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Charles Francis Hall Diary Volume 1, 1860

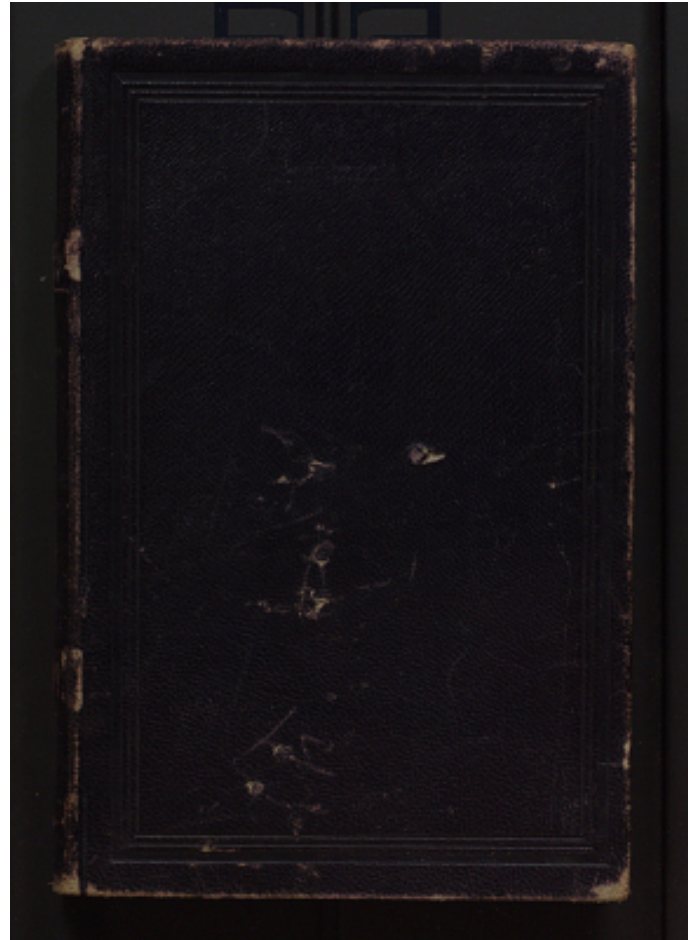
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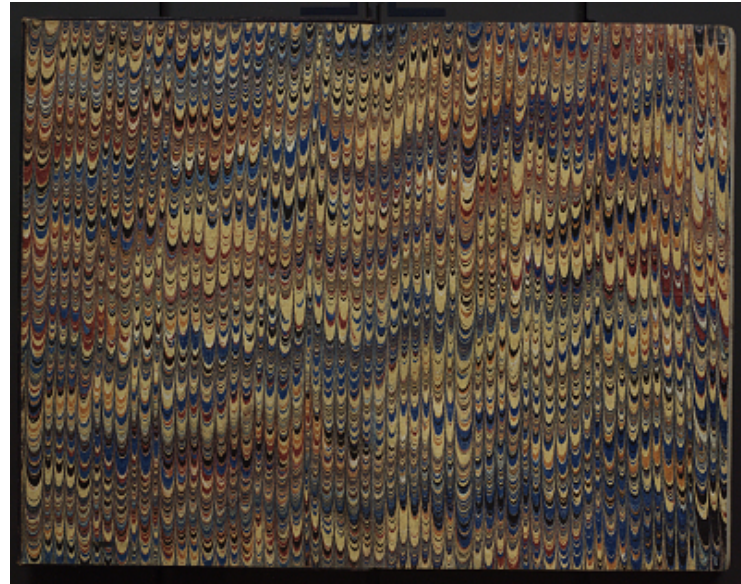
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[[Front cover]]



