

CHAPTER III

AUGUST 15 TO JANUARY 1, 1896

WITH the rise in the temperature the snow surface became daily worse, so that it was seldom fit for snow-shoeing; even with "truger" * on it was most laborious to get along, for the snow was so soft that we sank in up to our knees. Now and then for an odd day or so the surface would be fit, even in the month of July, and we took these opportunities of making short excursions for shooting and the like. Then the surface would be as bad as ever again, and one day when I had to go out on the ice to fetch a fulmar which had been wounded, the snow was so soft that I constantly sank in up to my waist. Before I could reach the bird the whole pack of dogs came tearing by, got hold of it, and killed it. One of the dogs seized the bird in his mouth, and then there was a wild race between it and the others. At last the whole pack turned back towards the lane in the ice again, and I watched my opportunity and snatched the bird from them. I had paid pretty dearly for my booty, all spent and dripping with perspiration as I was from plodding through that bottomless morass of snow.

Our chief occupation was still the work at our sledges and kayaks. The sledges, which were all brought on board from the great hummock where they had lain all the winter, were repaired and fitted with runners. By July 16th they were all in good order—eight hand-sledges and two dog-sledges.

The kayaks, upon which we had long been engaged, were finished about the same time. We had now in all five double and one single kayak. Of these I myself made one, the single kayak, which weighed 32 pounds. All of them were tested in the channel, and proved sound and watertight. Both the kayaks

* A round wicker snow-shoe like a basket-lid.