

which he most kindly allowed me to accompany him), and one under Mr. Hammond, to survey the western parts of the Beagle Channel, and afterward to return and visit the settlement. The day to our astonishment was overpoweringly hot, so that our skins were scorched: with this beautiful weather, the view in the middle of the Beagle Channel was very remarkable. Looking toward either hand, no object intercepted the vanishing points of this long canal between the mountains. The circumstance of its being an arm of the sea was rendered very evident by several huge whales' spouting in different directions. On one occasion I saw two of these monsters, probably male and female, slowly swimming one after the other, within less than a stone's throw of the shore, over which the beech tree extended its branches.

We sailed on till it was dark, and then pitched our tents in a quiet creek. The greatest luxury was to find for our beds a beach of pebbles, for they were dry and yielded to the body. Peaty soil is damp; rock is uneven and hard; sand gets into one's meat, when cooked and eaten boat-fashion; but when lying in our blanket-bags, on a good bed of smooth pebbles, we passed most comfortable nights.

It was my watch till one o'clock. There is something very solemn in these scenes. At no time does the consciousness in what a remote corner of the world you are then standing come so strongly before the mind. Everything tends to this effect; the stillness of the night is interrupted only by the heavy breathing of the seamen beneath the tents, and sometimes by the cry of a night-bird. The occasional barking of a dog, heard in the distance, reminds one that it is the land of the savage.

January 29th.—Early in the morning we arrived at the point where the Beagle Channel divides into two arms; and we entered the northern one. The scenery here becomes

¹ One day, off the east coast of Tierra del Fuego, we saw a grand sight in several spermaceti whales jumping upright quite out of the water, with the exception of their tail-fins. As they fell down sidewise, they splashed the water high up, and the sound reverberated like a distant broadside.