

been dried with a clean cloth, the plate-powder can be put on, and when dry it may be brushed off again, and finally every piece of silver must be industriously and thoroughly rubbed with a soft chamois leather. Now it looks as if it had just arrived from the silver-smith's shop.

When I was staying at the curate's cottage, of which I have made a former mention, my eyes were greatly distressed by the outward appearance of the silver; and I was told that the forks must be replated, a new coating of silver being necessary to hide the flecks and marks so plainly visible. I went so far as to inquire the cost of such a proceeding, but when the sum was named the curate shook his head, and said—

"Not at present."

Last month I paid the cottage another visit, and my first remark on seating myself at the dinner-table was—

"Why, you have had your forks re-plated."

No, they had never been out of the house, he affirmed.

The fact was that they had only been in the hands of a different cleaner. All the black spots had totally disappeared, and they would have graced any table in their present state of polish. This change in their condition I should not have believed to have been possible, had I not myself witnessed it.

Let me now criticise the appearance of the glass on

the table. It ought to look bright and clear, but too often it looks dim and streaked. I am aware that "cut" glass will always look better than that which is moulded, but there are other reasons besides that for its unsatisfactory appearance. All servants I have met with have such a fixed notion that hot water is necessary for the washing of everything, no matter whether it be for the ablution of dishes and floors, or glass and china. For the former and for some other things, the hotter the water the better; for the latter and for some other things, the cooler the water the better. Not only is hot water liable to crack glass and china, but it gives a peculiar dullness of look, which detracts greatly from whatever personal beauty they may possess.

And then, again, a special bowl should be kept for the washing of glass, because if the water is not quite clean—that is, if it should be in the slightest degree tinged with grease—a film will be cast over the glass, however good its quality. Lastly, a dry cloth is necessary, for glass looks flecked if dried with a damp cloth.

I have not yet exhausted my catalogue of hints and suggestions on these homely matters, but I have filled up my space, and therefore must lay down my pen. I hope, however, to meet you who listen to me on a future occasion. E. C.

## SEAL HUNTING IN GREENLAND NORTH.



THAT "sealing" trip of mine I shall never forget. My particular friend the doctor and I, and Brick, the dog, were always hungry, and often went in for midnight suppers, cooked and eaten under the rose and fore-castle. Friday night was sea-pie night by universal custom of the service. The memory of that sea-pie makes my mouth water even now.

The skipper came down from his nest one morning, and entered the saloon, having apparently just taken leave of his senses. He was "daft" with excitement, his face wreathed in smiles, and the tears standing in his eyes.

"On deck, man, on deck, and see the seals!"

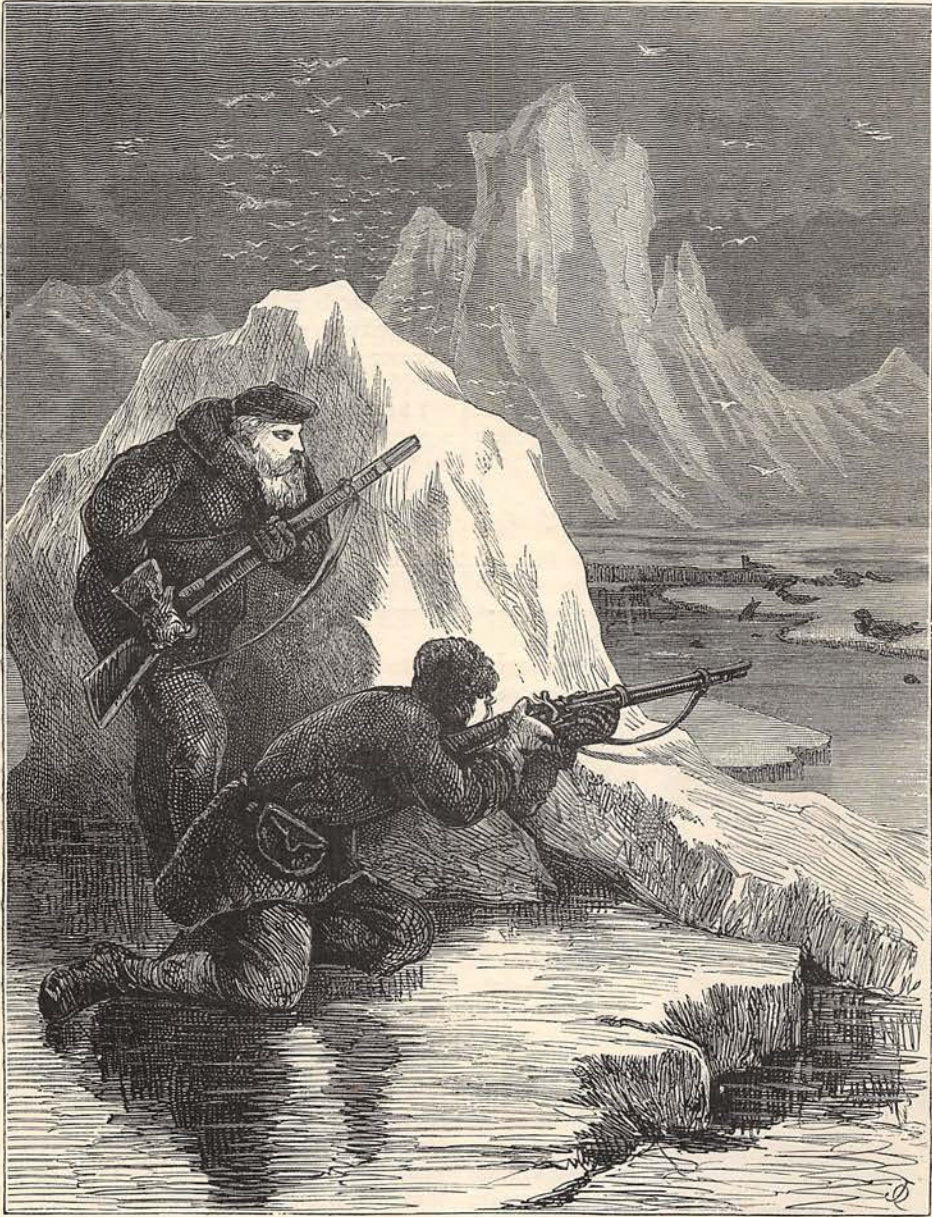
The scene was peculiarly Greenlandish. The sun had all the bright blue sky to himself—not the great

