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TRAVELS IN ALASKA

JOHN MUIR

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GIBBS
SMITH



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PART TWO

THE TRIP OF 1880



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FROM TAKU RIVER TO TAYLOR BAY

I never saw Alaska looking better than it did when we bade farewell to Sum Dum on August 22 and pushed on northward up the coast toward Taku. The morning was clear, calm, bright—not a cloud in all the purple sky, nor wind, however gentle, to shake the slender spires of the spruces or dew-laden grass around the shores. Over the mountains and over the broad white bosoms of the glaciers the sunbeams poured, rosy as ever fell on fields of ripening wheat, drenching the forests and kindling the glassy waters and icebergs into a perfect blaze of colored light. Every living thing seemed joyful, and nature's work was going on in glowing enthusiasm, not less appreciable in the deep repose that brooded over every feature of the landscape, suggesting the coming fruitfulness of the icy land and showing the advance that has already been made from glacial winter to summer. The care-laden commercial lives we lead close our eyes to the operations of God as a workman, though openly carried on that all who will look may see. The scarred rocks here and the moraines make a vivid showing of the old winter-time of the glacial period, and mark the bounds of the *mer-de-glace* that once filled the bay

and covered the surrounding mountains. Already that sea of ice is replaced by water, in which multitudes of fishes are fed, while the hundred glaciers lingering about the bay and the streams that pour from them are busy night and day bringing in sand and mud and stones, at the rate of tons every minute, to fill it up. Then, as the seasons grow warmer, there will be fields here for the plough.

Our Indians, exhilarated by the sunshine, were garrulous as the gulls and plovers, and pulled heartily at their oars, evidently glad to get out of the ice with a whole boat.

“Now for Taku,” they said, as we glided over the shining water. “Good-bye, Ice Mountains; good-bye, Sum Dum.” Soon a light breeze came, and they unfurled the sail and laid away their oars and began, as usual in such free times, to put their goods in order, unpacking and sunning provisions, guns, ropes, clothing, etc. Joe has an old flintlock musket suggestive of Hudson's Bay times, which he wished to discharge and reload. So, stepping in front of the sail, he fired at a gull that was flying past before I could prevent him, and it fell slowly with outspread wings alongside the canoe, with blood dripping from its bill. I asked him why he had killed the bird, and followed the question by a severe reprimand for his stupid cruelty, to which he could offer no other excuse than that he had learned from the whites to be careless about taking life. Captain Tyeen denounced the deed as likely to bring bad luck.

Before the whites came most of the Thlinkits held, with Agassiz, that animals have souls, and that it was wrong and unlucky to even speak disrespectfully of the fishes or any of the animals that supplied them with

food. A case illustrating their superstitious beliefs in this connection occurred at Fort Wrangell while I was there the year before. One of the sub-chiefs of the Stickeens had a little son five or six years old, to whom he was very much attached, always taking him with him in his short canoe trips, and leading him by the hand while going about town. Last summer the boy was taken sick, and gradually grew weak and thin, whereupon his father became alarmed, and feared, as is usual in such obscure cases, that the boy had been bewitched. He first applied in his trouble to Dr. Carliss, one of the missionaries, who gave medicine, without effecting the immediate cure that the fond father demanded. He was, to some extent, a believer in the powers of missionaries, both as to material and spiritual affairs, but in so serious an exigency it was natural that he should go back to the faith of his fathers. Accordingly, he sent for one of the shamans, or medicine men, of his tribe, and submitted the case to him, who, after going through the customary incantations, declared that he had discovered the cause of the difficulty.

“Your boy,” he said, “has lost his soul, and this is the way it happened. He was playing among the stones down on the beach when he saw a crawfish in the water, and made fun of it, pointing his finger at it and saying, ‘Oh, you crooked legs! Oh, you crooked legs! You can’t walk straight; you go sidewise,’ which made the crab so angry that he reached out his long nippers, seized the lad’s soul, pulled it out of him and made off with it into deep water. And,” continued the medicine man, “unless his stolen soul is restored to him and put back in its place he will die. Your boy is really dead already; it is only his lonely, empty body

that is living now, and though it may continue to live in this way for a year or two, the boy will never be of any account, not strong, nor wise, nor brave.”

