

resemble immense tabular plateaux, whose sides still inclose the débris of the *erratic blocks* torn from the littoral glacier; but occasionally they are greatly inclined, and present a more or less gentle slope, which can be easily ascended to the very summit. In time the restless waters work out profound cavities at the base, and horizontal channellings, which mark the successive lines of flotation of the decomposing masses. Then, as the degradation continues to increase, columns spring up, and natural bridges, and bristling shafts; stalactites and stalagmites, and yawning apertures, which pierce the huge colossus from side to side, especially when they are clothed in the purple light of the setting sun. More and more worn away by the combined



FIG. 231.—ARCHED ICEBERG, DISCOVERED BY SIR JOHN ROSS, OFF THE GREENLAND COAST.

action of the water and the atmosphere, they float southward, swept along the track of the rushing currents, sometimes even against the wind. When they arrive off the south of Greenland, the warm waters of the Gulf Stream complete their disintegration.

Not unfrequently the navigator falls in with a complete archipelago of these islands and islets of ice. The mass of blocks produces the effect of a city of giants which some geological catastrophe has overwhelmed, and whose ruins drift hither and thither at the will of the unchained elements. A myriad reflections of light play about its palaces of silver and crystal. When the human voice resounds in the mournful deadly solitude, unnumbered echoes repeat it on every side, as if the spirits of the unseen world gloomily responded to the rash intruder upon their sacred silence.