SEALS AND SEAL-HUNTING IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC.

BY ERNEST INGERSOLL.

HARDLY five years ago I knew a blue-eyed, brown-haired, and peach-cheeked little girl, just now beginning to read in ST. NICHOLAS, whom her father used to call his "harbor-seal." If you had ever seen her lying face down in the cradle,—her favorite position,—holding up her round, fuzzy little head, you would have understood at once why he called her so; for that is precisely the way a seal looks, when he is resting on a rock or a piece of ice.

Scores of years back, before the settlement of North America by Europeans, seals were wont to come to its shores even as far southward as the Carolinas, and were common visitors from New Jersey northward. Robin's Reef, in New York Bay, passed by all the Coney Island steamboats, gets its name from the Dutch word *robin* or *robyn*—"seal," because those animals used to resort there in great numbers. To-day they are uncommon even along the coast of Maine, scarcely abundant in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and are slowly being driven inside the arctic circle.

Now, this disappearance of the seals from our own coast has been brought about by incessant persecution, and it seems to me very unfortunate. How much it would add to the pleasure of a voyage down the bay, or a ramble along the weedy and wave-polished beach, if we could see, here and there, trim, brown animals creep up from the water on some projecting rock, and gaze at us with no fear in their mild eyes, while shaking the drops of water from their coats! But sadly for our amusement, and for the seals themselves, their bodies have a value in the market—and great fleets every year are fitted out to engage in this fishery.

The word "fishery" ought to imply a "fish" to be caught; but the term has become perverted: for instance, we speak of whale, sponge, coral, crab, and oyster, or clam fisheries, yet none of these animals is in the least a fish. Neither is the seal, although it lives in the water, swims and dives. It is, indeed, nothing but a warm-blooded, fur-coated mammal, with all the internal organs and outside structure of a quadruped.

"What!" you exclaim, "'all the outside structure' of an otter, for example?"

Yes, but not the same appearance. Let me explain to you how this is: If we study the outlines of the two heads, and the pictures of the two skulls—the first, those of the common harbor-seal, and the second those of the otter,—we shall see at once how the bones, and the shape and arrangement of the teeth in one, resemble those in the other. And if we had also a picture of the skull of a cod-fish, we should see how different from it are the skulls of the otter and seal.

Now look at the limbs. I have heard of a boy who defined a quadruped as an animal having a leg at each corner. Perhaps that would fit the otter, but you think that, certainly, it would not describe the seal, "which has n't legs at all," you say, "but fins or 'flippers.'"

If I had the time, I could prove to you that the difference between the fin of a fish and the bone-leg of an otter or of a dog, or your own arm, is not so very great; and it would be easy to show how nearly alike the flipper of the seal and fore leg of a land mammal really are. On examining diagrams of the bones in a seal's flipper and an otter's fore leg, you will find that you can match every bone of the one by a similar bone of the other. The shapes of the bones, to be sure, are altered to suit the varied uses of swimming in the water and walking on the land; but all the parts of the arm and hand (or fore foot) of the otter, or any other mammal, are seen also in the flipper of our subject—only there they are shortened, thickened, and covered with a membrane which converts them into a paddle instead of a paw.

The same comparison will hold good for the hind feet of the otter and the hind flippers or "tail" (which is *not* a tail) of the seal; and it is equally true of the walrus and of the whale, porpoise, grampus, blackfish, and other cetacea.

Of course, being mammals, these animals must breathe air. You could drown any of them by forcing it to remain under the water too long. Whales can stay down an hour or more, if necessary, and seals can hold their breath for fifteen or twenty minutes, though they do not like to be under as long as that. Of course, it is necessary for seals, therefore, in the arctic seas, where mainly

is their home, to be able to reach the air, even in spite of the sheet of thick ice which for half the year covers the whole ocean. But in large bodies of ice there always are some holes, no matter how cold the weather may be; and these holes afford the seals of that region an opportunity to come to the surface to breathe. There are some species, however, that keep round, smooth-edged air-holes open for themselves by continually breaking away the young ice as fast as it is formed; these holes are never very large at the surface — sometimes only big enough to let one animal poke his nose up through; they are much like chimneys, indeed, for the ice may sometimes be a hundred feet thick.

Before I go further, let me say that the word "seal" applies to several families of Pinnipeds, only one of which concerns us at present. This is the Phocidæ, or family of earless seals, of which the common harbor-seal, the ringed seal, the harp, or Greenland seal, and the bearded, or hooded seals, are chiefly to be remembered. Concerning the gigantic sea-elephant of the antarctic pole, the huge sea-lions of the Pacific, and the various "fur" seals, we have no occasion to speak. All our subjects inhabit the arctic zone, and principally the coasts of Greenland and Newfoundland, — washed by the North Atlantic.

While the breathing-holes in the ice afford the seals their only possibilities of life, they often prove to be death-traps, since many foes lie in wait near them.