The father then inquired whether anything could be done about it; was the soul still in possession of the crab, and if so, could it be recovered and reinstalled in his forlorn son? Yes, the doctor rather thought it might be charmed back and reunited, but the job would be a difficult one, and would probably cost about fifteen blankets.

After we were fairly out of the bay into Stephens Passage, the wind died away, and the Indians had to take to their oars again, which ended our talk. On we sped over the silvery level, close alongshore. The dark forests extending far and near, planted like a field of wheat, might seem monotonous in general views, but the appreciative observer, looking closely, will find no lack of interesting variety, however far he may go. The steep slopes on which they grow allow almost every individual tree, with its peculiarities of form and color, to be seen like an audience on seats rising above one another—the blue-green, sharply tapered spires of the Menzies spruce, the warm yellow-green Mertens spruce with their fingerlike tops all pointing in the same direction, or drooping gracefully like leaves of grass, and the airy, feathery, brownish-green Alaska cedar. The outer fringe of bushes along the shore and hanging over the brows of the cliffs, the white mountains above, the shining water beneath, the changing sky over all, form pictures of divine beauty in which no healthy eye may ever grow weary.

Toward evening at the head of a picturesque bay we came to a village belonging to the Taku tribe. We found it silent and deserted. Not a single shaman or

policeman had been left to keep it. These people are so happily rich as to have but little of a perishable kind to keep, nothing worth fretting about. They were away catching salmon, our Indians said. All the Indian villages hereabout are thus abandoned at regular periods every year, just as a tent is left for a day, while they repair to fishing, berrying, and hunting stations, occupying each in succession for a week or two at a time, coming and going from the main, substantially built villages. Then, after their summer's work is done, the winter supply of salmon dried and packed, fish oil and seal oil stored in boxes, berries and spruce bark pressed into cakes, their trading trips completed, and the year's stock of quarrels with the neighboring tribe patched up in some way, they devote themselves to feasting, dancing, and hootchenoo drinking. The Takus, once a powerful and warlike tribe, were at this time, like most of the neighboring tribes, whiskied nearly out of existence. They had a larger village on the Taku River, but, according to the census taken that year by the missionaries, they numbered only 269 in all—109 men, 79 women, and 81 children, figures that show the vanishing condition of the tribe at a glance.

Our Indians wanted to camp for the night in one of the deserted houses, but I urged them on into the clean wilderness until dark, when we landed on a rocky beach fringed with devil's clubs, greatly to the disgust of our crew. We had to make the best of it, however, as it was too dark to seek farther. After supper was accomplished among the boulders, they retired to the canoe, which they anchored a little way out, beyond low tide, while Mr. Young and I at the expense of a good deal of scrambling and panax stinging, discovered

a spot on which we managed to sleep.

The next morning, about two hours after leaving our thorny camp, we rounded a great mountain rock nearly a mile in height and entered the Taku fjord. It is about eighteen miles long and from three to five miles wide, and extends directly back into the heart of the mountains, draining hundreds of glaciers and streams. The ancient glacier that formed it was far too deep and broad and too little concentrated to erode one of those narrow canyons, usually so impressive in sculpture and architecture, but it is all the more interesting on this account when the grandeur of the ice work accomplished is recognized. This fjord, more than any other I have examined, explains the formation of the wonderful system of channels extending along the coast from Puget Sound to about latitude 59 degrees, for it is a marked portion of the system—a branch of Stephens Passage. Its trends and general sculpture are as distinctly glacial as those of the narrowest fjord, while the largest tributaries of the great glacier that occupied it are still in existence. I counted some forty-five altogether, big and little, in sight from the canoe in sailing up the middle of the fjord. Three of them, drawing their sources from magnificent groups of snowy mountains, came down to the level of the sea and formed a glorious spectacle. The middle one of the three belongs to the first class, pouring its majestic flood, shattered and crevassed, directly into the fjord, and crowding about twenty-five square miles of it with bergs. The next below it also sends off bergs occasionally, though a narrow strip of glacial detritus separates it from the tidewater. That forenoon a large mass fell from it, damming its draining stream, which at length broke

the dam, and the resulting flood swept forward thousands of small bergs across the mudflat into the fjord. In a short time all was quiet again; the floodwaters receded, leaving only a large blue scar on the front of the glacier and stranded bergs on the moraine flat to tell the tale.

