The life of Charles Wilkes spans the greater part of the 19th century, and his autobiography, which he began in 1871, covers over sixty years, breaking off in 1862. His career was varied, eventful, turbulent and, all in all, successful, since he progressed from midshipman to rear admiral in relatively easy stages, though he never compromised his rigorous principles and had to weather convictions by two courts-martial — setbacks which would surely have destroyed a lesser man. The most notable features of his career include his command of the U.S. Exploration Expedition (1838-42), during which the icebound Antarctic was discovered to be a continental land mass; and his boarding of the British steamer, Trent, to remove the Confederate Commissioners, John Slidell and James Mason: an international incident which found its way into the hands of English seamen in general come under his censure, and his comments upon them are especially scathing, focusing on the claim that he never acknowledged the correction of his anti-British feeling throughout. Noting that the gun was made in England he observes: "It would be of great value to have cultivated strong likes and dislikes, and regularly placed people in absolute categories of good and bad. His strongest abhorrence was of tyrants, and especially those who treated him as "one of the most untoward acts of want of resolution and bravery" and asserts that everyone under his command suffered from his tyranny. Belcher is also described as indelicate in his dealings with the officers, by holding office nor properly estimated the position they held." Polk, with letters stuffed in his pockets, reminded Wilkes of a "Penny postman." Even Lincoln incurs considerable criticism, despite Wilkes's staunch Northern loyalties. He felt Lincoln had "no sign of refinement and education about him, and...the effect he produced upon the country was not calculated to inspire confidence..." But Wilkes could also be generous in his assessments. In particular, he speaks with considerable understanding and sympathy about the problems of the South. Transcribing the volume must have been taxing, since, to judge from the specimen provided on the inside-covers, Wilkes's hand is difficult to decipher, and his style is chaotic. The editorial process seems to have been thorough, and the work is provided with admirable illustrations, a useful chronology, and a comprehensive index. Only the explanatory notes seem deficient, being sparse and a little capricious. It is also a pity that Fagan, the admirable proof-reader who saw Wilkes's Narrative and the works of James Fenimore Cooper through the press, could not have been resurrected to correct the spelling in the chronological table, which is almost as hapazard as Wilkes's own (e.g., "disobedience" and "Cemetery"). In general, however, the volume should be welcomed by every maritime library and by students of 19th century naval history.

Anthony G. Petti
Department of English
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2N IN4


My initial reaction to the book was "At last!" Here is a profusely and well illustrated book written in a popular vein on Precambrian through Quaternary glaciations. The book is divided into eight chapters and a glossary. Reading the book, one gets glimpses of the Precambrian, Ordovician, Carboniferous, and Quaternary glaciations, and some of the postulates as to the origin, causes and future possibilities of renewed glaciation. Unfortunately, the glimpses are overshadowed by the inadequacies of the book. These include inadequate cross-referencing of text and figures, inadequate explanation of figures, inaccurate definitions and numerous typographical errors. Figures are unnumbered and not specifically referred to in the text, so that the reader may be unaware that the following page has a highly informative illustration that would help clarify a concept. Nor do the captions alert the reader to the real significance of the illustrations or the details to be gleaned from them. Many of the illustrations, such as the diagram outlining the accumulation and ablation zone, are inadequately or not at all explained.

Definitions are often inadequate or incorrect. The following are but a few examples: \textit{medial moraine}, makes no reference to accumulation downstream from the juncture of two coalescing glaciers; \textit{palynology} as the "study of fossil spores, especially pollen"; and \textit{carbonates} as "material made of carbonates such as a calcite, dolomite, or aragonite."

The concept of the book is one that would fulfill a need and is one that still appeals to me: one that would reach out both to the professional as a summary and to the layperson. A revised version of the present volume would be a welcome addition to the literature on glaciations for both the layperson and the professional. Regrettably, I cannot recommend the present version.

L. V. Hills
Professor
Department of Geology/Geophysics
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2N IN4