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These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind, to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine. These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven, for nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose—a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good Uncle Thomas' library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life. These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets who diffuse those effusions entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. 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If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never. Farewell, my dear, excellent Margaret. Heaven shower down blessing on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness. Your affectionate brother, R. Walton Letter 2 Archangel, 28th March, 17-- To Mrs. Saville, England How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow! Yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I can depend on and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage. But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy, and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret, when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution and too impatient of difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a common and read nothing but our Uncle Thomas' books of voyages. At that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own country; but it was only when it ceased to be in my power to derive its most important benefits from such a conviction that I perceived the necessity of becoming acquainted with more languages than that of my native country. Now I am twenty-eight and am in reality more illiterate than many schoolboys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more and that my daydreams are more extended and magnificent, but they want (as the painters call it) KEEPING; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for him to endeavour to regulate my mind. Well, these are useless complaints; I shall certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangel, among merchants and seamen. Yet some feelings, unallied to the dross of human nature, beat even in these rugged bosoms. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory, or rather, to word my phrase more characteristically, of advancement in his profession. He is an Englishman, and in the midst of national and professional prejudices, softened and subdued by cultivation, retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel; finding that he was unemployed in this city, I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise. The master is a person of an excellent disposition and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness and the mildness of his discipline. This circumstance, added to his well-known integrity and his dauntless courage, made me very desirous to engage him. A youth passed in solitude, my best years spent under your gentle and feminine fostering care, has so refined the groundwork of my character that I cannot overcome an intense distaste to the usual brutality exercised on board ship: I have never believed it to be necessary, and when I heard of a mariner equally noted for his kindness of heart and the respect and obedience paid to him by his crew, I felt myself peculiarly fortunate in being able to secure his services. I heard of him first in rather a romantic manner, from a lady who owes to him the happiness of her life. This, briefly, is his story. Some years ago he loved a young Russian lady of moderate fortune, and having amassed a considerable sum in prize-money, the father of the girl consented to the match. He saw his mistress once before the destined ceremony; but she was bathed in tears, and throwing herself at his feet, entreated him to spare her, confessing at the same time that she loved another, but that he was poor, and that her father would never consent to the union. My generous friend reassured the suppliant, and on being informed of the name of her lover, instantly abandoned his pursuit. He had already bought a farm with his money, and intended himself to settle in his country, nor returned until he heard that his former mistress was married according to her inclination. Ignorant of her situation, he sought for her in vain. In the meantime his former mistress, ignorant of his search, attended him, while, while it renders his conduct the more astonishing, detested because I can conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am wavering in my determination. The winter has been dreadfully severe, but the spring promises well, and it is considerably warmer than last year. I am well, and hope you are the same. I am writing you very truly, your affectionate brother, Robert Walton Letter 3 July 7th, 17-- To Mrs. Saville, England My dear Sister, I write a few lines in haste to say that I am safe—and well and am now on its homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land again for many years. I am bold and apparently firm of purpose, nor do the floating sheets of ice that continually pass us, frightening, appear to dismay them. We have already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer here, and the ice melts away so rapidly that we are enabled to proceed with safety. I shall blow us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain, breathe a degree of fresh air, and then I shall be well content if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage. Adieu, my dear sister, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent. But success SHALL crown our efforts. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent. But success SHALL crown our efforts. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent. But success SHALL crown our efforts.

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