

This is a transcription of the first voyage covered in Alexander Smith's journal, a seal fishing trip from Dundee to Greenland in February 1861. A transcription of the second voyage will be added when complete. This does not follow the original pagination of the handwritten journal, and we have made very minor edits to improve readability, but we have kept most of Smith's spelling and grammar. The diary itself is not divided into sections within this voyage. The headings in the text here are taken from an index to topics covered which Smith added to the original log book. Notes in italics are ours.

The Camperdown

On Wednesday 27th of February 1861 all was bustle and activity on board of "S. S. Camperdown" agreed to sail from Dundee Harbour for the prosecution of the Northern Seal fishery. She was one of 5 auxiliary screw steamers destined for Old Greenland that year and her second year in the trade. She was built by the firm of Stephen Shipbuilders in Dundee in 1860 and supplied with engines of 70 nominal horse power by Messrs Gourlay also of that town, by contract and being unsuccessful the year previous. Some slight manifestation of anxiety was displayed by all concerned, and the community at large as to her future career & fortune for she was really a noble vessel and well provided.

Accordingly by the ship's Articles all Hands had to be on board by twelve o'clock on that day and ready for Sea. Accordingly I shaped my course to the West Dock, where she was moored to the quay, for we had to steam out into the river and consequently required a little time to put everything to rights & get steam up

The first I met on deck was our Captain Will Bruce who to some extent was part Owner, nevertheless quite free from the avarice & meanness so prevalent amongst our captains & ship owners, being a man of a free & liberal disposition, enterprising and of a decisive, masterly turn. His motto is what you do, that you do it well and spare no necessary cost or time. Having so far noticed the vessel & her master allow me to introduce myself as Chief Engineer, second voyage & ship, having been in the capacity of second engineer in the "Wildfire" the preceding year to Captain L. B. Walker and proved successful.

After the usual compliments of the morning, our Captain informed me he intended if the muster of the crew was good he would in all probability go right out to sea and to have steam ready by half past two the tide answering about 3 O Clock P.M. So down stairs I went in order to run up the water in the boiler, and so prepare ourselves to be in readiness when the time for our action should arrive. Light in spirits for I loved the life we were about to [?] on and yet I felt a little thoughtful from various causes, leaving my home and father's house besides a few faithful, dear friends, bound by inseparable ties of affection, together with the responsibility devolving on my sensitive constitution, however the full rigour of youth was mine, and thought was soon, soon abandoned for active duty.

Departure

In due time my force of men arrived and work went on smoothly & cheerily and after little odds and ends were settled I contented myself all was right went home to dinner, although I did not harm it much, bade father, mother, sister and brothers good bye, and hurried back to my future abode with my stomach empty and my heart full and found everything as I could wish it, we were now in all readiness and expectations, and a goodly number of the respectable people of Dundee now stood upon the quay waiting our departure the very steam would be confined no longer and likewise expressed a desire to be off, it was now verging on four o'clock when they began to loose her moorings and many good bye's were then spoken with words of comfort and consolation, handkerchiefs were agitated by fair delicate hands in token of adieu, or a lover's parting kiss observed as a pledge of truth and mutual

understanding, with various other demonstration on the occasion of separation and a fellow as if to eclipse the whole, his feet going farther than his judgment adroitly drops into the dock along side of us from the quay then arose the hue & cry of a man in the water, and a simultaneous rush of the crowd nearly proved fatal to a few more of their number, during which he was got safely out & we moved quietly off amidst such cheers as is seldom heard, after waiting at the Ferry roadstead until the train should arrive, we again moved on with a light wind in our favor it was now about 8 O'clock and close on nine ere we parted with the Pilot for we had to wait some time for the Pilot Cutter, and now clear of all obstruction we once more shot ahead, and next morning found us past the entrance of the Moray Firth, it was a rare and lovely morning and the gentle easy motion of our ship as she glided along with the dense columns of smoke at intervals curling in the air, formed a pleasant contrast with the rising sun, tipping the rolling waves with a golden hue, yes, it was sweet and pleasant and the fragrant morning air put me in remembrance of my Breakfast but my contemplations were here cut short, I had also something else to engage my attention which I was near forgetting, and that was my engines.

Lerwick

having been on watch the whole night, no wonder my imagination beguiled me a little, as my second took unto himself that tormentor, called sea sickness, as soon as we left the Tay and always continued getting worse. I packed him off to bed, thinking a nights rest would be of benefit to him, but poor John was unwilling to go and would fain have been able to keep his watch, but ah: one the flesh was weak, and in a short time he required no further pressing, notwithstanding my confinement I was pretty brisk for everything worked well, giving me far less trouble than I fondly anticipated and my mind was perfectly easy on that account, onward we went and that night at midnight found us snugly moored in Lerwick Harbour in the midst of fully 2 dozen vessals, all bound for Old Greenland and lying there to ship the full complement of men required to prosecute the seal fishing, and which was likewise our errand there, the reason I am led to understand is because they can employ the men much cheaper, and also better acquainted with the fishing we then put everything to right in the Engine Room and I hurried into bed after having a good glass of spirits at the same time giving my men a drop, I slept soundly and sweetly as you may suppose and awoke on Friday about 12 o'clock, I found John all right and on duty although somewhat pale gave him his morning which he declared was better than his last one, for the day previous I had made him swallow a pint of sea water and I may add it proved to him beneficial, going back to my berth I made my bed, stitched the bed clothes together, and arranged my clothes in my chests & furnished my writing desk. The captain had kindly put up for my use, I next set about writing a few letters for home and elsewhere, and went up on deck to have a promenade and a view of the town from the harbour although it is by no means picturesque, regular in build, or attractive.

Most of the houses are 2 storied some fronting the harbour some with their backs towards it, others again with their gables built several yard into the water and appurtenances for hoisting up their boats fixed or built into the walls, and when not in use the boat is hoisted up on the gable, rather a comical plan in my opinion, and not a few stand corner on, the captain having placed a boat & crew at my service, I availed myself on Sunday along with John & the doctor of the opportunity to go to church & took them along in the boat after dinner & at the same time post our letters but by the time we got a boat lowered & a crew mustered we were late for the afternoon service, so being a beautiful afternoon we took a fancy for a look of the surrounding district, happening to overhear the doctor say he had a nice ride on a pony over to Scalway [Scalloway] a village on the other side of the Island some 6 miles distant and a few old romantic ruins in its vicinity, I cried John what do you say for a ride over to Scalway, come on says he & the three of us settled on a scamper there & then as it only cost some two or 3 shillings, we soon got equipped by one Mr Goudie a tailor who kept a stud of ponies for those who inclined to make use of them. So we mounted cane in hand and trotted off. The afternoon was excellent and the road good, with our minds bent on an afternoon sport, as soon then as we cleared the town, a pace was agreed on and off we went, at a fine pace. Soon finding I lost ground