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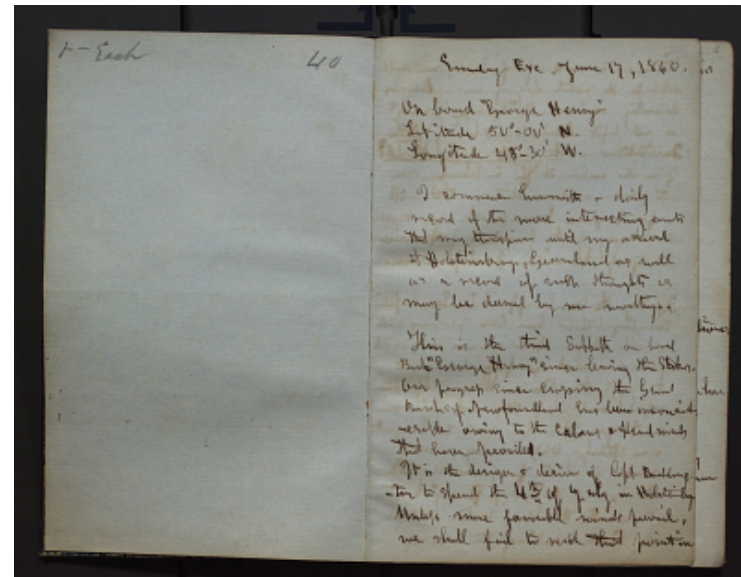
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Sunday Eve, June 17, 1860.

On board "George Henry"
Latitude 50° - 00' N.
Longitude 48° - 30' W.

I commence herewith a daily record of the more interesting events that may transpire until my arrival at Holsteinsborg, Greenland as well as a record of such thoughts as may be deemed by me worthy. .

This is the third Sabbath on board Bark "George Henry" since leaving the [[States?]]. Our progress since crossing the Grand Banks of Newfoundland has been inconsiderable owing to the Calm & Head winds that have prevailed.

It is the design & desire of Capt Buddington to spend the 4th of July in Holsteinborg. Unless more favourable winds prevail, we shall fail to reach that position



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time. In case of failure, we will celebrate the natal day of our glorious country on board the "George Henry" as will befit Americans loving their Institutions as the best of the World! If we do arrive at ~~H?~~ in Sererin?, we will make a demonstration that will go far to prove how much we revere the memory of the founders of American Liberty - of American Independence.

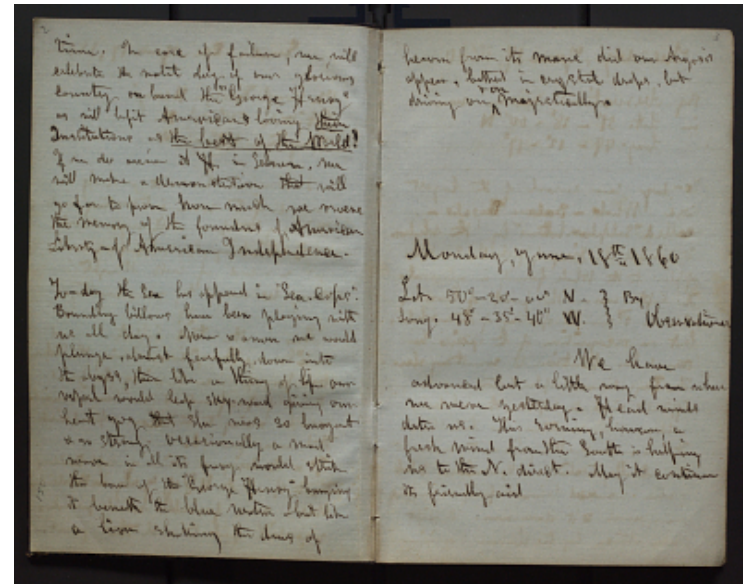
To-day the Sea has appeared in "Sea-caps". Bounding billows have been playing with us all day. Now & anon we would plunge, almost fearfully, down into the abyss, then like a thing of life our vessel would leap sky-ward giving our heart that she was so buoyant & so strong. occasionally a mad wave in all its fury would strike the bow of the "George Henry" burying it beneath the blue water but like a lion shaking the dews of

heaven from its mane did our Argosis appear, bathed in crystal drops, but driving on majestically.

