

come tearing round, stare at the light, and begin bounding and dancing and gambolling with each other round it, like children round a Christmas-tree. This goes on day after day, and they have never seen anything else than this deck with a tarpaulin over it, not even the clear blue sky; and we men have never seen anything else than this earth!

“The last step over the bridge of resolution has now been taken. In the forenoon I explained the whole matter to Johansen in pretty much the same terms as I have used above; and then I expatiated on the difficulties that might occur, and laid strong emphasis on the dangers one must be prepared to encounter. It was a serious matter—a matter of life or death—this one must not conceal from one’s self. He must think the thing well over before determining whether he would accompany me or not. If he was willing to come I should be glad to have him with me; but I would rather, I said, he should take a day or two to think it well over before he gave me his answer. He did not need any time for reflection, he said; he was quite willing to go. Sverdrup had long ago mentioned the possibility of such an expedition, and he had thought it well over, and made up his mind that if my choice should fall on him he would take it as a great favor to be permitted to accompany me. ‘I don’t know whether you’ll be satisfied with this answer, or whether you would like me still to think it over; but I should certainly never change my mind.’ ‘No, if