The enemies of seals, other than man, are not a few, both on land and in the water. The polar bear, finding their holes, watches as quietly and vigilantly as a cat for a mouse, and leaps upon them as they rise to breathe, or even chases them into the sea, and so captures a great many. The arctic wolves and foxes, the raven, and probably also the great snowy owl, attack the young before they are able to defend themselves or escape. These enemies are so active that the heavy and awkward parents have hard work to defend their babies. The full-grown seals, as well as the young, are seized in the water by sharks and sword-fish, and also by killer-whales, which, though of small size, are able to murder the monstrous right whale by biting out his tongue.

Travelers say that when a sword-fish sees a seal upon a floating "pan," or cake of ice, he will get on one side and tip the pan down to such an angle that the seal must slip off, and then will devour it. So great is a seal's terror of these water-foes that, should a man be on the pan when sword-fish and sharks are after him, the seal will run between his feet for protection. Many seals are killed, too, by fighting among themselves, and by the fierce storms of the frozen zone.

The most ingenious and dreaded enemies of the seal, however (leaving out of sight for the present the white men), are the Eskimos. To them seals are of the utmost importance, and we may say that in many parts of the arctic world men could not live without these animals. The Eskimos' methods of hunting this game, and the hundred ways in which they utilize its body, will be interesting matters to look into.

The harbor-seal [see page 627] is, perhaps, the least serviceable of seals, since he is not common very far north of Labrador; but his flesh is considered the best, and on the Pacific coast the Indians take whole herds at once, by stealing upon them when they are basking on the beach or in shallow bays, and drawing a seine around them. The hides

A SEAL SEEKING A MAN'S PROTECTION FROM A SWORD-FISH.

A HARP-SEAL MOTHER AND HER BABY.

of the old ones are good only for tents, but those of the young are highly prized; and no present is more acceptable to a Greenland damsel than the prettily mottled skin of a *kassigiak* (as she would call it), out of which she will make the wide, warm trousers that serve her in the place of petticoat.

Another seal, of which the Greenlanders do not get many,—the bearded seal,—is very large, and is especially prized on account of the thickness of its skin. Out of it they make not only the slender-pointed canoe-like boats, called "kayaks," in which they chase this and other wandering species, but also the stout lines to which their harpoons are attached. It makes durable soles for their boots, too, and strong harnesses for the dogs, besides which the flesh is sweet. It is one of the most easily killed of all seals, because it is not watchful. The harp-seal is also readily killed along the edges of the ice-floes, by the kayaker, but he values it little, excepting to eat; the hooded seal or "square-flipper," on the contrary, shows fight, taxing the courage and skill of the bravest of those hardy natives to overcome its fierce resistance and avoid its terrible bite.

The one seal useful above all others to them, and eagerly pursued, is their favorite *netsick*, one of the smaller species. It is the one called in our books the ringed seal, or floe-rat.* It is confined to the polar seas, rarely wandering south of Labrador, but it belongs also to the arctic shores of Europe, Asia, and Alaska, so that not only the Eskimos proper, but many arctic Indian tribes, regularly hunt it.

Although it is hunted throughout the year, the most profitable time for killing the netsick is in April, when each mother seal is accompanied by a young one. Here, perhaps, I may digress a little in order to tell you something of the babyhood of the Greenland seal.

Of the different sorts of seals I have mentioned, all but two are migratory—that is to say, the whole body of them move from north to south each autumn, and back from south to north each spring. Upon this important fact the great fleets of fishermen, of which I shall give an account presently, depend for their success. The annual southward journey of the restless harp-seal furnishes a vivid picture of these great migrations which are so prominent a feature of polar history. Keeping just ahead of the "making" of the ice, or final freezing up of the fiords and bays, at the approach of winter they leave Greenland, and begin their passage southward along the coast of Labrador, freely entering all the gulfs and bays. They appear first in small detachments of half a dozen to a score or more of individuals; these are soon followed by larger companies, until in a few days they form one continuous procession, filling the sea as far as the eye can reach. Floating with the Arctic current, their progress is extremely rapid, and in but one short week the whole multitude has passed. Arriving at the Straits of Belleisle, some enter the gulf, but the great body move onward along the eastern coast of Newfoundland, and thence outward to the Grand Banks, where they arrive about Christmas. Here they rest for a month, and then they turn northward, slowly struggling against the strong current that aided them so much in their southward journey, until they reach the great ice-fields stretching from the Labrador shore far eastward—a broad continent of ice.

During the first half of March, on these great

*A field of floating ice, in the arctic phrase, is a "floe," so long as it remains a firm sheet; when it breaks up it becomes a "pack," or "pack-ice."

floating fields of ice, are born thousands of baby seals — only one in each family, to be sure, but with plenty of play-fellows close by — all in soft woolly dress, white, or white with a beautiful golden luster. The Newfoundlanders call them "white-coats." In a few weeks, however, they lose this soft covering, and a gray, coarse fur takes its place. In this uniform they bear the name of "ragged-jackets"; and it is not until two or three years later that the full colors of the adult are gained, with the black crescentic or harp-like marks on the back which give them the name of "harps."

