

went on, but it did not go beyond crackling and creaking beneath our feet and in the ridge at our side. Perhaps it is to warn us not to be too confident! I am not so sure that it is not necessary. It is in reality like living on a smoking volcano. The eruption that will seal our fate may occur at any moment. It will either force the ship up or swallow her down. And what are the stakes? Either the *Fram* will get home and the expedition be fully successful, or we shall lose her and have to be content with what we have done, and possibly on our way home we may explore parts of Franz Josef Land. That is all; but most of us feel that it would be hard to lose the ship, and it would be a very sad sight to see her disappear.

“Some of the hands, under Sverdrup, are working, trying to cut away the hummock ice on the port side, and they have already made good headway. Mogstad and I are busy getting the sledges in order, and preparing them for use as I want them, whether we go north or south.

“Liv is two years old to-day.

“She is a big girl now. I wonder if I should be able to recognize her? I suppose I should hardly find a single familiar feature. They are sure to celebrate the day, and she will get all kinds of presents. Many a thought will be sent northward, but they know not where to look for us; are not aware that we are drifting here embedded in the ice in the highest northern latitudes ever reached, in the deepest polar night ever penetrated.”