dazzling orb that you are accustomed to in warmer countries, but a shining disc of molten silver hue, that you can look into and count its spots with naked eye. About a quarter of a mile to windward was the main ice-pack, along the edge of which we were sailing under a gentle topsail breeze. Between and around us lay the sea, as black as a basin of ink. But everywhere about, as far as the eye could see from the quarter-deck, the surface of the water was covered with large beautiful heads, with brilliant earnest eyes, and noses all turned in one direction—that in which our vessel was steering, about south-west and by south. Nay, but I must not forget to mention one peculiar feature in the scene, without which no sea(l)-scape in Greenland would be complete. Away on our lea-bow, under easy canvas, was the *Green Dutchman*. This isn't a phantom ship, you must know, but the most successful of all ships that ever sailed the Northern Ocean. Her captain and owner has been over twenty years in the same trade, and well deserves the fortune that he has made by his own skill and industry. If other proof were wanting that we were among the main body of seals, the presence of that *Green Dutchman* afforded it; besides, yonder on the ice were several bears strolling up and down, those yellow monsters with the ease and self-possession of gentlemen waiting for the last dinner bugle. Skippers may err in their diagnoses, the *Green Dutchman* himself might be at fault, but the instinct and judgment of Bruin is infallible.

We were now in the latitude of Jan Mayen; the

mountain cone of that strange island we could distinctly see, raised like an immense shining sugar-loaf against the sky's blue. To this lonely spot come every year, through storm and tempest, in vessels but little bigger or better than herring-boats, hardy Norsemen,

the southern ice, on which to bring forth their young. They here find a climate which is slightly more mild, and never fail to choose ice which is low and flat, and usually protected from the south-east swell by a barrier of larger bergs. The breeding takes place as soon as



(Drawn by W. L. JONES.)

to hunt the walrus for its skin and ivory, but by other human feet it is never trodden. It is the throne of King Winter, and the abode of desolation, save for the great bear that finds shelter in its icy caves, or the monster seals and strange sea-birds that rest on its snow-clad rocks. At this latitude the sealer endeavours to fall in with the seals, coming in their thousands from the more rigorous north, and seeking

the seals take the ice, the males in the meantime removing in a body to some distant spot, where they remain for three weeks or so, looking very foolish—just, in truth, as human gentlemen would under like circumstances—until joined by the ladies. The seal-mothers are, I need hardly say, exceedingly fond of their young. At all other times timid in the extreme, they will at this season attack men with all the

ferocity of bears. The food of the seals in nursing season consists, I believe, of the small shrimps with which the sea is sometimes stained for miles, like the muddy waters of the Bristol Channel, and also, no doubt, of the numerous small fishes to be found burrowing, like bees in a honeycomb, on the under surface of the pieces of ice. The wise sealer "dodges" outside, or lies aback, watching and wary, for a fortnight at least, until the young seals are lumpy and fat, then the work of death begins. I fear I am digressing, but these remarks may be original to some readers.

