

CHAPTER II

THE NEW YEAR, 1895

“WEDNESDAY, January 2, 1895. Never before have I had such strange feelings at the commencement of the new year. It cannot fail to bring some momentous events, and will possibly become one of the most remarkable years in my life, whether it leads me to success or to destruction. Years come and go unnoticed in this world of ice, and we have no more knowledge here of what these years have brought to humanity than we know of what the future ones have in store. In this silent nature no events ever happen; all is shrouded in darkness; there is nothing in view save the twinkling stars, immeasurably far away in the freezing night, and the flickering sheen of the aurora borealis. I can just discern close by the vague outline of the *Fram*, dimly standing out in the desolate gloom, with her rigging showing dark against the host of stars. Like an infinitesimal speck, the vessel seems lost amidst the boundless expanse of this realm of death. Nevertheless, under her deck there is a snug and cherished home for thirteen men undaunted by the majesty of this realm. In there, life is freely pulsating,