These two glaciers are about equal in size—two miles wide—and their fronts are only about a mile and a half apart. While I sat sketching them from a point among the drifting icebergs where I could see far back into the heart of their distant fountains, two Taku seal hunters, father and son, came gliding toward us in an extremely small canoe. Coming alongside with a goodnatured “Sagh-a-ya,” they inquired who we were, our objects, etc., and gave us information about the river, their village, and two other large glaciers that descend nearly to the sea level a few miles up the river canyon. Crouching in their little shell of a boat among the great bergs, with paddle and barbed spear, they formed a picture as arctic and remote from anything to be found in civilization as ever was sketched for us by the explorers of the Far North.

Making our way through the crowded bergs to the extreme head of the fjord, we entered the mouth of the river, but were soon compelled to turn back on account of the strength of the current. The Taku River is a large stream, nearly a mile wide at the mouth, and, like the Stickeen, Chilcat, and Chilcoot, draws its sources from far inland, crossing the mountain chain from the interior through a majestic canyon, and draining a multitude of glaciers on its way.

The Taku Indians, like the Chilcats, with a keen appreciation of the advantages of their position for trade, hold possession of the river and compel the

Indians of the interior to accept their services as middlemen, instead of allowing them to trade directly with the whites.

When we were baffled in our attempt to ascend the river, the day was nearly done, and we began to seek a campground. After sailing two or three miles along the left side of the fjord, we were so fortunate as to find a small nook described by the two Indians, where firewood was abundant, and where we could drag our canoe up the bank beyond reach of the berg-waves. Here we were safe, with a fine outlook across the fjord to the great glaciers and near enough to see the birth of the icebergs and the wonderful commotion they make, and hear their wild, roaring rejoicing. The sunset sky seemed to have been painted for this one mountain mansion, fitting it like a ceiling. After the fjord was in shadow the level sunbeams continued to pour through the miles of bergs with ravishing beauty, reflecting and refracting the purple light like cut crystal. Then all save the tips of the highest became dead white. These, too, were speedily quenched, the glowing points vanishing like stars sinking beneath the horizon. And after the shadows had crept higher, submerging the glaciers and the ridges between them, the divine alpenglow still lingered on their highest fountain peaks as they stood transfigured in glorious array. Now the last of the twilight purple has vanished, the stars begin to shine, and all trace of the day is gone. Looking across the fjord the water seems perfectly black, and the two great glaciers are seen stretching dim and ghostly into the shadowy mountains now darkly massed against the starry sky.

Next morning it was raining hard, everything looked dismal, and on the way down the fjord a

growling head wind battered the rain in our faces, but we held doggedly on and by 10 A.M. got out of the fjord into Stephens Passage. A breeze sprung up in our favor that swept us bravely on across the passage and around the end of Admiralty Island by dark. We camped in a boggy hollow on a bluff among scraggy, usnea-bearded spruces. The rain, bitterly cold and driven by a stormy wind, thrashed us well while we floundered in the stumpy bog trying to make a fire and supper.

When daylight came we found our campground a very savage place. How we reached it and established ourselves in the thick darkness it would be difficult to tell. We crept along the shore a few miles against strong head winds, then hoisted sail and steered straight across Lynn Canal to the mainland, which we followed without great difficulty, the wind having moderated toward evening. Near the entrance to Icy Strait we met a Hoona who had seen us last year and who seemed glad to see us. He gave us two salmon, and we made him happy with tobacco and then pushed on and camped near Sitka Jack's deserted village.

Though the wind was still ahead next morning, we made about twenty miles before sundown and camped on the west end of Farewell Island. We bumped against a hidden rock and sprung a small leak that was easily stopped with resin. The salmonberries were ripe. While climbing a bluff for a view of our course, I discovered moneses, one of my favorites, and saw many well-traveled deer trails, though the island is cut off from the mainland and other islands by at least five or six miles of icy, berg-encumbered water.