"The *Green Dutchman* has filled her fore-yard, sir, and is making for the ice;" thus said the first mate to the captain one morning.

"Let the watch make sail," was the order, "and take the ice to windward of her."

The ship is being "rove" in through the icebergs, as far and fast as sail will take her. Meanwhile, fore and aft, everybody is busy on board, and the general bustle is very exciting. The steward is serving out the rum, the cook's coppers are filled with hams, the hands not on deck are busy cleaning their guns, sharpening their knives, getting out their "lowrie tows" (dragging-ropes), and trying the strength of their seal-club shafts by attempts to break them over their hardy knees. The doctor's medical preparations are soon finished, he merely pockets a calico bandage and dossel of lint, and straps a tourniquet around his waist, then devotes his attention exclusively to his accoutrements. Having thus arranged everything to his entire satisfaction, he fills a sandwich-case, then a brandy-flask and baccy-pouch, and afterwards eats and drinks as long as he can—to pass the time, he says—then, when he can't eat a morsel more, he sits and waits and listens impatiently, beating the devil's tattoo with his boot on the fender. Presently it is "Clew up," and soon after "All hands over the side."

The day was clear and bright and frosty, and the snow crisp and hard. There was no sinking up to the knees in it. You might have walked on it with wooden legs. Besides, there was but little swell on, so the movement of the bergs was slow, and leaping easy.

Our march to the sealing-ground was enlivened by a little linguamachy, or wordy war, between the first mate and the doctor. The latter began it—

"Harpooneers and clubmen," he cried, "close up behind me, here; I'm gaun to mak' a speech; but keep movin' a' the time—that's richt. Well, first and foremost, I tell ye, I'm captain and commander on the ice; d'ye hear?"

"You commander!" exclaimed the mate; "I'll let ye ken, my lad, that I'm first officer o' the ship."

"Look here, mate," said the doctor, "I'll no lose my temper wi' ye, but if ye interrupt me again, by ma sang, ye'll ha' to fecht me, and ye ken ye havena the biceps o' a daddy-lang-legs, nor the courage o' a cockney weaver, so keep a calm sough.—Now, men," he continued, "I, your lawfully constituted commander, tell ye this: there is to be nae cruelty, this day, to the innocent lambs we're here to kill. Mind ye, God made and cares for a' his creatures. But I'm neither going to preach or pray, but I'll put it

to ye in this fashion. If I see one man Jack of ye put a knife in a seal that he hasna previously clubbed and killed, I'll simply ca' that man's horns oot [dash his brains out] to begin wi', and if he does it again, I'll stop his 'bacca for the entire voyage, and his grog besides."

Probably the last threat was more awful to a sailor than actual braining. At all events, it had the desired effect, for during the whole of that day I saw nothing among our men but slaughter as humane as slaughter could be made. Even then, however, there was much to harrow the feelings of any one at all sensitive. For the young Greenland seal is such an innocent little thing, so beautiful, so tender-eyed, and so altogether like a baby in a blanket, that killing it is revolting to human nature. Besides, they are so extremely confiding. Raise one in your arms—it will give a little petted grumble, like a Newfoundland puppy, and suck your fingers; not finding its natural sustenance in that performance, it will open its mouth, and give vent to a plaintive scream for its ma, which will never fail in bringing that lady from the depths beneath, eager-eyed and thirsting for your life.

Towards the middle of the day I strolled among the crew of the *P—e*. The men were wildly excited, half-drunk with rum, and wholly with spilling blood, singing and shouting and blaspheming, striking home each blow with a terrible oath, flinching before the blood had ceased to flow, and sometimes, horrible to say, flinching the unhappy innocents alive. All sorts of shocking cruelties were perpetrated, in order to make puppies scream, and thus entice the mother to the surface to be shot or clubbed. I saw one fellow—Pah! I can't go on.

Blood shows to advantage on ice. Here there were oceans of it. The snow was pure and white and dazzling in the morning, I leave it to the imagination of the sentimental to guess its appearance at eventide. The stout Shetlandmen, with their lowrie tows, dragged the skins to the ship. There were no regular meals any day during sealing. All-told fed and drank alike, when they could and what they could. There was but little sport in all this—a certain wild excitement, to be sure, quite natural under the circumstances, for were we not engaged in one of the lawful pursuits of commerce and making money? The bears were having fine times of it, for there was but little inclination on our part to pursue them, while there were seals to slay; and Bruin seemed to know this, and was correspondingly bold and impertinent, although never decidedly aggressive; for compared to seals men are merely skin and bone, and Bruin has a *penchant* for adiposity.