Monday, June, 18th 1860

Lat. 50°-20'-00" N. }
Long. 48°-35'-40" W. } By Observations

We have advanced but a little way from where we were yesterday. Head winds deter us. This evening, however, a fresh wind from the South is helping us to the N. direct. May it continue its friendly aid



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Tuesday, June 19, 1860

By observations we are now
in Lat. $51^{\circ} - 18' - 00''$ N
Long. $49 - 12' - 17''$

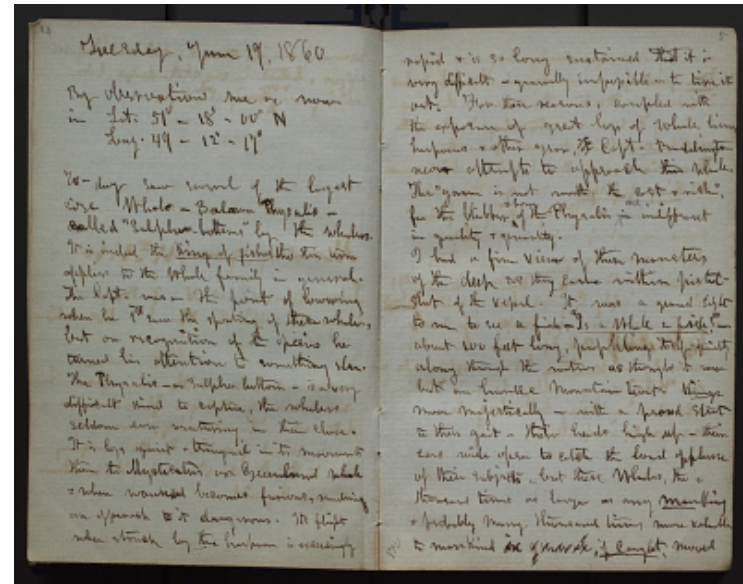
To-day saw several of the largest size Whale - *Balaena Physalis* - called "Sulphur-bottoms" by the whalers. It is indeed the King of fishes tho this term applies to the Whale family in general. The Capt. was on the point of lowering when he 1st saw the spouting of these whales, but on recognition of the species he turned his attention to something else. The *Physalis* - or Sulphur bottom - is a very difficult kind to capture, the whalers seldom even venturing in their chase. It is less quiet & tranquil in its movements than the *Mystecetus* or Greenland whale & when wounded becomes furious, making an approach to it dangerous. Its flight when struck by the harpoon is exceedingly

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rapid & is so long sustained that it is very difficult - generally impossible - to tire it out. For those reasons, coupled with the exposure of great loss of whale lines, harpoons & other gear, ~~it~~ Capt. Buddington never attempts to approach this whale. The "game is not worth the cost & risk", for the blubber & bone of the *Physalis* is indifferent in quality & quantity.

I had a fine view of these monsters of the deep as they came within pistol-shot of the vessel. It was a grand sight to me to see a fish - "Is a Whale a fish?" - about 100 feet long, propelling itself quietly along through the waters as though it was but an humble Mountain trout. Kings move majestically - with a proud strut to their gait - their heads high up - their ears wide open to catch the loud applause of their subjects, but these Whales, tho a thousand times as large as any man - King & probably many thousand times more valuable to mankind in general if caught, moved

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6 quietly & unsurprisingly along. So far as true greatness was concerned these whales had it surely. It is true the whale is the king & ruler of the seas as its etymology indicates, ~~the~~ balæna being derived from the Phœnician word Baalman which means the King of fishes; And yet these whales of which I write, though "King of fishes" showed no act of imperial greatness.

Now & anon they would raise their heads, but this was from no pride or pomposity; it was simply to fulfill a law of nature - to breathe or not - quite as necessary for whales as for men! - ~~by breathing~~ But life does not consist merely in breathing but in action - The ~~can~~ "King" can scarcely be said to live who does nothing but obey his animal impulses.

7

7

Wednesday June 20th 1860.

