

bers of seals, both *Phoca barbata* and *Phoca hispida*, were to be seen" on the ice in Taimur Strait.

So this was all the progress we had made up to the end of August. On August 18, 1878, Nordenskiöld had passed through this sound, and on the 19th and 20th passed Cape Chelyuskin, but here was an impenetrable mass of ice frozen on to the land lying in our way at the end of the month. The prospect was anything but cheering. Were the many prophets of evil—there is never any scarcity of *them*—to prove right even at this early stage of the undertaking? No! The Taimur Strait must be attempted, and should this attempt fail another last one should be made outside all the islands again. Possibly the ice masses out there might in the meantime have drifted and left an open way. We could not stop here.

September came in with a still, melancholy snowfall, and this desolate land, with its low, rounded heights, soon lay under a deep covering. It did not add to our cheerfulness to see winter thus gently and noiselessly ushered in after an all too short summer.

On September 2d the boiler was ready at last, was filled with fresh water from the sea surface, and we prepared to start. While this preparation was going on Sverdrup and I went ashore to have a look after reindeer. The snow was lying thick, and if it had not been so wet we could have used our snow-shoes. As it was, we tramped about in the heavy slush without them, and