

Just as our prospects were at their darkest, and we were preparing to seek a way back out of the ice, which kept getting ever denser, the joyful tidings came that the fog was lifting, and that clear water was visible ahead to the east on the other side of the ice. After forcing our way ahead for some hours between the heavy floes, we were once more in open water. This first bout with the ice, however, showed us plainly what an excellent ice-boat the *Fram* was. It was a royal pleasure to work her ahead through difficult ice. She twisted and turned "like a ball on a platter." No channel between the floes so winding and awkward but she could get through it. But it is hard work for the helmsman. "Hard astarboard! Hard aport! Steady! Hard astarboard again!" goes on incessantly without so much as a breathing-space. And he rattles the wheel round, the sweat pours off him, and round it goes again like a spinning-wheel. And the ship swings round and wriggles her way forward among the floes without touching, if there is only just an opening wide enough for her to slip through; and where there is none she drives full tilt at the ice, with her heavy plunge, runs her sloping bows up on it, treads it under her, and bursts the floes asunder. And how strong she is too! Even when she goes full speed at a floe, not a creak, not a sound, is to be heard in her; if she gives a little shake it is all she does.