The squealing and barking at one of these immense nurseries can be heard for a very long distance. When the babies are very young, the mothers leave them on the ice and go off in search of food, coming back frequently to look after the little ones; and although there are thousands of the small, white, squealing creatures, which to you and me would seem to be precisely alike, and all are moving about more or less, the mother never makes a mistake nor feeds any bleating baby until she has found her own. If ice happens to pack around them, so that they can not open holes, nor get into the water, the whole army will laboriously travel by floundering leaps to the edge of the field; and they show an astonishing sagacity in discerning the proper direction. It is supposed that they can smell the water at a long distance.

Sometimes great storms come, breaking the ice-floes in pieces and jamming the fragments against one another, or upon rocky headlands, with tremendous force. Besides the full-grown seals that perish in such gales, thousands of the weak babies are crushed to death or drowned, notwithstanding the dauntless courage of their mothers, in trying to get their young out of danger and upon the firm ice. And it is touching to watch a mother-seal struggling to get her baby to a safe place, "either by trying to swim with it between her fore flippers, or by driving it before her and tossing it forward with her nose." The destruction caused

THE HARBOR-SEAL. [SEE PAGE 625.]

by such gales is far less when they happen after the youngsters have learned to swim.

Does it surprise you that seals, which are constantly in the water, have to *learn* to swim? Well, it might stagger the phocidæ to be told that men have to be taught to walk. The fact is, a baby seal is afraid of the water; and if some accident, or his mother's shoulder, pushes him into the surf when he is ten or a dozen days old, he screams with fright and scrambles out as fast as he can. The next day he tries it again, but finds himself very awkward and soon tired; the third day he does better, and before long he can dive and leap, turn somersaults (if he is a bearded seal), and vanish under the ice, literally "like a blue streak," the instant danger threatens. But he had to learn how, to begin with, like any other mammal.

It is when the seals are busy in caring for their helpless babies and giving the better-grown youngsters their early lessons, that the Eskimo hunters seek most diligently to kill them. This is not merely for the pleasure of it,—not that at all, perhaps,—but because their flesh and skins are imperatively needed. Those pursued by the Eskimos, however, are not the species that make the great southward migrations which I have just described, but the ringed seals *(Phoca fœtida)* which remain on the far arctic coasts all the year round. Upon this animal the Eskimos place almost their entire dependence for food, fuel, light, and clothing. Its capture is therefore exceedingly important to every family.

At the end of winter each of the female seals creeps up through the breathing-hole (which is named *atluk)*; and under the deep snow overlying all the ice-field she digs a cave, eight or ten feet long and three to five feet wide. At one end of the excavation is the breathing-hole, affording a ready means of retreat in case of danger. In this cave the young seal is born, and though protected from the sight of its enemies, here it is often captured.

About the first of April the Eskimo hunter leaves his winter encampment, taking his family and a few bits of furniture on his dog-sledge, and goes to some locality where he expects to find seals abound. Arrived there, he cuts out square blocks of hard snow, piles them up into a round hut with a domed roof, clearing away the snow from the inside, down to the hard ground or ice-surface. Over this hut he throws water, which, in freezing, cements all the blocks together; and then he has a good tight house—as warm as though made of stone, as soon as he has built his fire. This done, he and his family are as comfortable as if they were at their winter home, and if his hunting is successful, he is contented and happy.

The old-fashioned native manner of hunting—some of the Eskimos now have guns, and this spoils the interest—called for much skill and patience. In it, each hunter has a trained dog which runs on ahead, but is held by a strap around his neck from going too fast and far. The dog scents the seal lying in its excavation under the snow (the level surface of which of course gives no sign of the cave), and barks; whereupon the hunter, who is close behind, hastens forward, and by a vigorous jump breaks down the cover before the young seal can escape. If he succeeds in cutting off its retreat, it is an easy prey, for he simply knocks it on the head; otherwise he must use his seal-hook very quickly or his game is gone.

"It sometimes happens," says Mr. L. Kumlien, "that the hunter is unfortunate enough to jump the snow down directly over the hole, when he gets a pretty thorough wetting. The women often take part in this kind of sealing, and become quite expert. The children begin when they are four or five years old: the teeth and flippers of the first catch are saved as a trophy, and are worn about the little fellow's neck; this they think will give him good luck when he begins the next year.

"As the season advances and the young begin to shed their coats, the roof of their *igloo* or cave is often or perhaps always broken down, and the mother and young can be seen on sunny days basking in the warm sunshine beside their atluk. The mother will take to the water when the hunter has approached within gunshot, and will leave the young one to shift for itself, which generally ends in its staring leisurely at the hunter until suddenly it finds a hook in its side. A stout seal-skin line is then made fast to its hind flipper and it is let into the atluk. It of course makes desperate efforts to free itself, and is very apt to attract the attention of the mother if she is anywhere in the vicinity. The Eskimo carefully watches the movements of the young one, and, as soon as the mother is observed, begins to haul in on the line; the old one follows nearer and nearer to the surface, until, at last, she crosses the hole at the proper depth, when the deadly harpoon is planted in her body and she is quickly drawn out. If, however, the mother has seen the hunter approaching the atluk, she will not show herself."

