

to those lonely islands, with pleasant companions, was not to be thrown lightly away. So after calculating the chances of my getting back to Lerwick in time for the return steamer, I decided on accompanying them.

Making an early start on the morning of the 4th of August, from Dunrossness, to which I had been conveyed the previous night on pony-back, a journey of twenty-eight miles, we made our way to the Bay of Spiggie, where our cutter, the "Nelson," was anchored. We observed, on crossing the sands, a great many huge backbones, and learned that they were the remains of a shoal of the bottlenose or ca'ing whales (*Delphinus deductor*), which had stranded themselves and been expeditiously slaughtered by the natives.

It was a perfectly beautiful morning, and the wind though fair was extremely light, so much so that for some time we realized the idea of Coleridge's "Painted Ship." The skin of the sea, if I may use the expression, was as smooth as glass, while the general surface heaved gently up and down with the lazy undulation one would expect in a sea of oil. We had thus a very deliberate view of the west side of the grand headland of Fitful Head, and an excellent opportunity of shooting dozens of porpoises as they came to the surface, with their peculiar wheel-like motion, to sun themselves for a second or two. This opportunity we availed ourselves of to the extent of frightening a few of them. We got near enough the island to see its physical