with my companions and endeavouring to keep up with them, made a free use of the cane, but all to no purpose, the more I tried, the more the pony tried, only the opposite way from my intentions finally on losing command of him, I also lost all patience & did he not catch it, I then changed ponys with John as he was a bit of an equestrian, and between him & the Doctor, he turned out as good as the others, afterwards changing with the doctor, we did go it in earnest till both them and us were in perspiration although the wind was keen, it was a beautiful excursion along the hill side, and through the valley, then rising on a grassy eminence we brought the animals to a halt with a lovely view before us, the broad, clear expanse of water stretching out into the distance until seeming to mingle with the heavens. The curtain of mist hid it from human eyes, there too close on the bay was lying the quiet unmolested village slumbering on the margin of the ocean, arrayed in the glories of a setting sun, with its fine remains of a once magnificent cathedral standing aloof, and as it were still guarding & keeping watch over their common weal while in front their cradles of the deep nodded & rocked on the breast of the tide, [?] from inaction & anxious for their liberty, we gazed for a considerable lapse of time ere we thought of starting, for seldom could we embrace such a picture as lay before us, at a glance. Homeward, if I may use the word; we turned our studs, and be it known we had for less trouble in urging them forward, and little over another hour saw us wending our way to the beach of Lerwick, leaping in the boat and rowing for the Camperdown. Our appetites were unusually keen, so satisfying them first, we felt considerably more at ease, and we came to the conclusion it had on the whole been well spent, but being Sunday it ought to have been better, so there the matter stood, we will perhaps make it up when we get the opportunity.

On awaking that morning, I found my watch was going fast, or I had been rather slow in rising, but I reckon not much was lost, for it was blowing a heavy gale from the N. N. W. and putting our fleet in a sad commotion. Some of them were dragging their anchors and fast drifting on the land, amongst these unfortunates was the Dundee "S. S." commanded by Captain Sturrock late of the "Tay" she had driven down on a schooner & partially damaged her, shortly after coming across & slipping a "brigs" anchor, although every ship had both anchors down, alas doing considerable damage & mischief to herself & the "brig". I believe the accident happened by a slight mistake, wishing to get clear of them the "Dundee" raised her steam, but proceeded to raise her anchor before the engines could be started, and hence the result during the gale, which continued all day, she lost one of her anchors & a good piece of the cable attached while they remained lashed alongside the Brig during the gale and steaming the while to hold their own. I understand however that the captains of the vessels have been claiming damages to the amount of 20 & 30 £ respectively, however it has been compromised and the carpenters of various ships have been lending their aid towards repairing them again. So I conclude from that, the affair will pass over quietly considerable mischief has been sustained by the 'Dundee' herself in the shape of boats, davit & stays, of rigging.

The weather here at this time is all but agreeable gales & showers of hail & rain sometimes accompanied with thunder.

The weather improving towards the evening of Tuesday 5th October Anderson and myself thought by way of amusement to have an hours sport on shore, and as soon as tea was over we carried out our designs and went on shore with our own boat & crew, appointing a full muster at 10 o'clock to go of to the ship, on that condition we separated giving the crew as much as procure a glass of ale.

After promenading sometime together in their so called town, we found a capital refuge in Mr Goudies and passed an hour & a half very comfortable indeed. The Misses Goudie doing the aimiable & in a good degree adding to the conviviality of the evening, with all courtesy we left their dwelling to do a stroke of business in the shape of small purchases, (i.e.) going out a shopping, which every enlightened & well informed female will consider really necessary. We were hailed by one of the crew saying they were all mustered and waiting, the doctor unwittingly said, by way of a joke we were not coming on board all night, although it was by no means an agreeable evening for staying

ashore, for the rain & wind were again in the ascendant, so we said no more but quietly went along for something else & post a letter by the way and on returning some 10 minutes after, the boat was gone, they had acted on the belief of us staying out all night & consequently pulled off, what was now to be done it was getting late nearly all the boatsmen away & the boats hauled up, at last we came on 3 of them hauling up one of their boats & offered the a shilling double the usual price, to get on board, one of them replied, a shilleen won't too, must have more, for ye no see hoo she flows, o go to the Deuce said we and left him, determined not to encourage, impudent imposters. So the doctor ran up to (Leask) the agents, who politely told him, to find a boat for himself. Such is life, man mind thyself, well the old fox, we did take his advice getting chagrined at our want of success, we very handsomely went straight from his house to the pier of which there are a good number, by good fortune found a boat nicely moored; without being over s'mptuous we unfastened the mooring slip'd in and pushed off, not fifty yards from the pier we heard a voice bellowing hoi, hoi, come back in the boat, although we could distinguish nobody through the darkness of the night, ho, ho, old cock so you may we exclaimed to ourselves, we havn't the least intention of doing such a thing, we had trouble enough to get away besides running a chance of staying in chucky all night, so we held on our course, pulling like Britons & groping our way through the fleet in the darkness, nearly drenched with rain & spray we got on board at last, giving a couple of hands who volunteered, half a crown to take back the boat, they halted at the "Dundee" as they passed for a rest, as it was a rough night & the owners of the missing boat now appeared in pursuit and found their errand alongside of that vessel, and getting none of the ?crew of that air vessel to plead guilty to the theft, they returned some what disconsolate, the 2 fellows belonging us, coming on board early next morning, quite satisfied, with the job. We are now all expectation for our sister ship the Polynia, but our anxiety was of short duration, as she made her appearance in the midst of us about 8 o'clock in the evening of Wednesday 6th under steam, she had been up the night previous but could not effect an entrance owing to foggy weather and blowing a strong gale from the S.S.W. she was driven northwards, beating up under steam & canvass arrived safe as above mentioned, she certainly looks well and am informed is fully as good as she looks steaming from 8½ to 9 knots an hour ? well I hope she may, at any rate we will give her a chance for the (?Belt) although not boasting of more than a knot ?less we cannot however remain longer in her company at present, (hoping to meet again) we must away, business of more moment to us must and therefore shall be attended to, and with everything ship shape and the white plume floating from our bonnet we turn seaward once more to a "life on the ocean wave".

Departure

Heading north & by east, through the North Sea to country of ice and seals, earnestly hoping to have the companionship of a good round number by our return (of the latter only) more especially if a bad beginning augurs a good ending. Speaking from experience we have it rough & round & no mistake already our port bulwarks are nearly all knocked inn, and the ship and more than the ship has been nearly turned upside down, to say nothing at all of stomachs, I am really grateful mine has stood the test.

"Wouldn't thou", so the helmsman answered

Learn the secret of the sea

Only those, who brave its dangers

Comprehend its mystery

(Longfellow)

all I say is the knowledge is sometimes dear bought as at present, our fore cabin resembles the fore cabin of a passenger ship from its appearance, instead of apartments, belonging to thorough trained seaman forcibly putting one in mind of a mad cabin where the people live in one corner, & the pig &

family in another, meantime we hope for a far better arrangement once we get better weather, just now I am writing with hand & holding on with the other, to keep my position, the sea is in a fair hubbub arising from cross currents & contrary gales of wind alternately from the time we left Lerwick, we are not beginning to feel the cold frosty air as we fork our way over the North Sea, and to face the frequent hail storms comfortably one would require to wear a mask of [bond] leather so sharp is their bite. These only coming frequently with Nor' West winds.

