

In the Uttermost Parts of the Sea

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Advanced
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Great ships had been sent up towards the North Pole, to explore the most distant coasts, and to try how far men might penetrate up yonder. For more than a year they had already been pushing their way among ice, and snow, and mist, and their crews had endured many hardships; and now the winter was come, and the sun had entirely disappeared from those regions. For many many weeks there would now be a long night. All around, as far as the eye could reach, was a single field of ice; the ships had been made fast to it, and the snow had piled itself up in great masses, and of these huts had been built in the form of beehives, some of them spacious as the old “Hun’s Graves”—others only containing room enough to hold two or four men. But it was not dark, for the northern lights flamed red and blue, like a great continual firework; and the snow glistened and gleamed, so that the night here was one long, flaming, twilight hour.

When the gleam was brightest, the natives came in crowds, wonderful to behold in their rough, hairy, fur dresses; and they rode in sledges formed of blocks of ice, and brought with them furs and peltry in great bundles, so that the snow houses were furnished with warm carpets; and, in turn, the furs also served for coverlets when the sailors went to bed under their roofs of snow, while outside it froze in far different fashion

than here with us in the winter. In our regions it was still the late autumn-time; and they thought of that up yonder, and often pictured to themselves the yellow leaves on the trees of home.

The clock showed that it was evening, and time to go to sleep; and in the huts two men already had stretched themselves out, seeking rest. The younger of these had his best, dearest treasure, that he had brought from home—the Bible, which his grandmother had given him on his departure. Every night the sacred volume rested beneath his head, and he knew from his childish years what was written in it. Every day he read in the book, and often the holy words came into his mind where it is written, “If I take the wings of the morning, and flee into the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thou art with me, and Thy right hand shall uphold me;” and, under the influence of the eternal word and of the true faith, he closed his eyes, and sleep came upon him, and dreams—the manifestation of Providence to the spirit.

The soul lived and was working while the body was enjoying its rest: he felt this life, and it seemed to him as if dear old well-known melodies were sounding; as if the mild breezes of summer were playing around him; and over his bed he beheld a brightness, as if something were shining in through the crust of snow. He lifted up his head, and behold, the bright gleam was no ripple down from the snowy roof, but came from the mighty pinions of an angel, into whose beaming face he was gazing. As if from the cup of a lily the angel arose from among the leaves of the Bible, and stretching out his arm, the walls of the snow hut sunk down around, as though they had been a light airy veil of mist; the green meadows and hills of home, and its ruddy woods, lay spread around him in the quiet sunshine of a beauteous autumn day; the nest of the stork was empty, but ripe fruit still clung to the wild apple tree, although the leaves, had fallen; the red hips gleamed, and the magpie whistled in the green cage over the window of the peasant’s cottage that was his home; the magpie whistled the tune that had been taught him, and the grandmother hung green food around the cage, as he, the grandson, had been accustomed to do; and the daughter of the blacksmith, very young and fair, stood by the well drawing water, and nodded to the granddame, and the old woman nodded to her, and showed her a letter that had come from a long way off.

That very morning the letter had arrived from the cold regions of the North—there where the grandson was resting in the hand of God. And they smiled and they wept; and he, far away among the ice and snow, under the pinions of the angel, he, too, smiled and wept with them in spirit, for he saw them and heard them. And from the letter they read aloud the words of Holy Writ, that in the uttermost parts of the sea HIS right hand

would be a stay and a safety. And the sound of a beauteous hymn welled up all around; and the angel spread his wings like a veil over the sleeping youth. The vision had fled, and it grew dark in the snow hut; but the Bible rested beneath his head, and faith and hope dwelt in his soul. God was with him; and he carried home about with him in his heart, even in the uttermost parts of the sea.

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