

Their close approach was a convincing proof that they had never been exposed to the pursuit of their skilful hunters. They were of the fin-back species, and of extraordinary size.

Between ten and eleven o'clock at night it was entirely clear over head, and we were gratified with a splendid exhibition of the aurora australis. It exceeded any thing of the kind I had heretofore witnessed; its activity was inconceivable, darting from the zenith to the horizon in all directions in the most brilliant coruscations; rays proceeding as if from a point in the zenith, flashed in brilliant pencillings of light, like sparks of electric fluid in vacuo, and reappeared again to vanish; forming themselves into one body, like an umbrella, or fan, shut up; again emerging to flit across the sky with the rapidity of light, they showed all the prismatic colours at once or in quick succession. So remarkable were the phenomena that even our sailors were constantly exclaiming in admiration of its brilliancy. The best position in which to view it was by lying flat upon the deck, and looking up. The electrometer was tried, but no effect perceived. The star Canopus was in the zenith at the time, and though visible through the aurora, was much diminished in brightness. On this night also the moon was partially eclipsed.

Large icebergs had now become very numerous, and strengthened the belief that the land existing in this vicinity had taken a very decided trend to the northward. I accordingly followed up the northern barrier closely, and passed through the thickest of these bergs, well knowing from our experience that we should have little or no opportunity of seeing the land, unless on the inner side of them. It appeared as though they had collected here from other places, and it is impossible to form an idea of the small space to which we were at times confined. Upwards of one hundred ice-islands could be counted at a time without the aid of a glass, some of which were several miles long. We enjoyed this beautiful sight with the more pleasure, for we had become used to them, and knew from experience that it was possible to navigate through them without accident.

On the 18th, we continued beating to the eastward, and found no end to the apparently interminable barrier. We had a smooth sea, and better weather than I anticipated. At noon, we had retraced our way about forty miles. To-day we again had snow, which fell in the form of regular six-pointed stars. The needles of which these stars were formed were quite distinct, and of regular crystals. The temperature at the time was 28°. The barometer stood at 28.76 in., about three-tenths lower than we had had it for the last twelve days. The wind was easterly.