The other evening, we had the usual precedents of a southerly wind in a brilliant array of the Meteors of the North, illumining the spangled firmament and the face of the waters with a dazzling beauty, sweeping over the cloudless horizon like a twisting whip cord in the hands of an Esquimaux Driver of a sled, we are at present in Lat 67-8 or nearly within 250 miles of the

Tuesday 12th March

Island of Jan Mayen which lies in Lat 71° 10' and may be said to be the southern extremity of the seal fishing – extending north as far as Lat 76° – 77° and expecting in a day or two to make the ice, if not our fortune's. Meantime we are struggling along with a sou-easter and since it cleared up another vessal supposed to be the "Tay S.S." also discernible struggling along on our weather quarter. My poor friend John has still a weary time of it never having been free of sickness since we left Shetland, and I fear he will never make a thorough sea going man it is my opinion were he to make his, appearance just as he is at present, Mrs ?Jack, would deny ever she (k)new such a man (fellow) a short time has made a piteous alteration on him, poor fellow, although I doubt not he will soon recruit once we get him into smooth water, after trying him with everything I could think off, all to no purpose we must now leave him over to time for his recovery. There is nothing of moment transpiring in our small sphere of life at present worthy of record, if it aint the doctor who I cannot but imagine is tumbling somersaults in his berth, such is noise & din through the partition, I can fancy he will play thump through directly, but perhaps he may be going through some practical operation with himself, for the benefit of his constitution although cannot help wishing he would take the deck for it, or I'll have to stash the scrivening for a night and turn into bed for I am miserably pressy at any rate. Never particularly good humoured at any time and far less now (for I could tear to pieces a nice mutton pie) it is to be fear'd this sort of weather would put any good tempered person such as me, out of joint, you get worried to death nearly sitting below, will go up to get a promenade on deck, you get tossed like a penny roll from one side to the other with the occasional assistance of a neighbourly drop of brine thump on your back, and the only alternative remains, go below, till better weather, or have another of the same. I think this here particular vessel is never better pleased than rolling and tumbling about at large, at all events will remain below at present. As

The night is lowering-stally black

Heep's the grim wave, while heavens rack

Dispers'd and wild, twist earth & sky

Hangs like a shattered canopy

There's not a cloud in that blue plain

But tells of storm to come or past

Here, flying loosely as the mane

Of a young war horse, in the blast

There rolled in masses: dark and selling
As proud to be the thunder dwelling
While some, already burst & risen
Seem melting down the verge of heaven

As though, the infant storm had sent
The mighty womb that gave him birth
And, having swept the firmament
Was now in fierce career for earth.

We are now close on the ice but the proper direction for us to steer, seems now a matter of no little moment. Owing to the great prevalence of (Nor West) gales of wind, the ice is sadly scattered and broken up, drifting about in all directions over the sea, which is not a very satisfactory appearance to us seal fishers, liking better to see a nice light close pack edge, as there is a greater certainty of ascertaining as to the map & seal's whereabouts, so that we must content ourselves to knock about until providence guides us amongst them, if it is so ordained.

Talk about cold – this is the spot for cold, you dare not stay on deck here five minutes with any part of your body not carefully protected from it. The wind so piercing, with an intense frost, and the very air occasionally impregnated with minute frozen particles almost imperceptible until you remain sometime on deck, when a gradual accumulation of it covers your entire person more especially on a beard or pair of whiskers, making them perfectly white. Hence the usual designation of it as the Barber or the Miller even when in bed and snugly moored amongst the blankets, the heat of the body together with continatral perspiration causes a mildew to appear on the outer covering, as if one had been sleeping in a field of clover on a May morning, although quite sensible of the difference, we are now coming in amongst our neighbours.

I had no idea of the vast quantity of ships engaged at the sealing, from Peterhead alone there is nearly 2 dozen, with or besides a goodly sprinkling of Norweigians and Dutchmen – all endeavouring to catch “Mr Pussy”. Were we to sum up what each vessel expects (it is my opinion the race of seals would become extinct) but like us, I suppose they may be allowed the blessed privilege of hoping to get them as I daresay they are not out of the need of them.. At all events we are making ready for the Harvest the Flensing knives & steels have been distributed with a few rifles, and men busy moulding the bullets, night & day. Nothing like preparation and if we don't get anything for our pains, why I suppose there isn't much harm done. Seals or no seals, we are a class that has our part of the play to do, and steaming every day is now all the go.

Saturday night

Saturday past we had a little bit of comfort in the shape & substance of rum punch (my favourite in the Engine Room after our work was done, and spruced up as if going to an evening concert, in fact it was of that nature ere we gave it up it brought out quaint old stories of past times, the hopes or misgivings for the future, the memory of our homes, with the supposed sayings or doings likely to occupy in some manner that evening's catalogue there these with many other pleasing and droll ruminations formed the principal topics of our evening's amusement occasionally raised with a toast, or song, and another bit taste of the punch, finishing with a cordial 'good night' we took to our several berths for an evening.

Next day we were up and at it again, Sunday as it was, though I suppose it was the work of necessity with us, and after steaming all day we stopped in the evening, had our tea and assembled for to read ourselves a lesson from the 'Book of Books' which guides us all (or ought to)

(But) Hark! the vesper call to prayer

As slow the orb of daylight sets

Is rising sweetly on the air

From Syria's thousand minarets

The boy has started from the bed

Of flowers, where he had laid his head

And down upon the fragrant sod

Kneels with his forehead to the south

Lispings the eternal name of God

From purity's own cherub mouth

And looking, while his hands and eyes

Are lifted to the glowing skies

Like a stray lake of Paradise

Just lighted in that flowery plain

And seeking for its home again

Oh! 'twas a sight – that heaven – that child

A scene that might have well beguiled

Even haughty Eblis of a sigh, for glories lost & peace gone by

Moore [an extract from Thomas Moore's "Paradise and the Peri"]

The next morning brought us fine pleasant weather, the air was pure and mild with a soft wind from the South East. In fact it would be altogether agreeable, only for the heavy rolling swell of the North Sea causing the pieces of broken ice to tear and hammer against our ships sides with unremitting zeal. The ship itself lurching from side to side, making it impossible to use the telescope with advantage in the look out. The country of our researches here is utterly devoid of scenery unless it can be found in a vast expanse of water partially covered with ice with nothing picturesque but a few vessels beating about, in the distance so that almost everyone is left to his own resources for amusement or instruction of any description. Thus being the chief cause of spinning yarns, card playing, dancing, or singing, and such frolics so prevalent in Greenland going ships, and followed out with untiring energy, and in many instances the habits thus practised for a lengthened period will be with difficulty thrown off. At discretion, it can scarcely be wondered at or denounced I fear under the circumstances, it is natural they should seek recreation, and if conducted with proper judgement, I have no doubt would serve a good purpose, as it is at present, however, no praiseworthy effect will likely be produced from such frivolities.

