



ICE-BOAT TRANSPORT OF MAILS AND PASSENGERS IN WINTER ACROSS THE BELTS BETWEEN THE DANISH ISLANDS

## ICEBOAT-TRANSPORT OF MAILS AND PASSENGERS ACROSS THE "BELTS" BETWEEN THE DANISH ISLANDS

ONCE or twice every ten years the winter is so severe in Denmark that the "Belts" of sea between the islands, and between these and the mainland are frozen over, and the regular mail and passenger service is then suddenly interrupted. In order not to be shut out from the outer world, the Danish Government established an excellent and remarkably well-organized iceboat service or transport as it is called in Denmark, the only one of its kind in any part the world. On account of the strong currents between the islands, the ice is often broken up even when of great thickness, and open places are frequently met with, so transport by sledges and horses been abandoned as unsafe and dangerous. Strong boats, sufficiently long to hold about ten persons, but light enough to be pulled out of the water on to the ice have been specially built for this service, and on both sides of the "Belts" stations have been established, which are well provisioned every year before the winter sets in. Each boat is manned by four men, who, when the boat is on the ice, have to drag the boat along in the manner depicted in our illustration, in which they are generally assisted by the passengers told off to each boat, generally four or five. An oar is lashed across the fore-part the boat, by which means the boat is kept straight on its keel.

The lady passengers are allowed to sit in the boats with the mail bags so that they can easily save themselves in case of any accident, such as the boat going through the ice, &c. The number of boats that start each day from both sides of the "Belts" vary according to the number of the passengers. From four to twenty boats may be seen leaving the shore, one close upon the other, so the whole procession of boats has the appearance of a caravan on a desert ice-field. It is a very interesting, and a curious sight to see the passengers of all nationalities and in all sorts of costumes, walking alongside the boats and assisting to pull them along, regardless of what station in life they may belong to. It takes from six to eight hours to cross the "Great Belt," and it has several times happened, during the passage across the ice that a storm has suddenly come up and broken up the ice which then goes adrift and of course carries the boats with it. During the severe winter of 1870-7,1 there were three occasions on which great fear was entertained as to the fate of the boats—one boat drifted northward for about fifty-six hours before the passengers could be landed. On the little Island of Sprogö, in the "Great Belt," a station has been erected in connection with the lighthouse there, where passengers will be received and housed in case the transport has to take refuge on the island. The last occasion on which the iceboat transport was in operation was last winter, when the sketch of our illustration was taken by one of the passengers, who expectantly was obliged to this method of reaching Copenhagen, and who had to walk across ice in an ordinary top coat and a London "stove-pipe"—a strange sight in the midst the warmly dressed and fur-arrayed passengers.

H.L.B.

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