In ten days there was not a seal left, for ships had collected from all quarters—like war-horses scenting the battle from afar, or like sea-gulls on "making-off" days—to assist in the slaughter. By-the-by, what peculiar instinct or what sense is it, that enables those sea-gulls to determine the presence of carrion in the water at almost incredible distances? On making-off days—that is, idle days at sea—when, there being nothing else to do, the hands are employed in separating the blubber from the skins, putting them

in different tanks and casting the offal overboard, there shall not be a single gull in sight from the crow's-nest, even within ken of the telescope; but twenty minutes after the work is begun, the sea shall be white with the gobbling brutes.

The *Green Dutchman* was about full ship, while we were a little over half; and, better luck still for that lucky skipper, the ice seemed to open like the Red Sea to the ancient Israelites, and let him go free; while we, waiting inside but a few hours longer for the sake of about twenty old seals, got beset, frozen in hard and fast among large heavy bergs of ice. There we lay for a whole fortnight. Had we managed to get clear away, we might possibly have fallen in with another patch of young seals, and so completed our voyage.

In our rifle practice we as often as possible made Bruin the target. But a fortnight after we were beset, we were forsaken by the bears, and even by the birds, both of which always follow the seals. What a lonely time we had of it, for the next month, in the centre of that silent solitary pack, which, but for the ships that lay one here, one there, might have been mistaken for some extensive moorland in the dead of winter! And all the time there never was a cloud in the blue sky the bigness of a man's hand; the sun shone there day and night, but gave no heat; and the silence was like the silence of space—we could hear a snow-flake fall. Once a week at least, a gale of wind would be blowing perhaps hundreds of miles from us (it was always calm in the pack), and the great waves would roll in beneath the ice, lifting up the giant bergs, packing the lighter ice over the heavy, and grinding each other and our poor vessel with a noise like ten million steam hammers, and a like number of Highland pipers, playing and courting and thumping at once. We lived in constant suspense, not knowing the moment we would have to leave a doomed ship. Our traps were always packed and ready. One ship had gone under before our eyes, and another about three miles off lay on her beam-ends, keel exposed.

When at last the sea of ice broke up, and a lane of water was seen two miles astern of us, we had to complete a work of engineering that wasn't unworthy of the great Lesseps himself—the making of a canal to the water. But by aid of barrels of gunpowder to blast, and ice-saws to cut, and long poles to sink the smaller pieces under the pack, we succeeded at last.

We left that great pack, stove in the starboard quarter, with a hole in the port-bow blanket-bound, and a new rudder jury-rigged, and sailed away to the far north after the old seals.

These old seals are slain with the rifle, and have to be stalked. When the females join the males again they all travel north together, affecting mostly the point-ends of the pack-edge on which to rest, make love, and wage war. Seal-stalking tasks all the skill and powers of endurance of even the best sportsmen. On a fine sunny day, when the seals lie well, when the snow is crisp and dry, it is very exciting and enjoyable, unless you tumble through a "pussy-hole" in the "bay-ice." When a swell is on among the bergs, and the leaps you have to take endanger the loss of your rifle, if not your life, it isn't so agreeable.

"Canny" does it in seal-stalking—you must neither excite yourself nor show yourself. Your first care is to kill the seal on sentry. If you don't miss (his *brain*, look you, for the bullet *must* pierce the head) you may bag from five to ten or more on a single berg; then on to the next, dodging well behind the "hum-mocks."

There are no want of seals if you happen among the main body. I have seen twenty square miles of ice literally covered black with seals.

You often come to bay-ice so bending and thin that it will not bear you upright, so over you go snake-fashion on your face; and to lanes of water which you have to ferry yourself across on a morsel of ice, with your rifle-stock for a paddle.

Towards the end of the season, just before we bear up for bonnie Scotland, seal-stalking becomes infinitely more trying and dangerous. Now you sink in the snow, and now the ice gets rotten, and is often undermined at the edges; so you are sure to get many a good ducking.

Boats, too, and "bings" of seal-skins, ay, and often men, are sometimes lost in the mist which towards the end of May and beginning of June envelopes the sea of ice in darkness and gloom.

On the whole seal-stalking is much more pleasurable than deer-stalking, for I've tried both, more than once, and trust I shall again. But in the name of all humanity let us have a close season, and put an end for ever to the sickening cruelties which are annually perpetrated on the poor lamb-seals by our blood-maddened Arctic seamen.

