village here. It is built on the bald, rugged side of the island, where the slope is almost cliff-like in steepness and rockiness. The winter houses are wood-lined burrows under ground, entered by a tunnel, and warm and snug like the nest of a field-mouse beneath a sod, though terribly thick and rancid as to the air contained in them. The summer houses are square skin boxes above ground, and set on long stilt poles. Neither the one nor the other look in the least like houses or huts of any sort, but those made of skin are the queerest human nests conceivable. They are simply light, square frames made of drift poles gathered on the beach, and covered with walrus hide that has been carefully dressed, and stretched tightly on the frame like the head of a drum. The skin is of a yellow color, and quite translucent, so that one feels when in it as if inside a huge blown bladder, the light sifting in through the skin by the top and all around, yellow as a sunset. The entire establishment is window, one pane for the roof, which is also the ceiling, and one for each of the four sides, without cross-sash-bars to mar the brave simplicity of it all.

MIDDLEMEN OF TWO CONTINENTS.

Most of the inhabitants, of whom there are perhaps about a hundred, had just returned from a long voyage in their canoes to Cape Prince of Wales, Kotzebue Sound and other points on the American coast, for the purposes of trade, bringing back ivory and furs to sell to the Tschukchis of Siberia, who in turn will carry these articles by a roundabout way nearly a thousand miles to the Russian trading post, and bring back goods to trade back to the Diomed merchants, through whose hands they will pass to the Cape Prince of Wales natives, and from these to several others up the Inland River, down the Colville, to Point Barrow, and eastward as far as the mouth of the Mackenzie River. The Diomed merchants are true middlemen, and their village a half-way house of commerce between northeastern Asia and America. The extent of the dealings of these people, usually regarded as savages, is truly surprising. And that they can keep warm and make a living on this bleak, fog-smothered, storm-beaten rock, and have time to beget, and feed, and train children, and give them a good Eskimau education, teach them to shoot the bow, throw the bird spears and make them, teach them to make and use those marvelous kyacks, kill seals, bears, walrus, hunt the whale, capture the different kinds of fishes, manufacture different sorts of leather, dress skins and make them into clothing, build those strange houses, teach them to carry on trade, make fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together—that they can do all this, and still have time to be sociable, dance, sing, gossip and discuss ghosts, spirits, and all the nerve-shaking marvels of the Shaman world, shows how truly wild, and brave, and capable a people these island Esquimaux are.

THE SIGHT OF WRANGEL LAND AGAIN.

The wind having moderated, we got away from the box-and-burrow village and through the strait before dark; then steered for the south end of Wrangel Land, and after a speedy and uneventful voyage came in sight of the highest of the coast mountains, on the 30th, at noon. Thus far we had not seen the ice, and, inasmuch as nineteen summer days had passed over it since our last visit, we hoped that it might have been melted considerably and broken up by the winds, so as to admit of a way being forced through it at some point up the land, or so near it that we might get ashore by crossing over the coast ice, dragging our light skin boat after us in case we should come to lanes of open water.

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A DISAPPOINTMENT—CRUISING ON THE EDGE OF THE ICE PACK.

In this, however, we were disappointed; for when three and a half hours later we came up to the edge of the pack it was found to all appearance unchanged. It still extended about twenty miles off shore; it trended as far as we could see in the same direction as was observed before, and it seemed as heavy and unbroken as ever, offering no encouragement for efforts in this direction. We therefore sailed along the edge of the pack to the eastward to see what might be accomplished towards our first landing place, gazing at the long stretch of wilderness spread invitingly before us, and which we were so eager to explore—the rounded, glaciated bosses and foothills, the mountains, with their ice-sculptured features of hollows and ridges and long withdrawing valleys, which on former visits we had sketched, and scanned so attentively through field-glasses, and which now began to wear a familiar look. The sky was overcast, and the land seemed almost black in the gloomy light, and a heavy swell began to be felt coming in from the northeast. Towards night, when we were not far from our old landing near the eastern-most extremity of the land, the Corwin was hove to, waiting for the morning before attempting to seek a way in. But the next day, August 31st, was stormy, the wind from the northeast blowing hard on shore, therefore it was not considered safe to approach too near. At 6 o'clock we were in sight of the ice opposite the northeast cape, and it seemed to be farther off the land than at our first visit, and no opening appeared, though the weather was so dim and rough that nothing could be definitely determined. Generally, however, the ice was now drifting against the east side of Wrangel Land, and coming southward to so great an extent that our chances of effecting another landing began to be less promising.

"HOVE TO" IN A GALE.

When we were within twenty miles of Herald Island we hove to, waiting better weather before entering narrow lanes and bays in the pack when so heavy a sea was running upon it. The sky was dismal all the afternoon—toward night, dull, lurid purple—and the wind was blowing a gale. The ice-breaker, made of heavy boiler iron, was broken by the pounding of the waves, and had to be cut away, which is unfortunate at this particular time.

ACCIDENT TO THE CORWIN—PARTED RUDDER CHAINS.

September 1st was a howling storm-day, with a wintry aspect, through which we lay to, swashing and rolling wildly among white waves, and drifting southeastward twenty or thirty miles a day. Next day there was no abatement in the force of the gale up to two o'clock P. M.; a heavy sea was running, streaked with foam, parallel to the direction of the wind, while the air was filled with snow, adding to the wintry aspect of the day. While we were still holding on, hoping the storm would subside from hour to hour, one of the rudder chains parted.

ABANDONMENT OF THE ATTEMPT TO LAND.

This made Captain Hooper decide that in view of the condition of the ship, and the ice, and the weather, the risk attending the making of further efforts this year about the shores of Wrangel Land should not be incurred, more especially since the position and drift of the ice held out but little promise of allowing another landing to be made, or a sufficiently near approach to enable us to add appreciably to the knowledge already acquired. Accordingly, after the rudder was mended as securely as possible, the good Corwin, excused from further ice-duty, was turned away from the war and headed for the American coast at Point Hope.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

Had the ship been in good condition the battle would probably have been waged a few weeks longer along the edge of the ice-barrier, watching the appearance of any vulnerable point of attack, whatever the result might have been. Now it seems we are homeward bound. We intend to stop at Kotzebue Sound, St. Michael's, and St. Paul's and Olenok to make necessary repairs, take on coal, etc., and may reach San Francisco by the middle of October.

SURMISES CONCERNING THE RODGERS.

We have not met the Rodgers. We learned from the natives at Plover Bay that she had called there and left seven days before our arrival. That was August 17th. We suppose she went to St. Michael's from here to coal and take on provisions, which would probably require a week. If so, we may have passed the strait ahead of her. But in case she had already been at St. Michael's, then, in following out her instructions, she would trace the Siberian coast for some distance, making inquiries among the Tschukchis, where she may possibly be at present. Or if this part of the work of the expedition had been completed before the coming on of the gale, she may be sheltering about Herald Island or some point on the coast of Wrangel Land.

JOHN MUIR.