

will not melt ; but this bit of ice, this solidified water, must dissolve with the heat of the sun !

This piece of ice had formed the thickest part of the island, and this will explain its having lasted so long. A layer of earth and plenty of vegetation covered it, and the base of ice must have been of considerable thickness. The long bitter Polar winters must have "fed it with fresh ice," in the countless centuries during which it was connected with the mainland. Even now its mean height was five or six feet above the sea level, and its base was probably of about the same thickness. Although in these quiet waters it was not likely to be broken, it could not fail gradually to melt, and the rapid dissolution could actually be watched at the edges, for as the long waves licked the sides, piece after piece of ground with its verdant covering sank to rise no more.

On this 5th June a fall of this nature occurred at about one o'clock P.M., on the site of the shed itself, which was very near the edge of the ice. There was fortunately no one in it at the time, and all that was saved was a few planks and two or three of the timbers of the roofs. Most of the cooking utensils and all the astronomical instruments were lost. The colonists were now obliged to take refuge on the highest part of the islet, where nothing protected them from the weather, but fortunately a few tools had been left there, with the air pumps and the air-vessel, which Hobson had employed for catching a little of the rain-water for drinking purposes, as he no longer dared to draw for a supply upon the ice, every atom of which was of value.

At about four o'clock P.M., the soldier Kellet, the same who had already given signs of insanity, came to Mrs Barnett and said quietly—

"I am going to drown myself, ma'am."

"What, Kellet?" exclaimed the lady.

"I tell you I am going to drown myself," replied the soldier. "I have thought the matter well over : there is no escape for us, and I prefer dying at once to waiting to be killed."

"Kellet!" said Mrs Barnett, taking the man's hand and looking into his face, which was strangely composed, "you will not do that?"

"Yes, I will, ma'am ; and as you have always been very good to us all, I wanted to wish you good-bye. Good-bye, ma'am!"

And Kellet turned towards the sea. Mrs Barnett, terrified at his