

be near to or more remote from the Pole. I said this before setting out, and I must keep it continually in mind. Certainly there are many important observations to be made on board during the further drift of the ship, many which I would dearly like to carry on myself; but all the more important of these will be made equally well here, even though two of our number leave the ship; and there can scarcely be any doubt that the observations we shall make farther north will not many times outweigh in value those I could have made during the remainder of the time on board. So far, then, *it is absolutely desirable that we set out.*

“Then comes the question: What is the best time to start? That the spring—March, at the latest—is the only season for such a venture there can be no doubt at all. But shall it be next spring? Suppose, at the worst, we have not advanced farther than to 83° north latitude and 110° east longitude; then something might be said for waiting till the spring of 1896; but I cannot but think that we should thus in all probability let slip the propitious moment. The drifting could not be so wearisomely slow but that after another year had elapsed we should be far beyond the point from which the sledge expedition ought to set out. If I measure the distance we have drifted from November of last year with the compasses, and mark off the same distance ahead, by next November we should be north of Franz Josef Land, and a little beyond it. It is conceivable, of course, that