

FRANKENSTEIN:
or, The Modern
Prometheus

Letter 1

To Mrs. Saville, England.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17—.

You will rejoice to hear the news. No disaster has accompanied the commencement of my enterprise. I arrived here yesterday, and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare.

I am already far north of London. As I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze. It plays upon my cheeks, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze gives me a foretaste of icy climes. My daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to think that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation. It presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible. There snow and frost are banished.

It is a country of eternal light. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death. I commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks

in a little boat. I want to discover a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite.

My heart glows with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven. Nothing contributes so much to tranquillise the mind as a steady purpose. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my **early years**¹. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages through the seas which surround the pole. A history of all the voyages composed the library of our good Uncle Thomas. **My education was neglected**², but I liked to read. These volumes were my study day and night. But my father forbid my uncle to allow me **to embark in a seafaring life**³.

Famous poets entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation. I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple of Homer and Shakespeare. Then I bore the disappointment.

¹ **early years** — юность

² **my education was neglected** — моим образованием не занимались

³ **to embark in a seafaring life** — отправиться в море

But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin.

Six years have passed since I made a decision. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea. I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep. I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day. I devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and branches of physical science. Twice I actually hired myself as an **under-mate**¹. I felt a little proud when my captain liked my services.

And now, dear Margaret, I deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life can pass in ease and luxury, but I prefer glory to wealth. My courage and my resolution are firm. I shall proceed on a long and difficult voyage.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. I fly quickly over the snow in my sledges; the motion is pleasant. The cold is not excessive. I have no ambition to lose my life between St. Petersburg and Archangelsk.

¹ **under-mate** — подшкипер

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks. My intention is to hire a ship there. I do not intend to sail until the month of June; and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear Margaret. Thank you for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,
R. Walton

Letter 2

To Mrs. Saville, England.

Archangelsk, 28th March, 17—.

How slowly the time passes here! Yet I have hired a vessel. I am collecting my sailors. But I have no friend, Margaret. No one will sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true. But that is not enough. I desire the company of a man who can sympathise with me, whose eyes can reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister,

but I really need a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. Such a friend can repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too impatient. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated. Now I am twenty-eight and am in reality more illiterate than many schoolboys of fifteen.

Well, these are useless complaints. I shall certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangelsk, among merchants and seamen. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage. He is madly desirous of glory. He is an Englishman, and retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel. I found that he was unemployed in this city. I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise.

The captain is a person of an excellent disposition and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness and the mildness of his discipline. His dauntless courage made me very desirous to engage him. My youth, my best years, passed in solitude, under your gentle and feminine fosterage. I distaste the usual brutality. I shall do nothing

rashly: you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness.

I cannot describe to you my sensations. It is impossible to tell you about the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful. I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow”. But I shall kill no albatross. There is something in my soul which I do not understand. I am practically industrious — but besides this there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous.

Shall I meet you again, when I return from Africa or America? Write to me **by every opportunity**¹: I may receive your letters when I need them most. I love you very tenderly.

Your affectionate brother,
Robert Walton

Letter 3

To Mrs. Saville, England.

July 7th, 17—.

My dear Sister,

I write a few lines to say that I am safe. This letter will reach England by

¹ **by every opportunity** — при каждой возможности

a **merchantman**¹ now on its homeward voyage from Archangelsk. It is more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: my men are bold and firm. We have already reached a very high latitude. It is summer, although not so warm as in England.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R.W.

Letter 4

To Mrs. Saville, England.

August 5th, 17—.

A very strange accident has happened to us. Last Monday (July 31st) we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides. Our situation was dangerous, especially as we met a very thick fog. Will some change take place in the atmosphere and weather?

¹ **merchantman** — торговое судно

About two o'clock the mist cleared away. We beheld vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind was watchful with anxious thoughts. Suddenly a strange sight attracted our attention. We perceived a low carriage, at the distance of half a mile. We noticed the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature. The man sat in the sledge and guided the dogs. Soon the traveller went away.

This appearance excited our wonder. We were many hundred miles from any land. It was impossible to follow the traveller's track.

About two hours after this occurrence we heard the sea. Before night the ice broke and freed our ship. In the morning, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck. All the sailors were talking to someone in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, which drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it. The sailors were persuading him to enter the vessel.

When I appeared on deck the sailors said, "Our captain will not allow you to perish on the open sea."

The stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent.

“Before I come on board your vessel,” said he, “will you have the kindness to inform me where you are going?”

You may conceive my astonishment. Such a question from a man on the brink of destruction! I replied, however, that we were going towards the northern pole.

The man was satisfied and consented to come on board. Good God, Margaret! His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We carried him into the cabin, but he fainted. We brought him back to the deck and restored him to animation. As soon as he showed signs of life we wrapped him up in blankets and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen stove. Then he recovered and ate a little soup, which restored him wonderfully.

Two days passed before he was able to speak. When he recovered, I removed him to my own cabin and **attended on him**¹. I never saw a more interesting creature. But he is generally melancholy and

¹ **attended on him** — ухаживал за ним

despairing, and sometimes he gnashes his teeth. The weight of woes oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions. Once, however, the lieutenant asked why he came so far upon the ice in so strange a vehicle.

The stranger replied, "To seek one who fled from me."

"And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?"

"Yes."

"Then I think we saw him. The day before we picked you up we saw some dogs and a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice."

The stranger asked many questions about the route and the demon, as he called him. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said,

"I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity. But you are too considerate to make inquiries. You rescued me from a strange and perilous situation. You have benevolently restored me to life."

From this time a new spirit of life animated the stranger. He wanted to be upon deck to watch for the sledge. But

I persuaded him to remain in the cabin. I promised to give him instant notice if any new object appeared in sight.

The stranger has gradually improved in health but is very silent and appears uneasy when someone enters his cabin. Yet his manners are conciliating and gentle. I begin to love him as a brother. His constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion.

August 13th, 17—.

My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites my admiration and my pity. He is so gentle, yet so wise. When he speaks, his words flow with rapidity and eloquence.

He is now continually on the deck, watching for the sledge that preceded his own. He knows my feelings. How gladly I shall sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise! One man's life or death are a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I seek.

And I told him about it. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's