

mings. This farthest north part of Siberia is quite uninhabited, and has probably not been visited even by the wandering nomads. However, I saw a circular moss-heap on a plain far inland, which looked as if it might be the work of man's hand. Perhaps, after all, some Samoyede had been here collecting moss for his reindeer; but it must have been long ago; for the moss looked quite black and rotten. The heap was quite possibly only one of Nature's freaks—she is often capricious.

What a constant alternation of light and shadow there is in this Arctic land. When I went up to the crow's-nest next morning (September 9th) I saw that the ice to the north had loosened from the land, and I could trace a channel which might lead us northward into open water. I at once gave the order to get up steam. The barometer was certainly low—lower than we had ever had it yet; it was down to 733 mm.—the wind was blowing in heavy squalls off the land, and in on the plains the gusts were whirling up clouds of sand and dust.

Sverdrup thought it would be safer to stay where we were; but it would be too annoying to miss this splendid opportunity; and the sunshine was so beautiful, and the sky so smiling and reassuring. I gave orders to set sail, and soon we were pushing on northward through the ice, under steam, and with every stitch of canvas that we could crowd on. Cape Chelyuskin must be vanquished!