

## **Second Scene--The Hut of the Sea-mew.**

### **Chapter 6.**

Good-by to England! Good-by to inhabited and civilized regions of the earth!

Two years have passed since the voyagers sailed from their native shores. The enterprise has failed--the Arctic expedition is lost and ice-locked in the Polar wastes. The good ships Wanderer and Sea-mew, entombed in ice, will never ride the buoyant waters more. Stripped of their lighter timbers, both vessels have been used for the construction of huts, erected on the nearest land.

The largest of the two buildings which now shelter the lost men is occupied by the surviving officers and crew of the Sea-mew. On one side of the principal room are the sleeping berths and the fire-place. The other side discloses a broad doorway (closed by a canvas screen), which serves as a means of communication with an inner apartment, devoted to the superior officers. A hammock is slung to the rough raftered roof of the main room, as an extra bed. A man, completely hidden by his bedclothes, is sleeping in the hammock. By the fireside there is a second man--supposed to be on the watch--fast asleep, poor wretch! at the present moment. Behind the sleeper stands an old cask, which serves for a table. The objects at present on the table are, a pestle and mortar, and a saucepanful of the dry bones of animals--in plain words, the dinner for the day. By way of ornament to the dull brown walls, icicles appear in the crevices of the timber, gleaming at intervals in the red fire-light. No wind whistles outside the lonely dwelling--no cry of bird or beast is heard. Indoors, and out-of-doors, the awful silence of the Polar desert reigns, for the moment, undisturbed.