If you were to examine the weapons by which the Eskimos manage to capture these and other seals,—specimens of them are in the National Museum at Washington,—you would be astonished at their roughness. It is very difficult, especially for the northern bands, to get any wood, excepting sticks that are washed ashore, and a piece long enough to make a good spear-handle is extremely rare. In most cases, therefore, they are obliged to splice two or three short pieces together,

and this they can only do by slanting both ends, and binding the pieces at their juncture with strings of raw-hide or strips of intestine. The striking end of the spear usually consists of a long and pretty straight piece of bone, such as can be got from a whale's or walrus's skeleton, and this is tipped with a sharp point of bone, or flint, or (nowadays generally) of iron. Sometimes this tip is movable, so that when it penetrates the prey it will come off and only be held by the line, while the handle floats, secured by a loop. Other spears have each a skin buoy attached, this making it

up and the Eskimos can go out in their kayaks, the crankiest of primitive craft, on the ugliest of voyages; but this is an adventure they never shirk, and one that their acquaintance with Europeans has not changed at all. The kayak is eighteen or twenty feet long, but is so light that it can be carried by the one man who forms the crew. It is all decked over, excepting a little round hole through which the young Eskimo squeezes his legs and sits down. Then he puts on a tight oil-skin coat over his garments, and ties it down to the deck all around him, so that no water can pour

HEAD OF THE HOODED SEAL, OR "SQUARE-FLIPPER,"—"THE SPECIES WHICH SHOWS FIGHT." [SEE PAGE 626.]

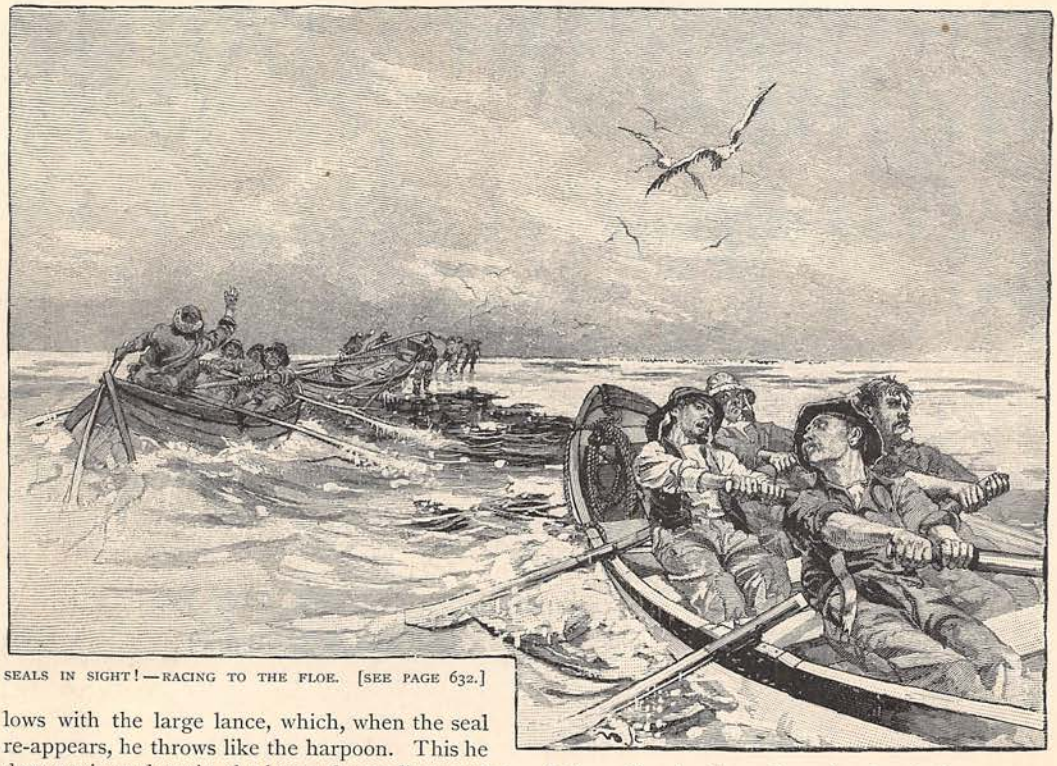
more difficult for the poor animal to swim away, and also helping to float the weapon if the hunter misses his aim. The stout lines are made of seal-hide, or sometimes of braided spruce roots. The "hooks" mentioned above have wooden or bone shafts, to the end of which a curved and sharpened hook of bone is firmly bound. Besides, there are other rough weapons, and a kind of net, in all of which the seal's hide and bones contribute to his tribe's destruction, and which are marvels of savage ingenuity.

Many of them are used later when the ice breaks

in "'tween decks." But, on the other hand, he must untie the knots before he can get out; so if by chance he capsizes, he must either be content to navigate head down and keel up, or else must right himself by a sort of somersault, which shall bring him up on the opposite side—and this he often actually does.