The aim in itself is thoroughly justifiable and were the means to be directed by a proper channel or for example were those whose prerogative it is to show a little interest in the welfare & comfort of those in their immediate charge (that is Master & Officers of vessels) I repeat the Master & Officers of a ships company to study in some degree, the relationship between them & the crew, as men and brethren, subject alike to hardship & danger, good and evil, considering the oportunites & means held by the former, their example for good or evil when brought to bear upon the latter in every day life and transactions, I have no hesitation in affirming a surprising and favourable change would soon be the result of kindness, duty & fellow feeling, between superiors, inferiors and equals, I dare not say all, for there is some who could not or would not appreciate kindness done for them, yet the great majority would, estimating it at its true worth, while the fruit of such co-operation would be infinitely more agreeable and beneficial to all concerned. There the exacting hand of the task master, or a dozen sermons delivered for outward bound vessels which in general come in (as the saying is) at the one ear and go out at the other.

Practice with the profession, of Christianity alone can do that [‘alone can do that’ has been inserted above the line] and until that practice be brought into action with every day dealings, and unanimously adopted in the various departments thereof, it is useless to hope for a better system of ship government or sanitary reform ever accomplished until that takes place. Such is the system I would confidently recommend the details of which I will not enter upon at present being in a manner, of no use here. Nor is it altogether in my line, this sort of legislature, I will therefore resign the task to some one more qualified and with greater weight in such matters to propagate it further amongst the community at large, and especially the seafaring portion of it.

Greenland

We have now been pretty well north in this country and as far as gone, no satisfactory or beneficial result has been obtained, tending only to make our hitherto imperfect ideas yet more conflicting and confused, being the opinion of a great many masters in our Greenland fleet. Judging from the appearance and casual condition of the country (i.e. the ice) there will be no good done this season, or in other words very few if any seals will be found by the ships here for this year, and still an unremitting search must be continued, for no one knows what to do or where to go for the best, while time wears on apace.

It is hard knocking about here, when in earnest or on eager search, I could scarce give you anything like a definite description of it, first seeking north things not being in a suitable condition, about ship is the word, and run south again, by the pack edge or edge of the main body of ice, perhaps descriing a fine lane or light of water in the interior and certainly prudence urges on once being sensible of seeing to use the phrase, what it is made of, then up steam and batter away amongst the detached mass which seems to bar all further progress or nearer approach, once inside each nook is carefully scrutinised while we make a circuit along its edge, feeling quite at ease, that nothing more remains best to give it up for a bad job, and come tumbling and rattling out again, in case of a night frost which would effectually confine us within said limits which if far from our wishes unless the seals took a fancy to pay us a visit whilst there, could we only ascertain their whereabouts we would be so condescending as to save them the extra bother, if they are actually here on the ice (and not as some has supposed) taken the air for it. I am somewhat surprised nobody has seen them as we have good reason to know in our perigrinations, receiving them every two or three days, I mean the equally unfortunate vessels from which I submit the following that no vessel, with whom we have had communication, we included, has yet ascertained or been at the spot where the seals are located, this season and hence the impossibility of catching them, or seeing them, which must take place first previous to catching them.

Prior to my conclusion, I mean to offer an excuse, exculpating us from censure on our unsuccessfull voyage if so it may end as it has every appearance of so doing, in the following

Seal fishing, in common with most other chances, probabilities, on speculations, have its own peculiar laws, modes, or reliable rules and theories, carefully deduced, and founded on the practical experience of a long series of years and principally hinging on the, texture, form, position, and general appearance of the ice as found at the time the old seals are supposed to take the ice, together with the winds, which has been prevalent and which in some way affect the position of the ice, and the winds in prospect that will in all likelihood affect it still more.

Now taking into consideration all this you will at once perceive the utmost delicacy and strict attention is requisite to reap the benefits of past experience, and which I am sorry to say this year will not be obtained, for our guidance or advantage. This being a year, which bids defiance to all established rules or former practices. Any attempt to shape our course in consistency with or to them ends in folly, and the most cherished plans have proved abortive. Nor can be found any data to bear upon or elicit the smallest light on what must be our course under the present circumstances, and to use the expression of our veteran fishers, there is no such ice in the country (to be seen) as seals would look at alluding therefore to our present condition are we not in very sense of the word labouring in the dark, at least circumstances would lead one to think so; can a successful voyage be expected, I should (hope so) but think not, looking at the case as it appears and really is. Established rules set to nought, the unfavourable position of the ice, the series of contrary winds, the absence of a clue to their place of concealment, can I would ask can the least blame be attached to us, us who are the sufferers and hourly exposed to its casualties, I should say no (hear, hear). Therefore to sum up if you desire a victim, reader, allow me to refer you to one or all of these unforeseen causes to which is attributable our want of success, not us.

Permit me to add in conclusion and defence

Each man has done his duty (as,)

What! Are our fairest prospects fled,
Our cherished day dreams yet unwon
Have we through fancy, been misled
By our own counsel, and undone;
O, thou sealed future, who shall say
What's kept by thee, in store for us
Whether "tis" joy; or blank dismay
Will mix the cup; thus drained for bliss
Yet this we know, content then rest
For plain tis, writ in holy word,
There's nothing here can make us blast
Nought that this poor world can afford. [AS]

Go, search the universe to its wall

Take all the pleasures of all the spheres

One minute of heaven is worth them all

Though multiplied through endless years.

Having thus far traced the cause of our misfortune to incidents ungovernable by us, and altogether beyond our control we find a relief in the saying old as it may be, which runs thus there are two things we should never murmur about that which we can help, & that which we cannot.

Surely this cannot be Greenland cries one man to his mate, on a fine sunny morning while basking himself in the sunbeams on deck.

The person he had just addressed, turning slowly round, from his first contemplation of the days probabilities was one well suited to answer from his long experience. The other and his juniors sceptical question looked at him with one of those whimsical, droll expressions, peculiarly the privilege of seafaring life.

Well now where did you think you were eh: hang me, if the fellow aint got out of bed before he is half awake go down and, oh interrupted the young man thus rebuked, twas only because I didn't expect to see such fine weather out here I said that. Well, now you're a precious chick. Surely: Why: did you think, you great blockhead the sun could only shine nowhere but on Fife, well I'm blessed.

No, persisted the other but from any account I could get, it was awful cold out here, and look at the difference to day, ho ho you may as well look at the difference tomorrow. Man – alive – do you know what you are talking about, wait till the first nor[th] easter sets in, I'm blown if old nick himself will get you on deck. I well remember once of being wintered in the "Queen" I think in '54 for exercise and fresh victuals we use to take a day to hunt the deer over the snow, well look ye the frost was that hard, now I'm telling the truth, while taking off my mitten to put a cap on my gun, d--n me look sore if I haven't had my hand frost bit, you fellows don't now what frost is, no there was only 3 of our whole ships company that was not frost bit or bad with scurvy, that's the spot to take a trial off where 16 of us died that three months.

