

variation of the compass. Unfortunately, I had no chart of the variations with me, and I could not remember where the zero meridian of variation lay—the boundary-line between easterly and westerly variation. I thought, however, that it lay somewhere near the Northeast Land; and here we had still a variation of about 20° . The whole thing was, and remained, an insoluble riddle.

As the daylight began to lengthen later in the spring, I made a discovery which had the effect of still more hopelessly bewildering us. At two points on the horizon, about W.S.W., I fancied that I could see land looming in the air. The appearance recurred again and again, and at last I was quite certain that it really was land; but it must be very far away—at least 69 miles, I thought.* If it had been difficult to find room between Franz Josef Land and Northeast Land for the islands we had hitherto seen, it was more difficult still to find room for these new ones. Could it be the Northeast Land itself? This seemed scarcely credible. This land must lie in about 81° or so northward, while the Northeast Land does not reach much north of 80° . But at least these islands must be pretty near Northeast Land, and if we once reached them, we could not have much farther to go, and would perhaps find open water all the way to the Tromsø sloop, on which our fancy had now dwelt for over a year, and which was to take us home.

* It proved afterwards that the distance was about 56 miles.