

and by the ship's company. We went below into the roomy, snug cabin, and all kinds of news were eagerly swallowed by listening ears, while an excellent breakfast with fresh potatoes and other delicacies glided down past a palate which needed less than that to satisfy it. There were remarkable pieces of news indeed. One of the first was that now they could photograph people through doors several inches thick. I confess I pricked up my ears at this information. That they could photograph a bullet buried in a person's body was wonderful too, but nothing to this. And then we heard that the Japanese had thrashed the Chinese, and a good deal more. Not least remarkable, we thought, was the interest which the whole world now seemed to take in the Arctic regions. Spitzbergen had become a tourist country; a Norwegian steamship company (the *Vesteraalen*) had started a regular passenger service to it,* a hotel had been built up there, and there was a post-office and a Spitzbergen stamp. And then we heard that *Andrée* was there waiting for wind to go to the Pole in a balloon. If we had pursued our course to Spitzbergen we should thus have dropped into the very middle of all this. We should have found a hotel and tourists, and should have been brought home in a comfortable modern steamboat, very different from the whaling-sloop we had been talking of all the winter, and,

* I did not dream that *Sverdrup* a year after would be in command of this steamer.