

Furthermore, the most important part of our mission was in a way accomplished. There was hardly any prospect that the drift would carry us much farther northward than we were now, and whatever could be done to explore the regions to the north would be done by Nansen and Johansen. It was our object, therefore, in compliance with the instructions from Dr. Nansen, to make for open water and home by the shortest way and in the safest manner, doing, however, everything within our power to carry home with us the best possible scientific results. These results, to judge from our experience up to this point, were almost a foregone conclusion—to wit, that the Polar Sea retained its character almost unchanged as we drifted westward, showing the same depths, the same conditions of ice and currents, and the same temperatures. No islands, rocks, shoals, and, still less, no mainland, appeared in the neighborhood of our frequently irregular course; wherever we looked there was the same monotonous and desolate plain of more or less rugged ice, holding us firmly, and carrying us willy-nilly along with it. Our scientific observations were continued uninterruptedly, as regularly and accurately as possible, and comprised, besides the usual meteorological observations, soundings, measurement of the thickness of the ice, longitude and latitude, taking the temperature of the sea at various depths, determining its salinity, collecting specimens of the fauna of the sea, magnetic and electrical observations, and so forth.