

went down in 77° north latitude, while the nearest land to us is many times more than double the distance it was in their case, to say nothing of the nearest inhabited land. We are now more than 70 miles from Cape Chelyuskin, while from there to any inhabited region we are a long way farther. But the *Fram* will not be crushed, and nobody believes in the possibility of such an event. We are like the kayak-rower, who knows well enough that one faulty stroke of his paddle is enough to capsize him and send him into eternity; but none the less he goes on his way serenely, for he knows that he will not make a faulty stroke. This is absolutely the most comfortable way of undertaking a polar expedition; what possible journey, indeed, could be more comfortable? Not even a railway journey, for then you have the bother of changing carriages. Still a change now and then would be no bad thing."

Later on—in July—the surface was even worse. The floes were everywhere covered with slush, with water underneath, and on the pressure-ridges and between the hummocks where the snow-drifts were deep one would often sink in up to the middle, not even the snow-shoes bearing one up in this soft snow. Later on in July matters improved, the snow having gradually melted away, so that there was a firmer surface of ice to go on.

But large pools of water now formed on the ice-floes. Already on the 8th and 9th of June such a pool had begun to appear round the ship, so that she lay in a little