

It is the risk of coming into collision with these colossal masses that makes the principal danger of the Polar Seas.

Captain (afterwards Dr.) Scoresby has given a very minute description of the different kinds of ice the navigator encounters in these parts. An extent of congealed water, whose limits cannot be recognized by the eye, is termed an *ice-field* (in French, *banquise*, or *champ de glace*). Ice-fields have been seen measuring thirty-five

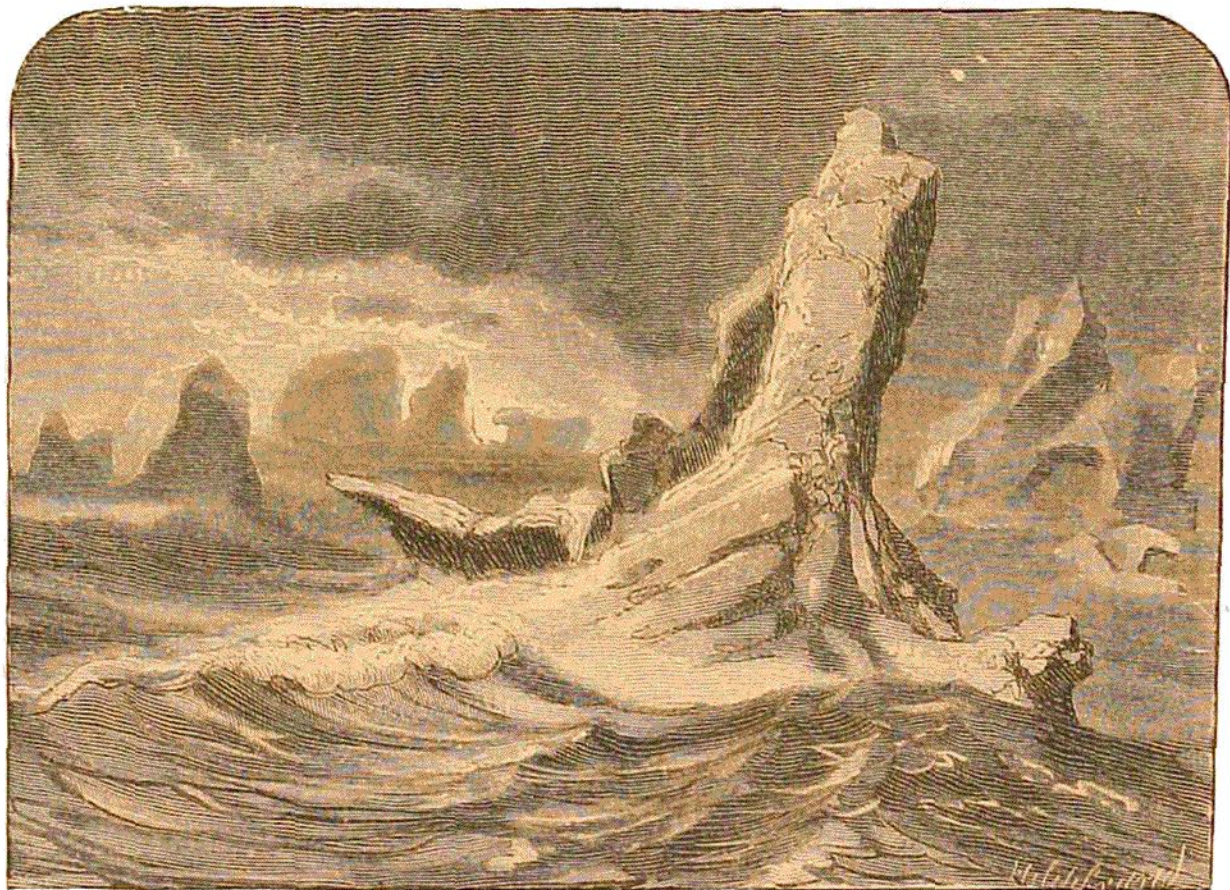


FIG. 224. — FLOATING ICE.

leagues in length by ten in breadth, and with a thickness of forty-five feet. But, generally, they do not rise more than three to seven feet above the surface of the water, and sink about twenty feet beneath.

Scoresby describes the formation of the ice-field in the open sea. When the first crystals appear, the surface of the ocean resembles that of water sufficiently cold to prevent the thaw of the snow falling upon it. As the freezing process continues, the sea suddenly grows calm, as if covered with oil. The small blocks of ice, as they form, dash against one another, round off their angles and inequalities, and