

The Vincennes was left on the 21st of February on her way north. On the night of the 22d, we had a beautiful and novel appearance of the aurora australis. The sketch of it which I made will in some measure convey an idea of it.

Black clouds were passing rapidly over the sky; an orange glow of light seemed to cover the heavens, emanating from a point, over which flitted rays of the prismatic colours, directed towards the horizon, lighting up both edges of the clouds, and throwing them into bold relief. The rays seemed to dart simultaneously towards the horizon, on reaching which they would seem to be gathered, as if by magic, towards the centre, and slowly vanish, to reappear again and fold up.

Strong gales from the west-northwest with snow-squalls continued until the 27th, with thick misty weather. Numerous ice-islands were passed during this interval. The last iceberg seen, was in the latitude of  $53^{\circ}$  S., and longitude  $120^{\circ} 25'$  E., the temperature of the water was  $46^{\circ}$ .

On the 28th, we found our variation  $1^{\circ}$  easterly, in the longitude of  $131^{\circ} 50'$  E., latitude  $50^{\circ} 30'$  S.; and in attempting to get a deep-sea sounding of eight hundred and fifty fathoms, we lost our Six's thermometer by the wire parting. The sea was a deep blue; the temperature  $45^{\circ}$ . We found a current setting west-northwest three-fourths of a knot per hour. The white object was seen at the depth of fifteen fathoms.

On the 1st of March we had reached the latitude of the Royal Company's Isles, and I continued to run in nearly the same parallel for eight degrees of longitude, without seeing any signs of the supposed land. Having sailed far to the eastward of their supposed position, I again hauled to the northward to proceed to Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, to fill up our water. We now saw a sail, the first during sixty days, which made us feel as if we were returning to a habitable part of the globe. This night we had a brilliant display of the aurora australis, resembling that seen on the 9th of February, with this difference, that it was seen to the southward, extending from east-southeast to west-southwest.

On the 5th of March the wind headed us off our course to Hobart Town; I then determined to proceed direct to Sydney, and thus be enabled to communicate as speedily as possible with the United States. The consideration of getting intelligence respecting the other vessels, also led to this determination. I felt, in truth, forebodings that all was not well, from not having met any of the vessels at the appointed rendezvous, along the icy barrier; and I was anxious for their safety, after the severe gale of the 28th of January.