When the kayaker catches sight of a seal, he advances within about twenty-five feet of it, and hurls his harpoon "by means of a piece of wood adapted to support the harpoon while he takes aim." This

is called a throwing-stick, and curiously enough the Australasians had a similar contrivance for hurling their javelins. As he throws, the kayaker loosens the bladder and tosses it off. The animal struck dives, carrying away the coiled-up line with great speed; if in this moment the line happens to become entangled, the canoe is almost certain to be capsized and dragged away with no chance of rising again, and many an Eskimo has lost his life through a similar mischance. But if the attack has been successful, the bladder moving on the surface of the water indicates the track of the frantic animal beneath it, and the hunter follows with the large lance, which, when the seal re-appears, he throws like the harpoon. This he does again and again, the lance always disengaging itself, until the poor seal becomes so weak that it can be overtaken, and killed by a lunge of the knife.



SEALS IN SIGHT! — RACING TO THE FLOE. [SEE PAGE 632.]

The flesh of the netsick serves for food all through the summer, and is "cachéd," or concealed, in the snow, or dried for winter use. From the skins of the old seals the arctic natives make their summer clothing, while under-garments are fashioned from those of the young netsick. Children often have entire suits of the white skins of the baby seals in their first fuzzy coat. With the flesh and skins of the netsick, too, the Eskimo travels southward to the Danish settlements, and trades for such civilized articles as he is able to buy.

Late in the summer, when the young seals have grown able to take care of themselves, and the herds are away enjoying the open sea and getting fat on the abundant food they find at that season, the Eskimo has to pursue them with great caution, crawling over the ice face downward, and imitating their awkward, tumbling play until near enough to hurl his spear; or he must get into his frail kayak and chase the herds far up glacial fiords and away across the rough and chilling sea, where they are living on the floating ice.

The food of seals is various, but consists chiefly of fish, though the young ones, when companies of them first begin to hunt in the shallow water near shore, seem to like crabs better than anything else; and to several species of shrimps, abounding in northern seas, the observant sailors have given the name "seals' food." Shell-fish of various sorts, too, are cracked in their strong jaws and devoured — especially the arctic mussels. They swallow many pebble-stones also, not for food, but, it is supposed, in order to aid digestion.

Now I must force myself to leave this hasty sketch of the natural history of these most interesting and serviceable animals, regretting that I can not dwell longer upon many of its features, and turn to the exciting incidents of the chase con-

ducted against them every spring by ships and crews from America and Europe. In this case, however, I am obliged to say that I must not go greatly into details, since they would present a horrible picture of blood and cruel warfare against one of the most innocent and child-like creatures that ever breathed. But I suppose that, much as we might wish it, it will be impossible always to keep out of our sight objects and acts that make us shudder; that is, if we are to know what is actually going on in the world.

A SEAL AFLOAT ON AN ICE-PAN.

The phocine seals of the Atlantic are not hunted for their fur, as are their Alaskan cousins, but chiefly for their oil, and secondarily for their skins. It is an industry which profitably employs hundreds of ships and thousands of seamen, and it receives the name of "sealing." The principal sealing-grounds are Newfoundland, Labrador, and the islands which lie between, but especially the ice-floes off the coast of Western Greenland, the Spitzbergen and Jan Mayen seas; Nova Zembla, the White Sea, and the Caspian Sea. Of these the most important is that first-named, where, as long ago as half a century, three hundred and seventy-five vessels assembled annually, and, twenty-five years ago, five hundred thousand seals were taken in a single season. These early fleets, which were larger in point of numbers than any that go out now, consisted wholly of sailing vessels, many of which were of small size, notwithstanding the long and tempestuous voyages they had to endure. The most of them hailed from Newfoundland. All these were concerned in "ice-hunting," which is the most extensive and profitable, though by far the most dangerous, of all the methods in vogue for capturing seals.

You will remember that at the end of winter enormous herds, chiefly of the harp-seals, come down and congregate upon the floating fields of ice eastward of Newfoundland, where the young are born in March. These are the place and season of the largest fishery, but the locality is never fixed nor certain; the fields, approached simultaneously by sailing fleets and steamers from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Scotland, England, France, Germany, and Norway, must be sought for every year as though for the first time. This is in the icy, tempestuous North Atlantic, at the most stormy period of the year. Dreadful gales may drive the ships anywhere but where they seek to go, bergs may be hurled against them, the ice may jam them between its ponderous edges and crush the doubly braced hulls into splinters, or cleanly cut away parts of the bottom, and leave the

