

headland to the west. Would the coast trend south here, and was there no more land westward? It was this we expected to decide our fate—decide whether we should reach home that year or be compelled to winter somewhere on land. Nearer and nearer we came to it along the edge of the perpendicular wall of ice. At last we reached the headland, and our hearts bounded with joy to see so much water—only water—westward, and the coast trending southwest. We also saw a bare mountain projecting from the ice-sheet a little way farther on; it was a curious high ridge, as sharp as a knife-blade. It was as steep and sharp as anything I have seen; it was all of dark, columnar basalt, and so jagged and peaked that it looked like a comb. In the middle of the mountain there was a gap or couloir, and there we crept up to inspect the sea-way southward. The wall of rock was anything but broad there, and fell away on the south side in a perpendicular drop of several hundred feet. A cutting wind was blowing in the couloir. While we were lying there, I suddenly heard a noise behind me, and on looking around I saw two foxes fighting over a little auk which they had just caught. They clawed and tugged and bit as hard as they could on the very edge of the chasm; then they suddenly caught sight of us, not twenty feet away from them. They stopped fighting, looked up wonderingly, and began to run around and peep at us, first from one side, then from the other. Over us myriads of little auks flew backward and forward,