

# THE FROZEN DEEP

*In Three Acts*

The Scene of the First Act, an old Country House in Devonshire (Telbin)

The Scene of the Second Act, a Hut in the Arctic Regions (Stanfield)

The Scene of the Third Act, a Cavern on the coast of Newfoundland (Stanfield)

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Period, The Present Time

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Time occupied in representation—Two hours and a half.

The Prompt-Book

## Prologue

*(Curtain rises. Mists and darkness. Soft music throughout.)*

One savage footprint on the lonely shore,  
Where one man listen'd to the surge's roar;  
Not all the winds that stir the mighty sea  
Can ever ruffle in the memory.  
If such its interest and thrall, O then  
Pause on the footprints of heroic men,  
Making a garden of the desert wide  
Where PARRY conquer'd and FRANKLIN died.

To that white region where the Lost lie low,  
Wrapp'd in their mantles of eternal snow;  
Unvisited by change, nothing to mock  
Those statues sculptured in the icy rock,  
We pray your company; that hearts as true  
(Though nothings of the air) may live for you;  
Nor only yet that on our little glass  
A faint reflection of those wilds may pass,  
But, that the secrets of the vast Profound  
Within us, an exploring hand may sound,  
Testing the region of the ice-bound soul,  
Seeking the passage at its northern pole,  
Soft'ning the horrors of its wintry sleep,  
Melting the surface of that 'Frozen Deep.'

Vanish, ye mists! But ere this gloom departs,  
And to the union of three sister arts  
We give a winter evening, good to know  
That in the charms of such another show,  
That in the fiction of a friendly play,  
The Arctic sailors, too, put gloom away,  
Forgot their long night, saw no starry dome,  
Hail'd the warm sun, and were again at Home.

Vanish ye mists! Not yet do we repair  
To the still country of the piercing air;  
But seek, before we cross the troubled Seas,  
An English hearth and Devon's waving trees.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Prologue, written by Dickens, was spoken by John Forster during the Tavistock House performances and by Dickens during the Gallery of Illustration and Manchester performances. It is not included in the M.A. 81 collection. The version printed here is taken from *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Georgina Hogarth and Mamie Dickens (New York, n.d.), pp. 522-523.

## THE FROZEN DEEP

### *Act the First*

## Act I\*

(Scene 1. A pleasant room in a country-house with an old fashioned bay window in the flat, looking out over autumn corn fields on a village church embosomed in woods. This prospect is supposed to be seen shortly before sunset. The room very comfortably and prettily furnished. Flowers about. A few flower pots on a Stand. A tea-table with tea things on it. Two little Work Tables with baskets of work on them, etc., etc. A bird in a cage. Mrs. Steventon and Rose discovered. Maid enters with newspaper from the post. Is going to give it to Rose. Mrs. Steventon beckons for it and it is given to her.)

ROSE: Any news, Caroline?

MRS. STEVENTON: (*Reading*) "Arrived, the Fortune from Valparaiso. The Ariel from Jamaica. (*Spoken*) The Sisters from Liverpool for California, eight days out. Reported drifting among ice at Sea, waterlogged and abandoned, the Hope—." (*Hurriedly and repressing a shudder*) No, Rose—no news to interest us.

ROSE: Shall I give you some more tea? (*Mrs. S. declines.*) Where are Clara and Lucy?

\* (*Before ringing up, see the Furniture Properties correct by the list. See the colored lights ready at the back. See the working sky ready. See that Lucy Crayford has a book. See that Clara Burnham has dried flowers in an envelope. See that Maid has folded Newspaper ready. See that basket, scissors and watering pot are ready. A. P. S.*)

