

at night it did not awaken even the lightest sleepers. Meanwhile the coal and other stores which for many months had reposed on the floe were again taken on board, and the engine was cleaned and put in order. All that now remained to be done was to get free. But how was this to be accomplished?

The obvious course was to blow up the ice, and as soon as it began to slacken, a mine of nearly a hundredweight of gunpowder was exploded with such satisfactory results that it really seemed as if another explosion would free the ship. A heavy charge was therefore inserted in the log-line hole; but though the blast resulted in a perfect cataract of ice and water, the *Fram* still remained hard and fast in the pack.

Sundry other mines were exploded with no perceptible effect, though one of them nearly caused a very serious accident to Sverdrup and another man. They had laid their charge, and had just set light to the fuse, when the ice on which they stood suddenly collapsed, and let them down into the water most unpleasantly near the mine. They struggled hard to scramble out; but the steep, slippery ice was not easy to climb, and it was only after the greatest exertion that they managed to get out of danger just before the charge exploded. After a few more blasts the ship was so far freed that she was set afloat; but the pool in which she lay was enclosed by miles of ice, and for all practical purposes she might almost as well have been still hard held.