

quarter of the skin, with the blubber on it, and threw it on the top, and then set off for the shore. We had scarcely abandoned our booty before the gulls bore down in scores upon the half-skinned carcass. Happy creatures! Wind and waves and drifting were nothing to them; they screamed and made a hubbub and thought what a feast they were having. As long as we could see the carcasses as they drifted out to sea, we saw the birds continually gathering in larger and larger flocks about them like clouds of snow. In the meantime we were doing our utmost to gain the ice, but it had developed cracks and channels in every direction. We managed to get some distance in the kayaks; but while I was crossing a wide channel on some loose floes I alighted on such poor ice that it sank under my weight, and I had to jump back quickly to escape a bath. We tried in several places, but everywhere it sank beneath us and our sledges, and there was nothing for it but to take to the water, keeping along the lee-side of the ice. But we had not rowed far before we perceived that it was of no use to have our kayaks lashed together in such a wind; we had to row singly, and sacrifice the walrus hide and blubber, which it then became impossible to take with us. At present it was lying across the stern of both kayaks. While we were busy effecting these changes we were surrounded, before we were aware of it, by ice, and had to pull the kayaks up hastily to save them from being crushed. We now tried to get out at several places, but