

We made our way along the coast of Asia, which many prophesied we should have great difficulty in doing. We were able to sail farther north than I had dared to hope for in my boldest moments, and in just the longitude I wished. We are closed in by the ice, also as I wished. The *Fram* has borne the ice-pressure splendidly, and allows herself to be lifted by it without so much as creaking, in spite of being more heavily loaded with coal, and drawing more water than we reckoned on when we made our calculations; and this after her certain destruction and ours was prophesied by those most experienced in such matters. I have not found the ice higher nor heavier than I expected it to be; and the comfort, warmth, and good ventilation on board are far beyond my expectations. Nothing is wanting in our equipment, and the food is quite exceptionally good. As Blessing and I agreed a few days ago, it is as good as at home; there is not a thing we long for; not even the thought of a beefsteak à la Châteaubriand, or a pork cutlet with mushrooms and a bottle of Burgundy, can make our mouths water; we simply don't care about such things. The preparations for the expedition cost me several years of precious life; but now I do not grudge them: my object is attained. On the drifting ice we live a winter life, not only in every respect better than that of previous expeditions, but actually as if we had brought a bit of Norway, of Europe, with us. We are as well off as if we were at home. All together in one saloon,