I like folk to speak with some sense, d[amne]d easy for the likes of you, whenever it comes the least bit of cold, shirk away below out of sight or else get muffled up to the eyes in your mother's shawls like a scarecrow in a tatie field. But I say Bill how would you like getting lashed to the masthead for twenty four hours eh, shipmate fine day and altogether, his discourse was here cut short by the order to slack away the head sheets, and so for the present ended this nice dialogue.

The mild weather here this sometime back has been quite unprecedented and has been the subject of remark among those accustomed to roughing it out here, we have had only some 4 or 5 of really cold days since we came, although often a copious supply of snow or hail, when nobody is looking for it, and a never ceasing thick fog always, spoiling our look out on a fine day, although we get steam up on a bright clear morning and fully prepared for a scour through the ice & proceed so far when perhaps a fog bank will make its appearance and in the course of 10 minutes you cannot see twice the length of the ship and of course we have to knock off, or chance to pass the very thing we were looking for; such cases are of daily occurrence, which somewhat retards our progress. "Hard times" has "come again once more".

While sauntering along the deck one morning, previous to retiring for the night, an exclamation of mirth caused me to listen. I peep'd below, it was a card party, of four, deeply interested one was evidently perplexed, and another losing all patience, cried, I say Jack come away, man, don't keep us waiting on you all night, what's wanted, says Jack, evidently roused from his lethargy and looking up; why hearts to sure play to the ace I know you've got one; about you but if a conscience was asked Jack, I don't know where you'd go to find it another deafening shout of applause from the rest marked this pun, Jack the while looking daggers although scarcely able to

suppress a smile in which he could have relished very heartily had it not been at his own expense: thus the game and the joke had their rounds in spite of all the cares or troubles which could surround them.

At length we have arrived at southern lat[itude] as far south at all events as we may expect to find the seals, or “critters” as our captain terms them, and still unsuccessful not having seen the indications of one of the tribe we are looking for. In consequence of which we may reasonably infer there are none of them meant for us, and will, not be much surprised although we all get handcuffed by old Mr Stephen as a parcel of barefaced imposters, continually spending his wealth without the least scruples and making no handsome profitable returns. In fact quite made up our minds for some outrage of this description. Poor we.

The game then being all up with us in this [?one/ere] quarter, it is up stick and away north again as fast as ever we can run, in case good is done while we are loitering away down here for little purpose. Precious hunting, is this blubber hunting beats everything out of sight, I have come across. There is neither rest or comfort to be had unless one takes pity on and does the amiable by himself for which he is the better off, as with us in general.

Charity, (this description of it anyhow) begins abroad and sums up with, each for himself, care not a tuppence for your neighbour, such is life Ugh! Were it in my option, I would willingly shake hands and have done with this grinding unparalleled, beastly, sort of work. Totally unfit for honest, intelligent, vigorous men spending a lifetime in. Just so much of time, talent, and opportunity thrown away uselessly. Neither of advantage to us or beneficial to the community. Yet if seal and whale fishing must be carried on, why at once make a Botany Bay or Van diemens Land, of it. Serving at once two we should think very important purposes.

Well, I beg pardon for my ideas running a little from my usual strain and situated as I certainly am ought to be the last to indulge in unlicensed sentiments against this here mode of life, nevertheless I hope to be excused on any pretext that “[sirts – spirits?], the too fastidious all important “critic”; be mercifull.

We have now experienced, what is termed a, stiff, tight Southerly, Easter. The effects of which has a constant tendency to keep the ships out here in imminent danger, especially as in this case when blowing in excess and right in upon the face of the pack of heavy ice, we might as well be driven ashore or against a rocky headland, the consequences of which is not in any case at all desirable, although sometimes a vessel in these trying circumstances has no option and with the stress of wind and waves gets buffeted in amongst that heavy broken ice in spite of all efforts to save her, ultimately falling a victim to their united destructive tendency’s, soon becomes a mass of floating fragments, then happy are the crew if they have the aid of a neighbourly vessel at hand to relieve them of their sufferings.

In ’52 a vessel named the Joseph Green of Peterhead was lost in this manner, and a great number of the crew were lost or died from the effects of exposure to the inclemency of the weather while not a few were rendered objects for life.

This gale of wind is over now indeed a strong gale seldom extends over 24 hours, long enough for all that, I assure you with little damage as far as we know

(except poor John very very sick)

How calm, how beautiful comes on

The peacefull hour, when storms are gone

Where warring winds have died away

And clouds beneath the glancing ray

Melt off, and leave the land and sea
Sleeping in bright tranquillity
Fresh as if day again were born
Again upon the lap of morn
And, ever that swell the tempest leaves
Is like the full and silent heaves
Of lover's hearts, when newly blest
Too newly to be quite at rest

- Moore

Diary of weather

Turn we now to a short and concise retrospect of the weather this past week
as follows

1861

Tuesday 2nd April very mild clear morning, under steam from 7am until 3pm when it came a heavy thickness which caused us to stop.

Wednesday, still mild, thick weather, very cold towards night

Thursday, thick snow, wind Nor[th] East

Friday, very clear, and very cold under steam all day, searching South

Saturday, cold thick weather steaming all day, wind toward evening from Sou[th] West, sighted Jan Mayen Island [as of 1929 a Norwegian (volcanic) island in the Greenland Sea of the Arctic Ocean, approx. 500 km east of Greenland; approx. 55 km long]

Sunday, extremely cold, wind N.W. and very intense frost all day, (Barber Flying)

Monday, most intense frost, nearly all the pipes containing water frozen, and a few burst pipe leading to pressure gauge frozen, ?tube of ditto burst, indicating a pressure from congealment 10 lbs on the square inch, although 2 furnaces were kept in active combustion night & day, raised steam and steamed all day North

Tuesday 9th South East gale & thickness from the preceding statements it will be readily seen at a glance, the liability we are under to changes of weather and atmospherical inconsistency arising therefrom and the ignorance and uncertainty we are in as regards its approach as it totally changes in the lapse of a few minutes from one extreme into the other, and also the disagreeable effects it produces, some of them very ?provoking what is here termed "Barber" is the minute frozen particles (arising from this thickness or moisture) floating throughout the whole atmosphere and scarcely discernable until it accumulates, which it does very readily to hair or ropes until they become thickly coated by it, and the beard soon assumes the appearance of being soap'd previous to a shave, hence the phrase ("the Barber") And putting me in mind of a curious story, the authenticity of which I cannot vouch for, and if my ink would be so obliging as to remain a fluid, I might venture to transmit it to paper if memory permits

Have to dissolve the ink at a fire occasionally.