About 12 last night a fine breeze from the S.E. sprung up carrying us to the North rapidly. During ~~the~~ part of the day we have made 10 Knots per hour. We are now, by my observations

in

Lat. 53° - 09' - 00" N

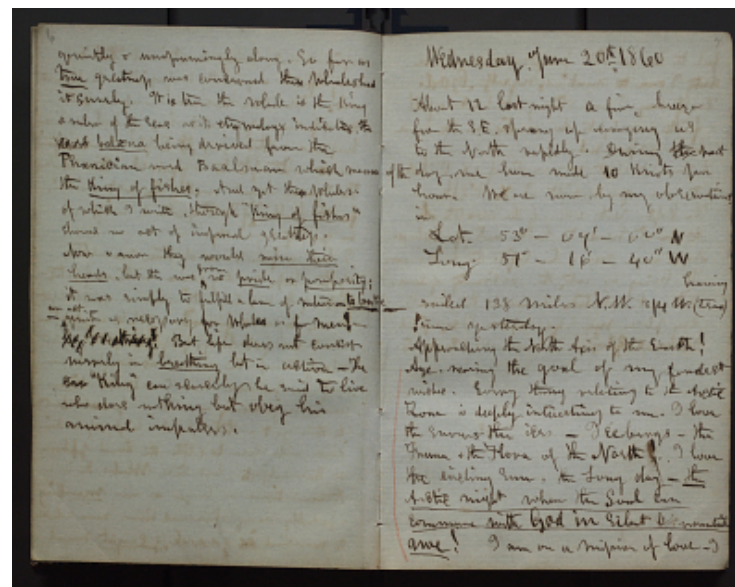
Long. 51° - 16' - 40" W

having sailed 138 miles N.W. 314 W. (true)! since yesterday.

Approaching the North Axis of the Earth!

Aye, nearing the goal of my fondest wishes. Every thing relating to the Arctic Zone is deeply interesting to me. I love the snows - the ice -

Icebergs - the Fauna & the Flora of the North! I love the circling Sun, the Long day - the Arctic night when the Soul can commune with God in silent and reverential awe! I am on a mission of love - I



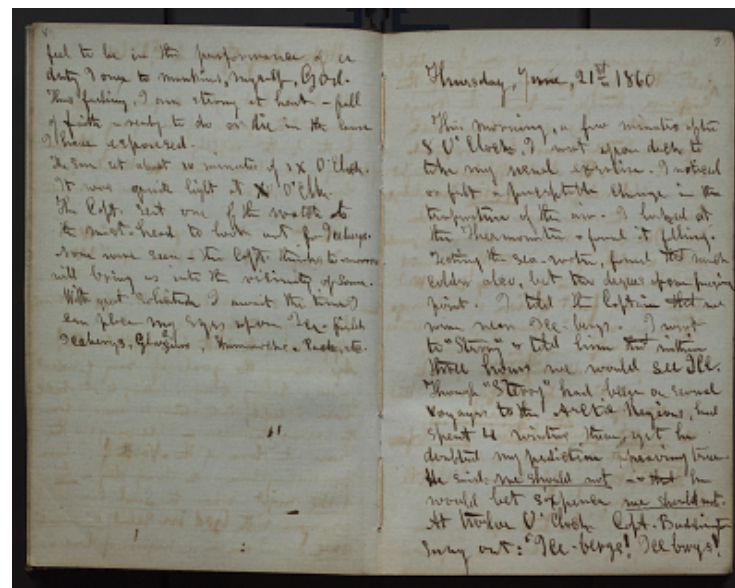
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8.
feel to be in the performance of a duty I owe to mankind, myself, God.
Thus feeling, I am strong at heart - full of faith - ready to do or die in the
cause I have espoused.
The sun set about 10 minutes of 1 X O'Clock. It was quite light at X
O'Clk.
The Capt. sent one of the watch to the mast-head to look out for
Icebergs.
None were seen - the Capt. thinks tomorrow will bring us into the vicinity
of some.
With great solicitude I await the time I can place my eyes upon Ice-fields
Icebergs, Glaciers, Hummocks, Pack, etc.
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9.
Thursday, June, 21st 1860

This morning, a few minutes after 8 O'clock, I went upon deck to take
my usual exercise. I noticed or felt a perceptible change in the
temperature of the air. I looked at the Thermometer & found it falling.
Testing the sea-water, found that much colder also, but two degrees
from freezing point. I told the Captain that we were near Ice-bergs. I
went to "Stevvy" & told him that within three hours we would see Ice.
Though "Stevvy" had been on several voyages to the Arctic Regions,
had spent 4 winters there, yet he doubted my prediction proving true. He
said: we should not - & that he would bet
sixpence we should not. At twelve O'clock
Capt. Buddington sung out: Ice-bergs! Ice-bergs!