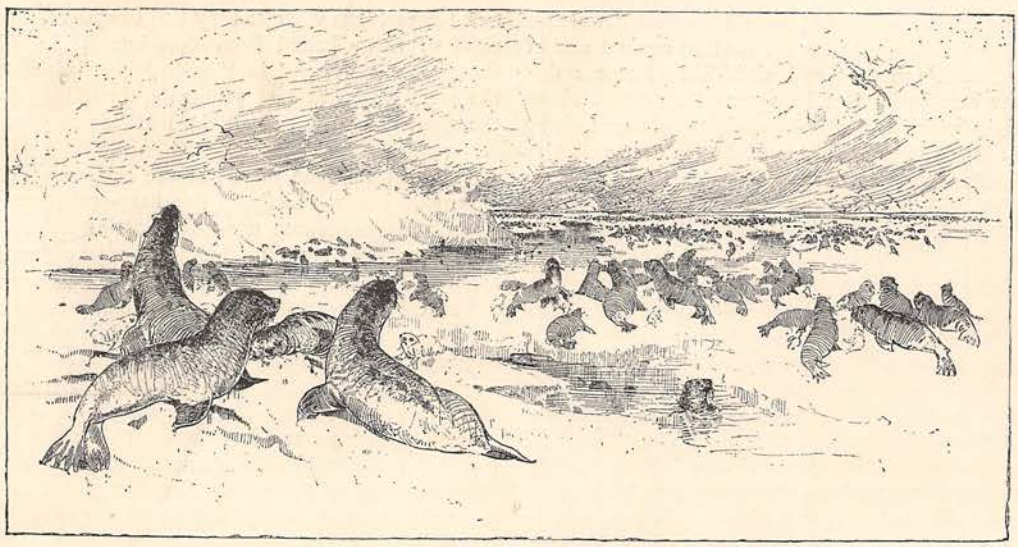
STEAM-SHIP DASHING INTO THE ICE.

vessels to sink and the men to save themselves as best they may upon broken and drifting ice. Strange to say, steam-ships are more liable to harm from the ice than sailing ships, which will be lifted up instead of crushed. Often a field of thin "bay-ice," or a solid floe, will lie right in the path. Then the ship dashes into it as far as its power can force it. When it sticks, the crew leap overboard, chop and break the field into cakes which are shoved under the floe or hauled out on top: or, if it is too thick to be broken, saws are brought out, and a canal is slowly made for the ship's progress. This is a time of great desire for haste, and you may well believe that every man works with all his might.

"Sometimes," writes an eye-witness, "a crowd of men, clinging around the ship's bows, and holding on to the bights of rope . . . would jump and dance on the ice, bending and breaking it with their weight and dragging her on over it with all their force. Up to their knees in water, as one piece after another sank below the cut-water, they still held on, hurrahing at every fresh start she made, dancing, jumping, pushing, shoving, hauling, hewing, sawing, till every soul on board was roused into excited exertion."

Well, when all this toil and danger are passed,—sometimes greatly prolonged, and in the midst of a frozen sea and the most violent storms,—and the ship has the good luck to sight a herd, then begins for the crew of hardy sailors a season of about the most arduous labor that one can imagine.

If the weather permit, the vessel is run into the ice, and moored there; if not, it sails back and forth in open spaces, managed by the captain and one or two others, while the remainder of the crew, sometimes sixty or seventy, or even more in number, get into boats and row swiftly to the floe. The young seals lie scattered about here and there, basking in the sun or sheltered under the lee of a hum-



A "SEAL-MEADOW," OR A HERD OF SEALS UPON AN ICE-FLOE.

mock, and they lie so thickly that half a dozen will often be seen in a space twenty yards square.

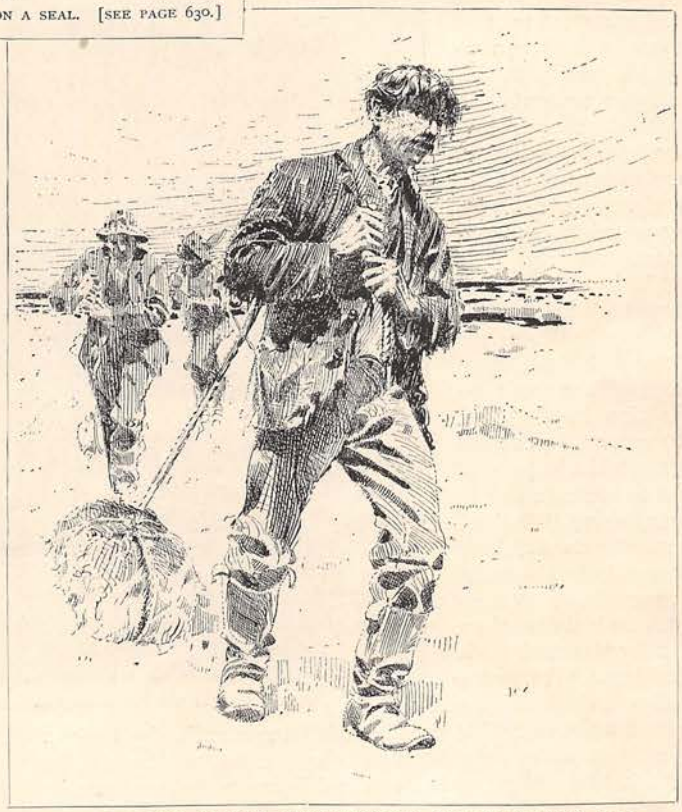
AN ESKIMO IN HIS KAYAK, ABOUT TO HARPOON A SEAL. [SEE PAGE 630.]

They can not get away, or at most can only flounder about, and their plaintive bleatings and white coats might almost be those of lambs. The old seals are frightened away by the approach of the sailors, and never show fight, and the youngsters are easily killed; so the men do not take guns, but only clubs, with which they strike the poor little fellows a single blow on the head, usually killing them at once.

