

but ice ahead. No! it is only smooth water with the snowy land reflected in it. This *must* be Taimur Strait!

But now we had several large ice-floes ahead, and it was difficult to get on; so we anchored at a point, in a good, safe harbor, to make a closer inspection. We now discovered that it was a strong tidal current that was carrying the ice-floes with it, and there could be no doubt that it was a strait we were lying in. I rowed out in the evening to shoot some seals, taking for the purpose my most precious weapon, a double-barrelled Express rifle, calibre 577. As we were in the act of taking a sealskin on board the boat heeled over, I slipped, and my rifle fell into the sea—a sad accident. Peter Henriksen and Bentzen, who were rowing me, took it so to heart that they could not speak for some time. They declared that it would never do to leave the valuable gun lying there in 5 fathoms of water. So we rowed to the *Fram* for the necessary apparatus, and dragged the spot for several hours, well on into the dark, gloomy night. While we were thus employed a bearded seal circled round and round us, bobbing up its big startled face, now on one side of us, now on the other, and always coming nearer; it was evidently anxious to find out what our night work might be. Then it dived over and over again, probably to see how the dragging was getting on. Was it afraid of our finding the rifle? At last it became too intrusive. I took Peter's rifle, and put a ball through its head; but it sank before we could reach it, and we gave up the whole