

channels appeared in front. I climbed up on to a hummock as quickly as possible, but the sight which met my eyes was anything but enlivening — lane after lane, crossing and recrossing, in front of us and on each side, as far as the eye could reach. It looked as if it mattered little what direction we chose: it would be of no avail in getting out of the maze. I made a long excursion on ahead to see if there might not be a way of slipping through and over on the consecutive flat sheets as we had done before; but the ice appeared to be broken up, and so it probably is all the way to land. It was no longer with the compact, massive polar ice that we had to deal, but with thin, broken-up pack-ice, at the mercy of every wind of heaven, and we had to reconcile ourselves to the idea of scrambling from floe to floe as best we might. What would I not have given at this moment for it to be March, with all its cold and sufferings, instead of the end of May, and the thermometer almost above 32° Fahr.? It was just this end of May I had feared all along, the time at which I considered it of the greatest importance to have gained land. Unhappily my fears proved to be well founded. I almost began to wish that it was a month or more later; the ice would then perhaps be slacker here, with more open pools and lanes, so that in a measure one could make one's way in a kayak. Well, who could tell? This miserable thin young ice appeared to be utterly treacherous, and there was a water-sky in every direction, but mostly far, far ahead. If only we were there! if only