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Icebergs were discovered one hour too late - one hour later than my prediction - I lost the sixpence, though in truth the Bergs were within sight of the Vessel's deck before the three hours had expired. As it was: Old Arctic Whalers thought me an old adept in Arctic Knowledge.

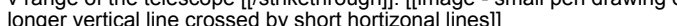
Soon as the announcement was made that Ice-bergs were in view, I responded with a will, for I instantly mounted the bulwarks & there far away to the West drank in my first vision of an Iceberg. I then ran for my Marine opera glass, and telescope perched myself away up in a Whale Boat.

I brought the ~~Main Opera~~ ~~glass~~ ~~to beare~~ - it did not satisfy me. I tried the telescope. The grandure of ~~its~~ ~~crystal mountains~~ ~~was before me~~, yet ~~its~~ ~~the~~ ~~sight~~ was brief as the lightning's flash - & I'll tell you why:

The telescope I have is one of great excellence & power
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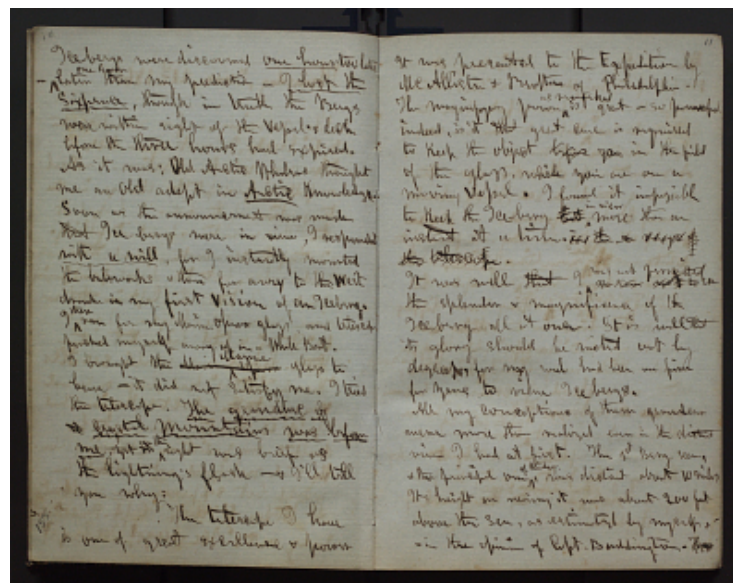
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It was presented to the Expedition by McAllister & Brothers of Philadelphia. The magnifying process ~~is~~ as remarked ~~is~~ great - so powerful indeed, is it that great care is required to keep the object ~~before you~~ in the field of the glass, while you are on a moving vessel. I found it impossible to keep the Ice-berg ~~but~~ ~~in view~~ more than an instant at a time. ~~in the v range of the telescope~~. 

It was well that I ~~was not permitted~~ ~~to see the splendor & magnificence of the Iceberg all at once~~. It is well that its glory should be meted out by degrees ~~for my soul had been on fire for years to view Icebergs~~.

All my conceptions of their grandeur were more than realized even in the distant view I had at first. The 1st Berg seen, & that principal view ~~of this day~~ was distant about 10 miles. Its height on viewing it was about 200 feet above the sea, as estimated by myself & in this opinion of Capt. Buddington. ~~The~~



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When I ¹ st had a view of this Berg ~~it~~ ~~it~~ 130 feet of its height was visible, allowing my position to have been 10 feet above the level of the Sea ~~&~~ ~~the~~ berg to have been 200 feet high, & distance 10 1/4 miles.

