

to be a very uncomfortable responsibility. And as regards our comrades, which of us would it be most to their interest to keep on board? I think they have confidence in both of us, and I think either of us would be able to take them home in safety, whether with or without the *Fram*. But the ship is his especial charge, while on me rests the conduct of the whole, and especially of the scientific investigations; so that I ought to undertake the task in which important discoveries are to be made. Those who remain with the ship will be able, as aforesaid, to carry on the observations which are to be made on board. It is my duty therefore, to go, and his to remain behind. He, too, thinks this reasonable.

I have chosen Johansen to be my companion, and he is in all respects well qualified for that work. He is an accomplished snow-shoer, and few can equal his powers of endurance—a fine fellow, physically and mentally. I have not yet asked him, but think of doing so soon, in order that he may be prepared betimes. Blessing and Hansen also would certainly be all eagerness to accompany me; but Hansen must remain behind to take charge of the observations, and Blessing cannot desert his post as doctor. Several of the others, too, would do quite well, and would, I doubt not, be willing enough.

This expedition to the north, then, is provisionally decided on. I shall see what the winter will bring us. Light permitting, I should prefer to start in February.