We got under way early next day—a gray, cloudy morning with rain and wind. Fair and head winds

were about evenly balanced throughout the day. Tides run fast here, like great rivers. We rowed and paddled around Point Wimbledon against both wind and tide, creeping close to the feet of the huge, bold rocks of the north wall of Cross Sound, which here were very steep and awe-inspiring as the heavy swells from the open sea coming in past Cape Spencer dashed white against them, tossing our frail canoe up and down lightly as a feather. The point reached by vegetation shows that the surf dashes up to a height of about seventy-five or a hundred feet. We were awe-stricken and began to fear that we might be upset should the ocean waves rise still higher. But little Stickeen seemed to enjoy the storm, and gazed at the foam-wreathed cliffs like a dreamy, comfortable tourist admiring a sunset. We reached the mouth of Taylor Bay about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, when we had a view of the open ocean before we entered the bay. Many large bergs from Glacier Bay were seen drifting out to sea past Cape Spencer. We reached the head of the fjord now called Taylor Bay at five o'clock and camped near an immense glacier with a front about three miles wide stretching across from wall to wall. No icebergs are discharged from it, as it is separated from the water of the fjord at high tide by a low, smooth mass of outspread, overswept moraine material, netted with torrents and small shallow rills from the glacier front, with here and there a lakelet, and patches of yellow mosses and garden spots bright with epilobium, saxifrage, grass tufts, sedges, and creeping willows on the higher ground. But only the mosses were sufficiently abundant to make conspicuous masses of color to relieve the dull slaty gray of the glacial mud and gravel. The front of the glacier, like all those

which do not discharge icebergs, is rounded like a brow, smooth-looking in general views, but cleft and furrowed, nevertheless, with chasms and grooves in which the light glows and shimmers in glorious beauty. The granite walls of the fjord, though very high, are not deeply sculptured. Only a few deep side canyons with trees, bushes, grassy and flowery spots interrupt their massive simplicity, leaving but few of the cliffs absolutely sheer and bare like those of Yosemite, Sum Dum, or Taku. One of the side canyons is on the left side of the fjord, the other on the right, the tributaries of the former leading over by a narrow tide channel to the bay next to the eastward, and by a short portage over into a lake into which pours a branch glacier from the great glacier. Still another branch from the main glacier turns to the right. Counting all three of these separate fronts, the width of this great Taylor Bay Glacier must be about seven or eight miles.

While camp was being made, Hunter Joe climbed the eastern wall in search of wild mutton, but found none. He fell in with a brown bear, however, and got a shot at it, but nothing more. Mr. Young and I crossed the moraine slope, splashing through pools and streams up to the ice wall, and made the interesting discovery that the glacier had been advancing of late years, ploughing up and shoving forward moraine soil that had been deposited long ago, and overwhelming and grinding and carrying away the forests on the sides and front of the glacier. Though not now sending off icebergs, the front is probably far below sea level at the bottom, thrust forward beneath its wave-washed moraine.

Along the base of the mountain wall we found abundance of salmonberries, the largest measuring

an inch and a half in diameter. Strawberries, too, are found hereabouts. Some which visiting Indians brought us were as fine in size and color and flavor as any I ever saw anywhere. After wandering and wondering an hour or two, admiring the magnificent rock and crystal scenery about us, we returned to camp at sundown, planning a grand excursion for the morrow.

I set off early the morning of August 30 before any one else in camp had stirred, not waiting for breakfast, but only eating a piece of bread. I had intended getting a cup of coffee, but a wild storm was blowing and calling, and I could not wait. Running out against the rain-laden gale and turning to catch my breath, I saw that the minister's little dog had left his bed in the tent and was coming boring through the storm, evidently determined to follow me. I told him to go back, that such a day as this had nothing for him.

"Go back," I shouted, "and get your breakfast." But he simply stood with his head down, and when I began to urge my way again, looking around, I saw he was still following me. So I at last told him to come on if he must and gave him a piece of the bread I had in my pocket.

Instead of falling, the rain, mixed with misty shreds of clouds, was flying in level sheets, and the wind was roaring as I had never heard wind roar before. Over the icy levels and over the woods, on the mountains, over the jagged rocks and spires and chasms of the glacier it boomed and moaned and roared, filling the fjord in even, gray, structureless gloom, inspiring and awful. I first struggled up in the face of the blast to the east end of the ice wall, where a patch of forest had been carried away by the glacier when it was advancing. I noticed a few stumps well out on the moraine

flat, showing that its present bare, raw condition was not the condition of fifty or a hundred years ago. In front of this part of the glacier there is a small moraine lake about half a mile in length, around the margin of which are a considerable number of trees standing knee-deep, and of course dead. This also is a result of the recent advance of the ice.

