

CHAPTER XXV

THE AMERICAN (WEDDELL) QUADRANT
(From Greenwich to 90° West)

THE geographical evolution of this quadrant began through an accidental discovery by a British trading ship, and was carried on by American sealers, a body of adventurous seamen whose pursuits and inclinations have led them to unknown seas, and resulted in polar discoveries which would have crowned with honor professional explorers.

The advantages of the Pacific Ocean as a fishing ground appealed early to Americans, five whalers entering it in 1791. Worth, in the *Beaver*, the first arrival, was ordered out of Lima and forbidden the coast by the Spanish authorities. Some did their fishing in the stormy seas of Tierra del Fuego, establishing their base on the northwest island, Desolation; others frequented the Falklands. The later named group was visited for sealing in 1815, as American ships returned the following summer laden with sea-elephant oil. The first clearances for the South Sandwich Islands, noted by Starbuck, were in 1819, the *Equator* and *Balaena*, of New Bedford, probably the first whalers to visit these islands.