

next, when I had brought the sledges up, there was only open water. Meanwhile we executed some intricate manœuvring from floe to floe, always farther east, in order to get round. The ice jammed under and around us, and it was often a difficult matter to get through. Often did we think we were well across, when still worse lanes and cracks in front of us met our disappointed gaze. It was enough sometimes to make one despair,

“There seemed to be no end to it; wherever one turned were yawning channels. On the overcast sky the dark, threatening reflection of water was to be seen in all directions. It really seemed as if the ice was entirely broken up. Hungry and almost tired to death we were, but determined, if possible, to have our troubles behind us before we stopped for dinner. But at last matters came to a hopeless pitch, and at 1 o'clock, after nine hours' work, we decided to have a meal. It is a remarkable fact that, let things be as bad as they may, once in the bag, and with food in prospect, all one's troubles sink into oblivion. The human being becomes a happy animal, which eats as long as it can keep its eyes open, and goes to sleep with the food in its mouth. Oh, blissful state of heedlessness! But at 4 o'clock we had to turn to again at the apparently hopeless task of threading the maze of lanes. As a last drop in our cup of misery the weather became so thick and shadowless that one literally could not see if one were walking up against a wall of ice or plunging into a pit. Alas, we have only