Pushing up through the ragged edge of the woods on the left margin of the glacier, the storm seemed to increase in violence, so that it was difficult to draw breath in facing it; therefore I took shelter back of a tree to enjoy it and wait, hoping that it would at last somewhat abate. Here the glacier, descending over an abrupt rock, falls forward in grand cascades, while a stream swollen by the rain was now a torrent—wind, rain, ice torrent, and water torrent in one grand symphony.

At length the storm seemed to abate somewhat, and I took off my heavy rubber boots, with which I had waded the glacial streams on the flat, and laid them with my overcoat on a log, where I might find them on my way back, knowing I would be drenched anyhow, and firmly tied my mountain shoes, tightened my belt, shouldered my ice axe, and, thus free and ready for rough work, pushed on, regardless as possible of mere rain. Making my way up a steep granite slope, its projecting polished bosses encumbered here and there by boulders and the ground and bruised ruins of the ragged edge of the forest that had been uprooted by the glacier during its recent advance, I traced the side of the glacier for two or three miles, finding everywhere evidence of its having encroached on the woods, which here run back along its edge for fifteen or twenty miles. Under the projecting edge of this vast ice river I could

see down beneath it to a depth of fifty feet or so in some places, where logs and branches were being crushed to pulp, some of it almost fine enough for paper, though most of it stringy and coarse.

After thus tracing the margin of the glacier for three or four miles, I chopped steps and climbed to the top, and as far as the eye could reach, the nearly level glacier stretched indefinitely away in the gray cloudy sky, a prairie of ice. The wind was now almost moderate, though rain continued to fall, which I did not mind, but a tendency to mist in the drooping draggled clouds made me hesitate about attempting to cross to the opposite shore. Although the distance was only six or seven miles, no traces at this time could be seen of the mountains on the other side, and in case the sky should grow darker, as it seemed inclined to do, I feared that when I got out of sight of land and perhaps into a maze of crevasses I might find difficulty in winning a way back.

Lingering a while and sauntering about in sight of the shore, I found this eastern side of the glacier remarkably free from large crevasses. Nearly all I met were so narrow I could step across them almost anywhere, while the few wide ones were easily avoided by going up or down along their sides to where they narrowed. The dismal cloud ceiling showed rifts here and there, and, thus encouraged, I struck out for the west shore, aiming to strike it five or six miles above the front wall, cautiously taking compass bearings at short intervals to enable me to find my way back should the weather darken again with mist or rain or snow. The structure lines of the glacier itself were, however, my main guide. All went well. I came to a deeply furrowed section about two miles in width

where I had to zigzag in long, tedious tacks and make narrow doublings, tracing the edges of wide longitudinal furrows and chasms until I could find a bridge connecting their sides, oftentimes making the direct distance ten times over. The walking was good of its kind, however, and by dint of patient doubling and axe work on dangerous places, I gained the opposite shore in about three hours, the width of the glacier at this point being about seven miles. Occasionally, while making my way, the clouds lifted a little, revealing a few bald, rough mountains sunk to the throat in the broad, icy sea which encompassed them on all sides, sweeping on forever and forever as we count time, wearing them away, giving them the shape they are destined to take when in the fullness of time they shall be parts of new landscapes.

Ere I lost sight of the east-side mountains, those on the west came in sight, so that holding my course was easy, and, though making haste, I halted for a moment to gaze down into the beautiful pure blue crevasses and to drink at the lovely blue wells, the most beautiful of all Nature's water basins, or at the rills and streams outspread over the ice-land prairie, never ceasing to admire their lovely color and music as they glided and swirled in their blue crystal channels and potholes, and the rumbling of the moulins, or mills, where streams poured into blue-walled pits of unknown depth, some of them as regularly circular as if bored with augers. Interesting, too, were the cascades over blue cliffs, where streams fell into crevasses or slid almost noiselessly down slopes so smooth and frictionless their motion was concealed. The round or oval wells, however, from one to ten feet wide, and from one to twenty or thirty feet deep, were

perhaps the most beautiful of all, the water so pure as to be almost invisible. My widest views did not probably exceed fifteen miles, the rain and mist making distances seem greater.

On reaching the farther shore and tracing it a few miles to northward, I found a large portion of the glacier-current sweeping out westward in a bold and beautiful curve around the shoulder of a mountain as if going direct to the open sea. Leaving the main trunk, it breaks into a magnificent uproar of pinnacles and spires and upheaving, splashing wave-shaped masses, a crystal cataract incomparably greater and wilder than a score of Niagaras.

