

I work indefatigably day after day till late in the night, it is mostly duty work, and I am not sorry when it is finished, to go and lie for some few hours in my berth reading a novel and smoking a cigar. With what exultation would I not throw the whole aside, spring up, and lay hold of real life, fighting my way over ice and sea with sledges, boats, or kayaks! It is more than true that it is 'easy to live a life of battle'; but here there is neither storm nor battle, and I thirst after them. I long to enlist titanic forces and fight my way forward—that would be living! But what pleasure is there in strength when there is nothing for it to do? Here we drift forward, and here we drift back, and now we have been two months on the same spot.

“Everything, however, is being got ready for a possible expedition, or for the contingency of its becoming necessary to abandon the ship. All the hand-sledges are lashed together, and the iron fittings carefully seen to. Six dog-sledges are also being made, and to-morrow we shall begin building kayaks ready for the men. They are easy to draw on hand-sledges in case of a retreat over the ice without the ship. For a beginning we are making kayaks to hold two men each. I intend to have them about 12 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 18 inches in depth. Six of these are to be made. They are to be covered with sealskin or sail-cloth, and to be decked all over, except for two holes—one for each man.

“I feel that we have, or rather shall have, everything