

U. S. Ship Vincennes,
At Sea, January 31st, 1840.

SIR,—

In answer to your communication of to-day, addressed to the ward-room officers, calling upon them for their opinion with regard to the practicability of our prosecuting the desirable researches in these latitudes, I am of opinion, with due regard to the report of the medical officers, which you have submitted for our perusal, that it is very desirable to ascertain the extent of the recently discovered land, by another attempt to the westward; provided, of course, this object can be attained without further endangering the health of the crew.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) JAMES ALDEN.

CHARLES WILKES, ESQ.,
Commanding Exploring Expedition.

U. S. Ship Vincennes,
At Sea, January 31st, 1840.

SIR,—

In answer to your letter, with the report of the medical officers enclosed, requesting the opinion of the ward-room officers of this ship, as to the expediency under the present circumstances of prosecuting our discoveries south at this time, I beg leave to state, that in my opinion the report of all the medical officers of the ship, as to the reduced condition of the crew, would be a sufficient reason for putting back; and, in addition, I would state other reasons which occur to me.

We have been almost surrounded with drift-ice and ice-islands for the last twenty-three days, and coasting along the barrier of field-ice, which has rendered it impossible to penetrate further south in this vicinity; and, although gratifying it would be to land upon the Antarctic Continent, I am not aware that any advantages to be derived from it would be commensurate for the dangers it would be necessary to incur; and if the discovery of new land in these regions is important, I consider it equally so that every precaution be taken to communicate the same to others.

Farther, in my opinion, the continuance of the severe gale which we have encountered for the last five days, accompanied with sleet, hail, and snow, and the necessity of keeping all hands on the watch, owing to the thick weather, &c., and difficulty of navigating among ice, makes it not only most dangerous, but, if necessary to be continued in, will render the watch officers and crew unfit for the arduous