Tracing its channel three or four miles, I found that it fell into a lake, which it fills with bergs. The front of this branch of the glacier is about three miles wide. I first took the lake to be the head of an arm of the sea, but, going down to its shore and tasting it, I found it fresh, and by my aneroid perhaps less than a hundred feet above sea level. It is probably separated from the sea only by a moraine dam. I had not time to go around its shores, as it was now near five o'clock and I was about fifteen miles from camp, and I had to make haste to recross the glacier before dark, which would come on about eight o'clock. I therefore made haste up to the main glacier, and, shaping my course by compass and the structure lines of the ice, set off from the land out on to the grand crystal prairie again. All was so silent and so centered, owing to the low dragging mist, the beauty close about me was all the more keenly felt, though tinged with a dim sense of danger, as if coming events were casting shadows. I was soon out of sight of land, and the evening dusk that on cloudy days precedes the real night

gloom came stealing on and only ice was in sight, and the only sounds, save the low rumbling of the mills and the rattle of falling stones at long intervals, were the low, terribly earnest moanings of the wind or distant waterfalls coming through the thickening gloom. After two hours of hard work I came to a maze of crevasses of appalling depth and width which could not be passed apparently either up or down. I traced them with firm nerve developed by the danger, making wide jumps, poising cautiously on dizzy edges after cutting footholds, taking wide crevasses at a grand leap at once frightful and inspiring. Many a mile was thus traveled, mostly up and down the glacier, making but little real headway, running much of the time as the danger of having to pass the night on the ice became more and more imminent. This I could do, though with the weather and my rain-soaked condition it would be trying at best. In treading the mazes of this crevassed section I had frequently to cross bridges that were only knife-edges for twenty or thirty feet, cutting off the sharp tops and leaving them flat so that little Stickeen could follow me. These I had to straddle, cutting off the top as I progressed and hitching gradually ahead like a boy riding a rail fence. All this time the little dog followed me bravely, never hesitating on the brink of any crevasse that I had jumped, but now that it was becoming dark and the crevasses became more troublesome, he followed close at my heels instead of scampering far and wide, where the ice was at all smooth, as he had in the forenoon. No land was now in sight. The mist fell lower and darker and snow began to fly. I could not see far enough up and down the glacier to judge how best to work out of the bewildering labyrinth, and how hard I tried while there was yet hope of reaching

camp that night! A hope which was fast growing dim like the sky. After dark, on such ground, to keep from freezing, I could only jump up and down until morning on a piece of flat ice between the crevasses, dance to the boding music of the winds and waters, and as I was already tired and hungry I would be in bad condition for such ice work. Many times I was put to my mettle, but with a firm-braced nerve, all the more unflinching as the dangers thickened, I worked out of that terrible ice-web, and with blood fairly up Stickeen and I ran over common danger without fatigue. Our very hardest trial was in getting across the very last of the sliver bridges. After examining the first of the two widest crevasses, I followed its edge half a mile or so up and down and discovered that its narrowest spot was about eight feet wide, which was the limit of what I was able to jump. Moreover, the side I was on—that is, the west side—was about a foot higher than the other, and I feared that in case I should be stopped by a still wider impassable crevasse ahead that I would hardly be able to take back that jump from its lower side. The ice beyond, however, as far as I could see it, looked temptingly smooth. Therefore, after carefully making a socket for my foot on the rounded brink, I jumped, but found that I had nothing to spare and more than ever dreaded having to retrace my way. Little Stickeen jumped this, however, without apparently taking a second look at it, and we ran ahead joyfully over smooth, level ice, hoping we were now leaving all danger behind us. But hardly had we gone a hundred or two yards when to our dismay we found ourselves on the very widest of all the longitudinal crevasses we had yet encountered. It was about forty feet wide. I ran anxiously up the side of it to northward, eagerly