The story runs nearly thus,

Some years since, a clergyman happened (while making his quarterly peregrinations for the purpose of obtaining pecuniary assistance from his parishioners in aid of his unfortunately small stipend) to go into the village barbers shop on the same errand, accosting the barber with Good Morning Sir, ahem! You know I am them minister! ahem! Oh, says the modest barber bowing, happy to see yae', wid yer reverence like a shave, and setting the chair for him began to look important, stop stop says the gentleman in black coming to his senses, for the fast going barber had taken him by surprise ahem! You know I merely called for ahem! Trifling five schillings for the last quarterly preaching (seat included) five shillings says the barber nervously grasping his razor, I'm no own you or any ither body five pennies, an ma'er I've never been within yer kirk door since I came to the parish

But o my good sir says the minister that's your own blame, the door is there open for you along with the others. If everybody were to do that I would become beggar'ed?

After a little inward cogitation the barber paid down the money, the man of sermon's inwardly congratulating himself, bade him good morning and vanished.

A few day after what had occurred the parson was disturbed while at dinner by a noisy rapping at the door, in a short time our friend the barber was usher'd into the room, after duly making his obeisance by way of a scrape & profound bow, utters 'Gude day Sir, I'm the barber body ye ken' well says the minister what can I do for you, 'Oh' says the barber 'Sir just ga'en roun' for my shavin baw'bee's ye ken, so ye can pay me mi seven & sixpence, for my times since'. 'What Sir, you never shaved me in your life Sir, go you fellow'. 'That's the rub Sir' says the barber, now laughing outright 'My shop's been open every day Sabbath an a' for the last six month, so if you didna get shaved it was yer ain blame Sir, gin a'body were to play those capers we'is, I wid shoon starve'.

The case was clear, the minister was outwitted and rather shaved for once, without consent, and paid for it too handsomely.

I have only another story to quote regarding a minister and I have done, the truth of which I can assert, happening not long ago, in one of our country towns north of the Tay. At the instance of several members of the said congregation an ecclesiastical court was held for the purpose of inquiring into a charge brought against the parish minister in consequence of his inebriety on Sunday and public occasions in ?co'y [company] with one of the elders named J..... B..... who was brought forward as chief witness in the case and on being duly admonished took his place in the witness box [and] gave evidence as follows

(Moderator) now Thomas on your oath, have you ever known the Rev. Mr. to be the worse of liquor, (Thomas) No your worship, he often heard him say he was the better of it but never that he was the worse of it,

(Mod., frowning) come, come Sir, this is mere equivocation, remember you are before an ecclesiastical court and must answer discreetly, now sir once for all did you ever see Mr the worse of liquor or in any other words tipsy or drunk, pause and think, now!!!

No your worship's, I never did, an deed Sir, that's what I'll never see, because I'm aye blind fou or ever he be half slocken'd [*Slocken is the past tense of slock, which is a dialectal, British word meaning to quench or drench.*]

At the conclusion of this speech the court burst into a shout of applause & laughter which had the desired effect of dismissing the case as not proven, which the Rev^d Gentleman triumphantly gave him his arm (to Thomas) home.

April 10th It blows very hard from the N. West today and very cold withal the thermometer 24° below freezing point but I understand it is usually coldest here about this time in the early part of April, when frost winds set in or greatly prevalent, & no word of Pussey yet

We are still steering our course North & East with a faint flickering hope of doing good yet although my own faith has vanished some weeks since fearing the only possible chance we will get, will happen when the seals are coming out from the ice to the water, that is if we wait as long,

We have passed the “Tay SS” this afternoon beating Sou(th) West, it is my opinion the most of them should boat away out to Davis Straits, and redeem themselves before it is too late, and the best of the season over. I care not I affirm how soon we were there and Captain John H Walker has every chance of getting a good laugh at my expense as he most assuredly predicted, yet I will try and afford [?it] if he don't come it all the stronger over me.

Monday 15th I am beginning to realise in real earnest it is all over with us here for the sealing season, and after a most determined search, the majority of the vessels including the 7 steamers have as exactly as if by appointment assembled from all directions into one last congregation of shipping, a circumstance which is but too apparent and conclusive to one and all, fully verifying the evidence that nobody has been fortunate enough to fall in with the seals, or discover the faintest indications as to their concealment. Indeed the case is so hopeless that even tonight the Narwhal, Polynia, Dundee and Tay have all taken their departure for home. Not however before the “Tay” has managed to run into and severely injure the Pacific Capt Alexander Stewart carrying away a topmast and a portion of the rigging.

Also the “Polynia” has got both fans broken by the ice, further information I cannot obtain as we spoke none of them.

There are the steamers yet remaining, Viz: the Diana and Lady Seale from Hull and us, the Camperdown from Dundee, but another week or so will most likely find us homeward bound, also: I suppose we are still clinging to a faint hope of getting some seals when they leave the ice and come South which they are bound to do to get into the water, which will shortly occur, whether we obtain a per centage or not, on our explorations as we are coming once more South and I hope once for all, but must not be disappointed although we do not,

“Oh! Ever thus from childhoods how

I've seen my fondest hopes decay

I never lov'd a tree or flower

“But 'twas the first to fade away

20th April This is once more Saturday night and no doubt will be hailed with pleasure by many, while to others it will be the harbinger of woe, and not a few will receive it as a matter of course.

To the labouring community it comes as a precious boon, ending their incessant toil for the past week, relaxing their muscles for a short space and bringing with it opportunity for mental or physical indulgence and recreation, also their hard won wages and more than needful, may scarcely sufficient for their bare existence, yet for that must they struggle on or with wives and families, starve, or become destitute outcasts on society, yet such, many has become, by such misfortune.

To the shopkeepers it comes as a harvest, magnificent is the display of the various articles for sale, even the window gets an extra polish on the all important Saturday, and a clean collar encircles the neck of the vendor as with smiling face he welcomes his customers to inspect his, just newly arrived stock, of first class goods at most alarming (low) prices.

To his used up assistant however the case is very different, with his wearied pent up frame he cannot appreciate staying behind the counter he sees no great beauty in the brilliant display of a shop, when his companions and equals are rowing about at freedom, enjoying the cool and placid fragrance of a summer evening with infinite satisfaction and benefit, while he remains so caged up deprived like a criminal of pleasant society and the pure oxygen his very blood is so much in want of, and can only be obtained by a nice walk by the fields in the open atmosphere or on the bosom of the pure water's of the deep.

To him Saturday has no enjoyment nor has it to the man who carries home his discharge from employment in his pocket, a sorrowful gift for his dependant household, to look at, certainly their support thus abruptly cut off, with poor if any veivs for their future maintenance no wonder if his brain burns at the thought, or a bitter tear scalds his cheek, as his generous heart is wrung to extreme tension with the sudden stroke it has not the power to defend, is it for himself he is thus unman'd, no, fate could not move him thus if alone he could bear it all, and grapple with and conquer it even as he grappled with a firm hand his hammer, and forced the obdurate mass of labour into meek subjection, the while waxing stronger, but now, the objects of his care and protection must feel the sad blow, it makes the lion tame.

