

The sealers said that the climate of Heard Island was far more rigorous than that of Kerguelen's Land. In winter the whole of the ground is frozen, and the streams are stopped, so that snow has to be melted in order to obtain water. In December, at Midsummer, there is plenty of sunshiny weather, and Big Ben is often to be seen. It is possible to land in whale boats, on the average of the whole year, only once in three days, so surf-beaten is the shore, so stormy the weather.

We saw six sealers; two were Americans, and two Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands. They were left on the island by the whaling vessels which we met with at Kerguelen's Land, their duty being to hunt Sea-Elephants. The men engage to remain three years on the island, and see the whale ships only for a short time in the spring of each year.

On the more exposed side of the island there is an extensive beach, called Long Beach. This is covered over with thousands of Sea-Elephants in the breeding season, but it is only accessible by land, and then only by crossing two glaciers or "ice-bergs" as the sealers call them. No boat can live to land on this shore, consequently men are stationed on the beach, and live there in huts; and their duty is constantly to drive the Elephants from this beach into the sea, which they do with whips made of the hide of the Elephants themselves. The beasts thus ousted swim off, and often "haul up," as the term is, upon the accessible beaches elsewhere, and there they are killed and their blubber is taken to be boiled down.

In very stormy weather, when they are driven into the sea, they are forced to betake themselves to the sheltered side of the island; hence the men find that stormy weather pays them best. Two or three old males, termed "beach-masters," hold a beach to themselves and cover it with cows, but allow no other males to haul up. The males fight furiously, and one man told us that he had seen an old male take up a younger one in his teeth and throw him over, lifting him in the air. The males show fight when whipped, and are with great difficulty driven into the sea. They are sometimes treated with horrible brutality.

The females give birth to their young soon after their arrival. The new-born young are almost black, unlike the adults, which are of a light slate brown, and the young of the northern Bladdernose, which are white. They are suckled by the female for some time, and then left to themselves lying on the beach, where they seem to grow fat without further feeding. They are always allowed by the sealers thus to lie, in order to make more oil.

This account was corroborated by all the sealers I met with.