hoping that I could get around its head, but my worst fears were realized when at a distance of about a mile or less it ran into the crevasse that I had just jumped. I then ran down the edge for a mile or more below the point where I had first met it, and found that its lower end also united with the crevasse I had jumped, showing dismally that we were on an island two or three hundred yards wide and about two miles long and the only way of escape from this island was by turning back and jumping again that crevasse which I dreaded, or venturing ahead across the giant crevasse by the very worst of the sliver bridges I had ever seen. It was so badly weathered and melted down that it formed a knife-edge, and extended across from side to side in a low, drooping curve like that made by a loose rope attached at each end at the same height. But the worst difficulty was that the ends of the down-curving sliver were attached to the sides at a depth of about eight or ten feet below the surface of the glacier. Getting down to the end of the bridge, and then after crossing it getting up the other side, seemed hardly possible. However, I decided to dare the dangers of the fearful sliver rather than to attempt to retrace my steps. Accordingly I dug a low groove in the rounded edge for my knees to rest in and, leaning over, began to cut a narrow foothold on the steep, smooth side. When I was doing this, Stickeen came up behind me, pushed his head over my shoulder, looked into the crevasses and along the narrow knife-edge, then turned and looked in my face, muttering and whining as if trying to say, "Surely you are not going down there." I said, "Yes, Stickeen, this is the only way." He then began to cry and ran wildly along the rim of the crevasse, searching for a better way, then, returning

baffled, of course, he came behind me and lay down and cried louder and louder.

After getting down one step I cautiously stooped and cut another and another in succession until I reached the point where the sliver was attached to the wall. There, cautiously balancing, I chipped down the upcurved end of the bridge until I had formed a small level platform about a foot wide, then, bending forward, got astride of the end of the sliver, steadied myself with my knees, then cut off the top of the sliver, hitching myself forward an inch or two at a time, leaving it about four inches wide for Stickeen. Arrived at the farther end of the sliver, which was about seventy-five feet long, I chipped another little platform on its upcurved end, cautiously rose to my feet, and with infinite pains cut narrow notch steps and fingerholds in the wall and finally got safely across. All this dreadful time poor little Stickeen was crying as if his heart was broken, and when I called to him in as reassuring a voice as I could muster, he only cried the louder, as if trying to say that he never, never could get down there—the only time that the brave little fellow appeared to know what danger was. After going away as if I was leaving him, he still howled and cried without venturing to try to follow me. Returning to the edge of the crevasse, I told him that I must go, that he could come if he only tried, and finally in despair he hushed his cries, slid his little feet slowly down into my footsteps out on the big sliver, walked slowly and cautiously along the sliver as if holding his breath, while the snow was falling and the wind was moaning and threatening to blow him off. When he arrived at the foot of the slope below me, I was kneeling on the brink ready to assist him in case he should be unable to reach the top. He looked

up along the row of notched steps I had made, as if fixing them in his mind, then with a nervous spring he whizzed up and passed me out on to the level ice, and ran and cried and barked and rolled about fairly hysterical in the sudden revulsion from the depth of despair to triumphant joy. I tried to catch him and pet him and tell him how good and brave he was, but he would not be caught. He ran round and round, swirling like autumn leaves in an eddy, lay down and rolled head over heels. I told him we still had far to go and that we must now stop all nonsense and get off the ice before dark. I knew by the ice lines that every step was now taking me nearer the shore and soon it came in sight. The headland four or five miles back from the front, covered with spruce trees, loomed faintly but surely through the mist and light fall of snow not more than two miles away. The ice now proved good all the way across, and we reached the lateral moraine just at dusk, then with trembling limbs, now that the danger was over, we staggered and stumbled down the bouldery edge of the glacier and got over the dangerous rocks by the cascades while yet a faint light lingered. We were safe, and then, too, came limp weariness such as no ordinary work ever produces, however hard it may be. Wearily we stumbled down through the woods, over logs and brush and roots, devil's clubs pricking us at every faint blundering tumble. At last we got out on the smooth mud slope with only a mile of slow but sure dragging of weary limbs to camp. The Indians had been firing guns to guide me and had a fine supper and fire ready, though fearing they would be compelled to seek us in the morning, a care not often applied to me. Stickeen and I were too tired to eat much, and, strange to say, too tired to

sleep. Both of us, springing up in the night again and again, fancied we were still on that dreadful ice bridge in the shadow of death.

Nevertheless, we arose next morning in newness of life. Never before had rocks and ice and trees seemed so beautiful and wonderful, even the cold, biting rain-storm that was blowing seemed full of loving-kindness, wonderful compensation for all that we had endured, and we sailed down the bay through the gray, driving rain rejoicing.