A mountain of Alabaster upon the bosom of the dark Sea, black clouds forming the back-ground, is a ~~picture of~~ ~~subject worthy the~~ study ~~it~~ & the pencil of the artist; but it ~~it~~ The Mountain of Ice, white as the undriven Snow ~~now~~ out upon the blue ocean westward of ~~with~~ us, with ~~the~~ setting Sun dipping its nether limb in the ~~rolling wave~~ ~~midst of white "Sea-caps", while its upper~~ thick heavy clouds ~~extending half around the horizon~~ & bathing them in a flood of crimson ~~half - around the horizon~~ with ~~Venus & the~~ New moon close by peering out in the cold air to make the back ground complete - is a subject worthy the song of the poet - worthy the pen of a ~~Greely~~ ~~Bayard Taylor~~ ~~Kane~~ - worthy the pencil of a Raphael.

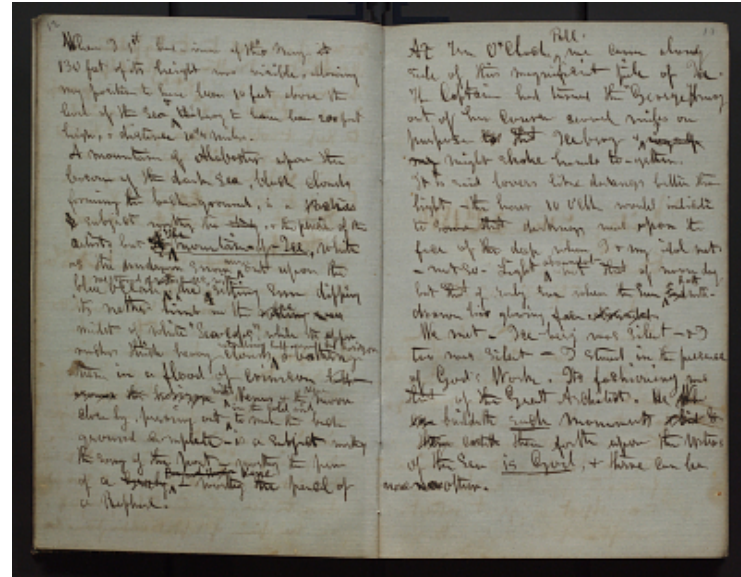
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At Ten o'clock P.M. we came along side of this magnificent pile of Ice. The Captain had turned the "George Henry out of her course several miles on purpose ~~to~~ ~~that~~ ~~Iceberg &~~ ~~myself~~ ~~my~~ ~~I~~ might shake hands to-gether.

It is said lovers like darkness better than light - the hour 10 o'clk would indicate to some that darkness was upon the face of the deep when I & my idol met. - not so - Light ~~abounded~~ - not that of noon day but that of early eve when the Sun ~~hath~~ ~~withdrewn~~ his glowing face. ~~abounded~~

We met - Ice berg was Silent - & I too was Silent - I stood in the presence of God's Work. Its fashioning was that of the Great Architect. He Who ~~can~~ ~~buildeth~~ such ~~monuments~~ ~~& bid of them~~ ~~casteth~~ them forth upon the waters of the Sea is God, & there can be ~~none~~ ~~other~~.



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Friday, June, 22d, 1860.
Latitude $54^{\circ}-55'-00''$ N.
Long. $54^{\circ}-33'-30''$ W.

