

near when we can be off again and start homeward in earnest. The snow has decreased sufficiently to make advance fairly easy. We are doing our utmost to get ready. The grips on the sledges are nicely arranged, and provided with cushions of bearskin on Johansen's and of cloth on mine. This is in order to give the kayaks a firm and soft bed and prevent chafing. The kayaks are painted with soot and train-oil, and have been calked with pastels (for drawing), crushed and also mixed with train-oil; that is to say, as far as these various ingredients would go. We are now using a mixture of stearine, pitch, and resin,* to finish up with. A thorough revision of our equipment will take place, and everything not absolutely invaluable will be left behind. We must say good-bye here to the sleeping-bag and tent.† Our days of comfort are past, and henceforth until we are on board the sloop‡ we will live under the open sky.

“Meanwhile we have lain here—‘Longing Camp,’ as we call it—and let the time slip by. We have eaten bear-meat morning, noon, and night, and, so far from being tired of it, have made the discovery that the breast of the cubs is quite a delicacy. It is remarkable that this exclusive meat and fat diet has not caused us the slightest discomfort in any way, and we have no craving

* This was taken in case it might be wanted for soldering the cooking apparatus or the German-silver plates under the sledge-runners.

† We eventually decided to retain this, however.

‡ The vessel we expected to catch in Spitzbergen.