However this aint a job for my fancy to picture out, nor was it my intentions to meddle with the subject, as I have little experience but that by chance thrown across my path, so I give it up instantor, and go to bed shortly after I get a glimpse of the concert I hear in the "tween decks", which is generally well attended owing to the prices being low, and no affectation.

Birthday Anniv.

Well I declare here is my 24th birthday anniversary past, exactly one week ago Saturday 13th April and the first time I am sensible of it is as I write that ought at least to be a tumbler of punch for me tonight as I can't get it sooner, but I reckon it will do - the rub is when am I to find it be found it must, on such an occasion it is wholly indispensable, when he serves himself, so here goes and it is our candid opinion (that is the doctor and one or two more) that a sprinkling of the fair sex would be necessary to keep us in order & good humour, (them as the grand poet truly observes

Will neatly brush our Sunday cl'oes

And with them to the pop they goes

While we poor mortals never knows

Woman, charming woman O')

"twasn't" I that wrote this "ere specimen".

We don't know how you are getting on at home but can assure you we are doing wonderfull well in the meantime here, and with a will, quite a respectable private concert of our own in the engine room and specially select are the audience the lot of us wishing we were home, very early separating after the usual toast of

To "the wind that blows"

To "the ship that goes"

& "the lass that loves a sailor"

& sentiment

The seals may break our fortune, but will never break our heart.

We can manage that is upwards of 70 hands can pick up 3 or 4 of the critters in a day, not bad work at all, already we have a better voyage than they had last year after all, as we have upwards of 2 dozen, while they had only 19 last voyage, we have one comfort the bad new's will be home before us, and the panic somewhat subsided ere we arrive, a deuced bad job for the town certainly and Peterhead especially, depending as it does on the seal and herrings fishings the poor place will become ruined as 28 vessals from there all unsuccessful is too much for it to bear.

Were I a capitalist with the inclination, I would make some good purchases of shipping 3 or 4 thousand would buy the best ships in the fleet and there is first class vessals in it.

At present their funds were so low as only to admit of the fore quarter, or the 2 fore legs of the beef being sent to Greenland, the hind legs &c being sent to London for the market. So you perceive it is about 7 bells with them. [*meaning 'just before the end' – 8 bells signals the end of the watch at sea and is also used as a by-word for death.*]

Return Home

Sunday 21st April, marks the commencement of our return from that wilderness term'd old Greenland.

The steam is up, the sails all furled,

We're bound to plough the watery world,

“Hurra” we're homeward bound.

There are only a few in high spirits about going home, the greater part would have liked much rather to have gone right on to Davis straits and consequently avoided the long, catalogue of stupid impertinent, meaningless and disagreeable, interrogations, they are certain to be annoyed with during the limited time we must necessarily stay, for the remainder of our stores and other needfulls requisite for the prosecution of the whale fishing.

Superstition

Sailing thus for home on a Sunday will surely please the most superstitious among us being considered very lucky, in fact the luckiest day of the week for such a purpose, for last year they sailed on a Friday which, with a good few accounted for their unsuccessful voyages. So fast does this contagion spread on board ship, even those who know better or should know better, when a coincidence of this nature occurs, have their mind strongly influenced by the more ignorant and also more clamorous, owing chiefly to a want of firmness and principle, much as civilisation and education coupled with a sound religion has done in regard of unmasking this terror of the Middle Ages.

There are still a few, otherwise rational & intelligent men, whose minds as it were are diseased on that point, nursing and clinging to these old fanatic dogmas, which no amount of reason or persuasion will shake off, alleging their own personal experience and knowledge in support of their statements. Several of these I have had the satisfaction of listening to, while with earnest and hushed language, they related some curious incident and to others who boldly assert the truth of certain omens daring any one to refute their statements.

To account for which I may mention that most of the men whose authority in such cases are quoted have had their younger days passed over in one or other of the different fishing villages or stations on the east & north coast of Scotland, a class of people remarkable for their oddities & peculiar notions in the present day, and which grows with and attaches itself to the whole of their course through life, from the common boy to the Captain & inclusive, however we dare not be to be too severe, as Paddy said when accused of holding the newspaper upside down, while pretending to read it, well, be-dad an what's that to you then can't I read it now, just any way I like, ain't this a free country, you spalpeen [*Irish - a rascal*] and

A man convinced against his will

Is of the same opinion still

Although I cannot resist the inclination to note some of their common phantasies, the first I would notice is the traditionary and superstitious reverence paid to ancient land-marks on the north side of the west entrance to the Pentland Firth, on a small island attached to the Orkneys, elevated on a high point of land, and quite distinct, standing out in bold relief, is a rock of peculiar appearance, which gradually assumes as you pass it, the outline of an old bareheaded man (which by some enchantment possesses unlimited power over the wind & tides in as much as to produce a proper amount of honour and reverence from the seamen, who pass that way (as the Old Man expect every good seaman to doff his cap in token of said respect if he wishes to have a prosperous voyage) even in this day it is spoken of with becoming gravity which I had occasion to observe in once coming home that way

And pious seamen as they passed

Towards that holy headland cast

Oblation's to the Genii there:

For gentle skies, and breezes fair.

Another, very curious one is that the black spots on each side of the gills of the common haddock, was made by Saint Peter with his finger and thumb, while extracting the tribute money from the mouths of fish of this species, and the marks continued on the whole race ever since the performance of the miracle.

The dolphin & porpoise which abound in vast numbers in our northern seas are looked upon as favourable omens if they make their appearance in a calm, the belief is that the fish & wind come from the same quarter.

But if they spring out of the water & bound about with energy it is held as a prognostic of a coming storm.

When the sun sets in a bank

Westerly winds you shall not want

There is a very old superstition originating from the Norwegians & Danes & is known by the name of the Neck [*nøkk in Norwegian*]. In shape he is to appearance a very handsome youth, wearing a red cap from which flows a rich profusion of golden curls luxuriant & dazzling, he is shaped below like a horse, and his favourite amusement seems to be playing a golden harp, which he does so exquisitely, as to entice the ship on a sunken reef or draw a false lover into the water.

Another from the same quarter is of a sea snake an amphibious animal inhabiting the coast of Norway, about 200 feet long 20 in circumference living in the recesses of the rocky shore, going out in the moonlight to devour cattle, sheep or swine. Sometimes going into the sea, disturbing vessels, with its presence it has a mane nearly 2 feet long with 2 fierce fiery looking eyes, erecting itself like a mast, stoops its head and woe to the poor seaman it finds on deck.

The shark has long been the terror of the weak minded seaman, numerous are the fictions attached to this nimrod of the deep, one especially of following a ship who bears a corpse or sick man, or an ill-fated man who must it appears become one or both to keep on appease the ravenous cravings of the animal. Hence the utmost delight is manifested by the seamen who has succeeding in capturing one of the creatures, and the knife is cheerfully applied to his vitals, till writhing in agony he expires.

Mermaids, at one period stood prominent in this sense, and seem to be almost now unheeded every one has a knowledge of their description a lovely woman the one half & a fish the other they were considered dangerous to approach on account of their great beauty, assisted by their fascinating melody enticing the unwary into the water, to drown them, there place of ritual was supposed to be submarine grottoes.