Yesterday we saw 14 Icebergs- to-day have seen six, one of which we passed within a stone's throw. This one was seen early this morning, far to the N.W. & found to be in the course we should pursue through the day. Its pyramidal form & the apparent size made it an object of great interest. I was often up on deck with glass
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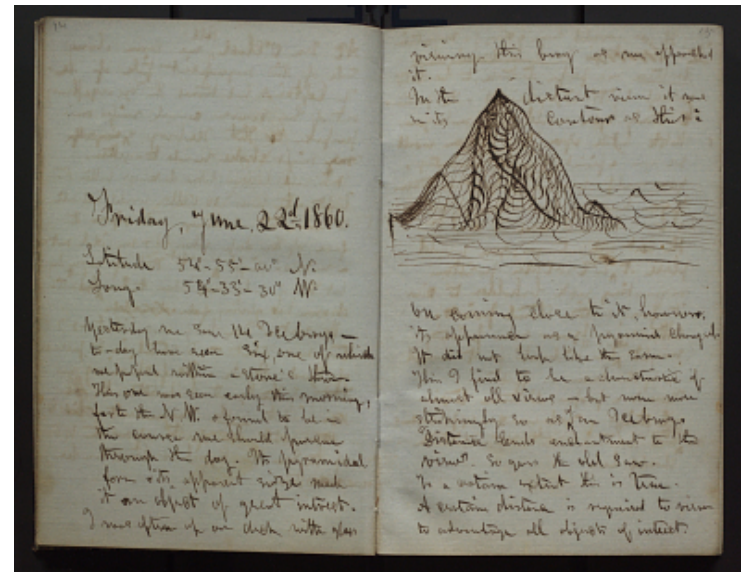
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viewing this berg as we approached it. In the distant view it was in its contour as this:

[[image - pen sketch of iceberg surrounded by sea with lines drawn indicating shape and texture]]

On coming close to it, however, its appearance as a pyramid changed. It did not look like the same. This I find to be a characteristic of almost all views - but none more strikingly so as [[insertion]] of [[/insertion]] an Iceberg. "Distance lends enchantment to the view". So goes the old [[saw?]]. To a certain extent this is true. A certain distance is required to view to advantage all objects of interest.
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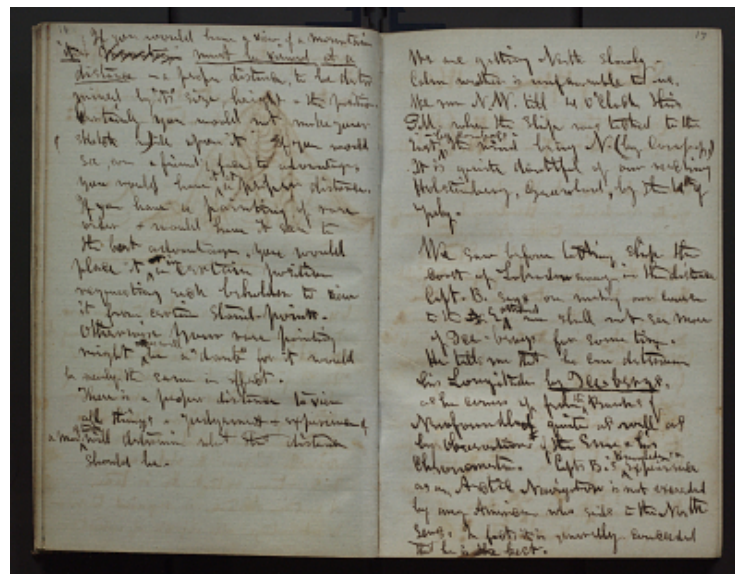
If you would have a view of a mountain it must be viewed at a distance - a proper distance, to be determined by its size, height & the position. Certainly.. you would not make your sketch while upon it. If you would see, even a friend's face to advantage, you would have it at a proper distance. If you have a painting of rare order & would have it seen to the best advantage, you would place it in a certain position requesting each beholder to view it from certain stand-points. Otherwise your rare painting might as well be a "daub" for it would be nearly the same in effect. There is a proper distance to view all things. Judgement & experience of a man of taste will determine what that distance should be.

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We are getting North slowly - Calm weather is unfavorable to us. We ran N.W. till 4 o'clock this P.M. when the ship was tacked to the East - by compass - The wind being N. (by compass) it is quite doubtful of our reaching Holsteinsberg, Greenland, by the 4th of July.

We saw before tacking ship the coast of Labrador away in the distance. Capt. B. says on making our course to the ~~N~~ E astward we shall not see more of Ice-bergs for some time. He tells me that he can determine his Longitude by Ice-bergs, as he comes up from the Banks of Newfoundland quite as well as by observations of the Sun & his Chronometer. Capt. B.'s knowledge & experience as an Arctic Navigator is not exceeded by any American who sails to the North Seas. In fact, it is generally conceded that he is the best.



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