

FARTHEST NORTH

VOLUME II.

CHAPTER I.

WE PREPARE FOR THE SLEDGE EXPEDITION.

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WHO are to be the two members of the expedition? Sverdrup and I have tested each other before at this sort of work, and we could manage very well; but we cannot both leave the *Fram*; that is perfectly clear without further argument. One of us must remain behind to take on himself the responsibility of bringing the others home in safety; but it is equally clear that one of us two must conduct the sledge expedition, as it is we who have the necessary experience. Sverdrup has a great desire to go; but I cannot think otherwise than that there is more risk in leaving the *Fram* than in remaining on board her. Consequently, if I were to let him go, I should be transferring to him the more dangerous task, while keeping the easier one to myself. If he perished, should I ever be able to forgive myself for letting him go, even if it was at his own desire? He is nine years older than I am; I should certainly feel it to be a very uncomfortable responsibility. And, as regards our comrades, which of us would it be most to their interest to keep on board? I think they have confidence in both of us, and I think either of us would be able to take them home in safety, whether with or without the *Fram*. But the ship is his especial charge, while on me rests the conduct of the whole, and