Having struck down all they can see within a short distance, the small squad of men who work together then quickly skin, or (as they call it) "sculp" them, with a broad clasp-knife, cutting clear through the thick layer of fat which lies underneath the hide, and so leaving a surprisingly small carcass behind. Bundles are then made of from three to seven "pelts," and each man drags a bundle toward the boat. This is sometimes miles distant, the ice is rough and broken, he must leap cracks, trust himself to isolated cakes, and often he falls into the freezing water, or loses his way in a sudden squall of snow. It is limb-cracking and life-risking work, and, to accomplish it successfully, a man must school his muscles to endurance, his nerves to peril, and his heart to bitter cruelty; — but every pelt is worth a dollar!

By night, after a "seal-meadow" has been attacked, the decks of the vessel are hidden under a deep layer of fat, slippery pelts. After these have lain long enough to get cool, they are stowed away in the hold in pairs, each pair having the hair outward. The hold is divided by stout partitions into compartments, or "pounds," in order to prevent the cargo from moving about and so rubbing the fat into oil, which would speedily fill every part of the hold and the cabins, spoiling all the provisions. A vessel once had to be abandoned from this accident, because it had not been "pounded." The European ships, however, generally separate the fat at once and stow it in casks.

Sometimes, instead of bringing the pelts to the ship as fast as they are obtained, the hunters pile them up and



SAILORS DRAGGING BUNDLES OF "PELTS" OVER THE ICE TO THEIR BOAT.

place a flag on the heap, so that no other crew will take them, for there may be a score or two of vessels all attacking the herd at once; and this

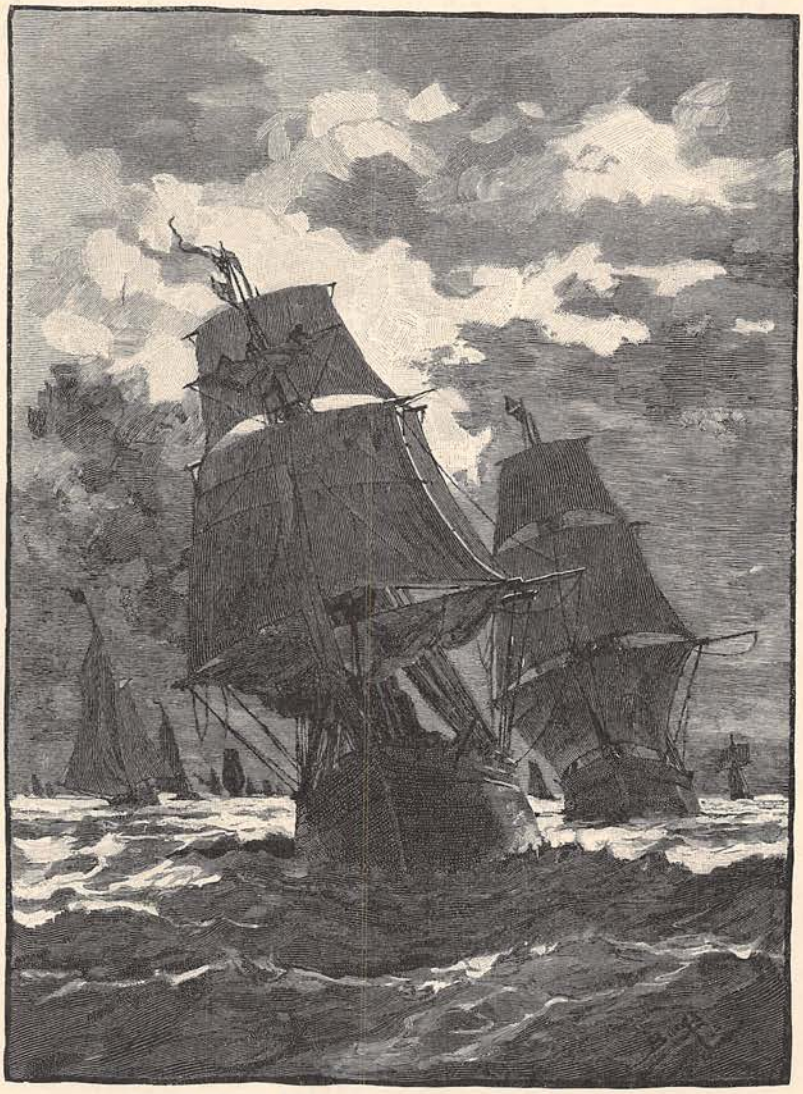
claim is respected. But in very many cases a snow-storm hides these heaps, or they break away from the floe, or the ice "jams" and crushes them, or the ship itself is driven too far off to return, so that they are lost and wasted; hence the practice of thus piling up the pelts is ceasing.

Perhaps I have given you the impression that it is only the young seals that are taken on these expeditions, but that is not wholly correct. Two voyages are ordinarily made, each lasting about two weeks. The first voyage brings home few old seals, but on the second voyage the sealers find the youngsters pretty well grown, and as well able to escape as the old ones. They must therefore use guns somewhat, and otherwise manage to secure adult, or nearly full-grown seals, if they are to get any at all.

