

way. But the mountains here are not so well separated, and are considerably lower than those farther north. The sea is unpleasantly shallow; at one time during the night we had only 4 fathoms, and were obliged to put back some distance. We have ice outside, quite close; but yet there is a sufficient fairway to let us push on eastward."

The following day we got into good, open water, but shallow—never more than 6 to 7 fathoms. We heard the roaring of waves to the east, so there must certainly be open water in that direction, which indeed we had expected. It was plain that the Lena, with its masses of warm water, was beginning to assert its influence. The sea here was browner, and showed signs of some mixture of muddy river-water. It was also much less salt.

"It would be foolish," I write in my diary for this day (September 15th), "to go in to the Olenek, now that we are so late. Even if there were no danger from shoals, it would cost us too much time—probably a year. Besides, it is by no means sure that the *Fram* can get in there at all; it would be a very tiresome business if she went aground in these waters. No doubt we should be very much the better of a few more dogs, but to lose a year is too much; we shall rather head straight east for the New Siberian Islands, now that there is a good opportunity, and really bright prospects.

"The ice here puzzles me a good deal. How in the world is it not swept northward by the current, which,