

we were under land! Perhaps, if the worst should come to the worst, we may be reduced to waiting till over the time when the mild weather and break-up of the ice come in earnest. But have we provisions enough to wait till that time? This was, indeed, more than doubtful. . . . As I stood sunk in these gloomy reflections on the high hummock, and looking southward over the ice, seeing ridge after ridge and lane after lane before me, I suddenly heard the well-known sound of a whale blowing from a lead close behind. It was the solution of my troubles. Starve we should not; there are animals here, and we have guns, thank Heaven, and harpoons as well, and we know how to use them. There was a whole school of narwhals in the lane breathing and blowing ceaselessly. As some high ice hid them from view for a great part, I could only see their gray backs, now and then, as they arched themselves over the black surface of the water. I stood a long while looking at them, and had I had my gun and harpoon, it would have been an easy matter to get one. After all, the prospect was not so bad at present; and meanwhile what we had to do was not to mind lanes, but to keep on our course S.W. or S.W. to S. over them, and push on the best we could. And with that resolution I returned to the sledges. Neither of us, however, had a very firm belief that we should get much farther, and therefore all the more elated did we become as our advance proved by degrees to be tolerably easy, in spite of our exhausted dogs.