Besides the skins and the fat, parts of the flesh are preserved for food, and those who are accustomed to it recommend it highly. The flesh is a "universal remedy" among the Eskimos. When the "Pandora" left England on her arctic expedition in 1874, her interpreter, Joe, an Eskimo, had a bad cough, but he refused all medicine, saying, "Bimeby, eat seal, get well." And, sure enough, his coughing was heard no more after he had feasted on his favorite food for a few days. "For young ladies and gentlemen who can not succeed in making their features sufficiently attractive on chicken and cheese-cakes, no diet is likely to succeed so well as delicate cutlets from the loin of a seal."

There are several methods of capturing these animals along the shore, by driving companies of them into nets, set among rocks or spread underneath the ice at their breathing-holes; by surprising them asleep on the shore and cutting off their retreat; by shooting, harpooning, and so on; but I can not weary you in detailing them, although they are exciting and picturesque.

When a cargo of pelts is brought home, the fat is carefully removed and converted into oil, either by the sun or, in less time, by the aid of steam; but the latter produces a quality poorer in some respects both for lamps and for the lubrication of machines. The skins are salted and packed, and become cured in three weeks, finding ultimate use as shoe-leather, and as covering for knapsacks, valises, small trunks, etc. It would be interesting



ON THE WAY TO THE SEALING-GROUNDS.—LEADING THE FLEET.

to enlarge on this point, too, but readers must be content with only a skeleton of a history of seals and the seal industries, which they can fill out with all the more pleasure to themselves by independent reading in books of arctic travel, of zoology, and of the fisheries.

The sealing in the North Atlantic alone gives employment every spring to, say, twenty-five steamers from Newfoundland, built expressly for the purpose, besides unnumbered sailing vessels; the crews of this fleet making a navy of about ten thousand eager young men. The starting is a scene of the greatest bustle, and when the men return with rich cargoes, and get their pockets full of money, there is great hilarity around the usually dull towns of that far-northern island. It is said that in one year, recently, a round million of seals were taken in the North Atlantic alone. Yet there seems to be little or no diminution in the crowds that throng the ice-floes as each March comes round.

THE CORRECTION BOX.

By Kitty White.

YESTERDAY morning a missionary man came to our Sunday-school, and told us all about the little heathen. They don't have to be dressed up, nor learn the catechism, nor sew patchwork, nor behave, nor do anything disagreeable. And they don't know the value of money; they 'd a great deal rather have a bright button than a gold dollar.

In the afternoon, when we were ready for church, Mother gave us each a five-cent piece. "That 's to put in the correction box," says she. "The missionary is going to preach, and your father and I want you to give him something for the heathen."

On the way to church, Johnny said: "It is n't the least use to send five centses to the heathen. They 'd rather have a bright button than a gold dollar, and of course they would n't care about five cents. And there 's no candy in heathenland, so what do they want of money, anyhow?"

Then I said: "If I only had my button-string, we could each give a button, and spend the five centses for candy, and so we 'd be pleased all 'round." Johnny said that was a good idea; and "there 's a button loose on my jacket this minute; and if I can twist off another before the correction box comes 'round, I 'll give it to you, Kitty."

I thought it was a lovely plan, for Johnny's buttons are just beauties. I heard Mother tell sister Em that they cost two dollars a dozen. They look like gold. But when we got to church, they made me go into the pew first, and Father put Johnny beside him next the door, so 's we could n't talk.

The missionary talked a long time, and then they sang "Greenland's Icy Mountains," and then they went 'round with the correction boxes. Father takes one of them, and they 're on long sticks like a corn-popper, and deep, so 't other folks can't see what you put in. I had to drop in my five cents, and then Mother and Em put in their money, and last of all Johnny put in his button. He held his hand close to the box when he did it, and then he looked at me behind the others, and nodded, so I 'd know he had his five cents all safe.

This morning we bought five lovely squares of taffy. We did n't have time to eat it before school, and when we were going home, Johnny said: "Let us wait till after dinner, and then give everybody a piece; and then I 'll tell Father what the missionary said, and may be after this he 'll give buttons, and it 'll save him a great deal of money."

So we waited, and after dinner, just as we took out the candy to divide it, Father pulled something bright out of his pocket, and rolled it across the table to Mother. She thought it was money, and said, "Just what I wanted!" But it was n't money; it was a brass button.

"How did you come by this?" said she.

"I found it in the correction box, yesterday afternoon," said Father. "Some little rascal put it in, I suppose, and spent his money for candy, and whoever he is, he ought to have a wholesome lesson. If he was my son ——"

And then Mother said, "Why, it is just like Johnny's buttons!" And sister Em said, "Well, there 's one gone off his Sunday jacket. I noticed it this morning, and meant to speak about it."

Everybody looked at us. Father asked what we had in that paper, and "John, is this your button?" And what could we say but yes? They called us unhappy children, and sent us upstairs.

We 've both had a wholesome lesson. I had one 'cause they said I put it into Johnny's head. For two weeks, Father is going to put our pennies away for the heathen, to make us remember.

Johnny says he wishes he was a heathen.