

It seemed a safe assumption that she might drift out into the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland next summer or autumn, and probability seemed to point to her being in Norway in August or September. But there was just the possibility that she might arrive earlier in the summer; or, on the other hand, *we* might not reach home until later in the autumn. This was the great question to which we could give no certain answer, and we reflected with sorrow that she might perhaps get home first. What would our friends then think about us? Scarcely any one would have the least hope of seeing us again, not even our comrades on board the *Fram*. It seemed to us, however, that this could scarcely happen; we could not but reach home in July, and it was hardly to be expected that the *Fram* could be free from the ice so early in the summer.

But where were we? And how great was the distance we had to travel? Over and over again I reckoned out our observations of the autumn and summer and spring, but the whole matter was a perpetual puzzle. It seemed clear, indeed, that we must be lying somewhere far to the west, perhaps off the west coast of Franz Josef Land, a little north of Cape Lofley, as I had conjectured in the autumn. But, if that were so, what could the lands be which we had seen to the northward? And what was the land to which we had first come? From the first group of islands, which I had called White Land (Hvidtenland), to where we now