The Race of the Dead Men.

When I was at home in the vacation after our last semi-annual examinations, I met there, visiting my father, a gentleman whose name I had often heard spoken of in connection with Arctic explorations, and whose reputation as a man of science and letters was no mean one. I found that he was as pleasant and interesting a man to talk with and listen to, as I had been led to think from reading many of his books, which I had eagerly devoured, for I had always been an enthusiast on Arctic matters. He had been on the ill-fated Polaris expedition of several years ago, and had an inexhaustible fund of stories of adventures which he had passed through. Naturally, as I was greatly interested in all such matters, I was with him constantly, and was continually on the lookout for anything which would lead him to relate some untold experience about Arctic matters. In the evenings, after dinner, we used to sit around the wood fire in the library, with no other light but that thrown out by the burning logs, and smoke our pipes and talk. My father was as much interested in Arctic matters as myself, and it was at these times that we would have our most interesting conversations, and that the most thrilling tales of adventure were told. One of the stories which Mr. H—told us, although not remarkable as an adventure, yet greatly impressed me at the time with its terrible, thrilling weirdness; and, indeed, I can hardly now think of it without a shudder passing through me.

Without, it was a horrible night; the wind howled mournfully around the many corners and gables of our old-fashioned house, and whistled wildly down the chimney. Within, our room wore an especial air of comfort. The curtains hung in warm width in the windows, and although the air outside was nipping cold, we did not feel it in-doors; for a genial warmth pervaded the whole room, emanating from the broad-backed chimney-place, where a huge wood fire was burning, which every now and then crackled like Fourth of July fire crackers, sending bright showers of sparks up the chimney. A kettle hung from a crane in one of the crackling corners, singing a song through its nose, and the most minute objects of furniture assumed an air of comfort and homeness.

Around the fire sat Mr. H—my father, and myself. Mr. H—was talking,—but I will try and put the story in his own words.

"During the month of October, eighteen hundred and seventy-two, I was in latitude 70° 5' 17" N., and longitude 96° 46' 45" W., to the southward of Cape Nikolai, on the western shore of Boothia. Pretty high up, this was, among the frozen regions. The weather was rather tight, for it froze the thermometer down to 42° below freezing point. Brandy froze in my throat, and it tasted like iced ice. Do you know what those degrees I have just mentioned mean? No? Why, nothing more nor less than this, the North Magnetic Pole! I had arrived in this interesting region of ice and snow in a Nantucket brig, owned by Captain Tom Thomas, and likewise commanded by him. She was a whaler, and so was he, and I was gastronomer, astronomer, historian, and scenic-sketcher to the expedition. Captain Ross had taken possession of the magnetic pole before us, but had left neither garrison nor provisions in his round-house; so we had to subsist on frozen walrusses, boiled porpoises and ship-stores, which, by the way, I was getting heartily tired of. As you know, a mighty sea washes this realm of polarity, usually crowded, like a Broadway omnibus, by ribbed mountains of ice, rolling, and grinding, and surging over each other, and trying to get a good seat, so as to be able to get out at the earliest convenience, without the slightest regard to the rights or comfort of their neighbors. After we had fished around there a little, and caught as much, Captain Tom Thomas made up his half-frozen mind to steer homeward; and so out we ran before a cracking breeze, breaking our path through acres of ice, that thundered like the batteries of Lord Wellington, when he fought his great fight against a greater man than himself, on the field of Waterloo. On we went before the breeze, day and night, night and day,—for it was all about the same thing; and all the time I kept wondering when that lump of brandy would