Was whiter than the downy spray
And round her bosom heaving bright
Her glossy yellow ringlets play
Borne, on a foamy crested wave
She reached amain the bounding prow
Then, clasping fast the chieftan brave
She, plunging sought the deep below

It is considered a bad omen to lose a map or drop a water bucket into the sea while drawing water, the same in regard to killing or drowning a cat, and by no means pass any article between the steps of a trap or ladder, and whistling a tune or jig is certain to have a storm raising tendency.

The moon also comes in for a share of attention, if her horns are sharp, fine weather may be expected, but if lying on her back as they term it, the contrary is sure likewise when new moon appears carrying the old moon in her arms.

A halo or hazy circle round the moon is a fore runner of snow rain, and the same if the moon change at noon, if it happen about midnight fine weather may be looked for. Events sometimes occur at sea, which give a strong colouring to superstitious notions and placed in a sphere of action where he beholds many of the wonders of creation working on a gigantic scale. To the rough seaman magnetic attraction, the laws of refraction and the laws of acoustics are totally unknown with little of a reflective nature in him, most things, beyond the most familiar are a mystery to him, hence he is easily imposed on, always exposed to perils, from habit he becomes bold and daring, in respect to physical danger, and being prone to wonder, in his rambling vocation he becomes, the unconscious slave of superstition which might be readily explained on scientific principles, for example.

In the year 1820 Capt. Scoresby was navigating in the neighbourhood of west Greenland, on the 18th July having approached so near the unexplored shore of Greenland that the land appeared distinct & bold and he was anxious to make a drawing of it, but on making the attempt he found that the outline was constantly changing, and he was induced to examine the coast with a telescope.

The general appearance of the coast says Capt. Scoresby, was of an ancient extensive city abounding with the ruins of castles, obelisks, churches and monuments, and other conspicuous buildings. Some of the hills seemed to be surrounded by turret battlements, and pinnacles, while others subjected to one or two reflections, exhibited large masses of rock apparently suspended in the air. The whole exhibition being a grand phantasmagoria. Scarcely was any particular portion sketched, before it changed its appearance, and assumed the form of an object totally different. Notwithstanding these changes, the various figures had all the perfect distinctness of reality, even the veins of the rocks with the wreaths of snow occupying the ravines & fissures, formed sharp & distinct lines, and exhibited every appearance of the most perfect solidity. The sailors called the place, when these phenomena occurred the "Enchanted Coast".

On a calm sunny day, a ship was sailing over the sea, hundreds of miles from land, and no other sail in sight, when suddenly the attention of the crew was arrested by the loud & distinct ringing of a bell, several times to the amazement of all. They ascended the rigging, nothing could be seen but the gentle heaving of the sea & the fair blue sky. From whence could the sound proceed no bell by the ordinary mode of conveying sound could be heard beyond the distance they could see. Still the inexplicable sounds continued, clang clang and terror was depicted on the countenance of every sailor; it seemed to them as though they heard the ships knell. On the present instance the clouds reflected the sound of a bell from distant ship, by a well-known law of acoustics.

On the following day they met a vessel, and on inquiring they discovered it was her bell they had heard, her crew had been violently sounding it for amusement but for this explanation every sailor on board, would have believed the sounds of the bell had been caused by supernatural agency.

To ascertain the true character of a sailor, mark his first language when he rises out of bed if he turns out complacent & good humoured you may trust that man, as honest & good hearted, if on the contrary he rises ill-natured & swearing cut his acquaintance, if you desire peace.

Once more and I have done.

Ships apparently navigating among the clouds are occasionally observed at sea, owing to certain peculiar states of the atmosphere, and a slight shifting of the suns rays, on different density of the atmosphere, will cause a sudden disappearance under these circumstances it requires no ordinary effort to calm the apprehensions of superstitious men.

It is with pleasure however we notice the daily decrease of these unwholesome vagaries, and ignorant notions, supplanted by a liberal education, instilling sound principles into the minds and hearts of the rising generations together with a wider knowledge of the primary laws of science in its different features, which cultivated will tend to annihilate all superstition henceforth.

Light, as the angel shapes that bless
An infant dream, yet not the bless
Rich, in all womans loveliness - :
With, eyes so pure that from their ray
Dark vice would turn abashed away
Blinded, like serpents when they gaze
Upon, the emeralds virgin blaze

A, soul, too. More than half divine
Where, through some shades of earthly feeling
Religious soften'd glories shine
Like, light through summer foliage stealing
That makes the very darkness there
More beautiful than light elsewhere

Moore

Fancy's Pictures

In all probability as we careered homewards, and indulging in fancy's pictures which are always so abundant and delightful to the crew of a vessel homeward bound more especially at the termination of a long voyage after enduring innumerable hardships and at length approaching the shores of our native land the feelings are irrepressible and burst forth in mutual exuberance at the glorious & happy prospect beckoning them onwards. In some buoyant heart the image of his beloved may arise in all her beauty, graces, and sterling worth, ten times dearer to him, now than before, from the very fact of separation, for to his mind ages, drawing all its pleasures together, and concentrating their essence. So long fondly cherished, for the blissful moments on his return. So nearly accomplished, what a gorgeous feast his senses are busy preparing, what incomparable joys they are collecting and storing up for him.

How he fondly plans pleasant surprises for those he loves, in fact he is sublimely happy in himself, and his only care seems to be how to increase the happiness of the objects of his affection, should he sacrifice his all... at length the ship rides in the harbour, he leaps ashore, and half intoxicated with happiness, seems at a loss what to do first, now he hastens home for home is where the heart is, and his generous soul glows in every feature, as each step brings him nearer it quickens its pace and his heart beat quickens as his hand reaches the door.

Pause ere you follow him further, has he been preceeded by the ruthless hands which sometimes intervene between us and our all but complete and cherished hopes, snatching away the only objects of affection to which we were bound and into which our hearts were interwoven, bereft of all that made this sad rough world endurable, and which served as our guiding star through life.

Poor fellow his mind will not receive the impression, his brain is parylised, a gloomy stupor seizes his soul, he for the present is incapable of realizing his situation so intense is the shock and only on recovering does he feel & comprehend the heart breaking facts which sear his soul so deep no period of time can hope to efface.

Arrival Home

Trusting our lives may fall on pleasant places we are anxiously looking for land as we are certain it cannot be far off and sure enough as night approaches we make the island of Shetland and towards morning we landed our Shetland men close by the Sumburgh-head light house about 4 oclock on the morning of Friday 26th April blowing a perfect gale from the Nor West so we had to get up stream to affect their landing then with a fair wind we set sail for the South whipping along 11 & 12 knots an hour, and the following morning found us with our steam up waiting on a tide at the mouth of the Frith of Tay and by 3pm snugly moored in 'Carolina Roadstead', Saturday 27 April 1861

Clean ships

Conclusion of voyage to Greenland

AS