

state we could hardly hope to have it answer its purpose, through the boisterous weather with which we should have to contend before reaching the nearest port, and its utter unfitness for further cruising amongst icebergs and near ice, through the foggy, thick weather, and frequent snows to which those latitudes are subject, and when rapid evolutions are often necessary, in which the rudder must perform its part,—with the ship considerably strained, her starboard spar-deck bulwarks gone as far as the gangway, the gripe off and stern mutilated, and the further fact before me, that the other vessels of the squadron were ranging over the same longitude, with directions to leave on the 1st of March for surveying operations in the north; that the ship's bottom would have to be examined, and repairs made before leaving another port, (which would occupy, with all the facilities this quarter of the world affords, at least four weeks,) during which time the services of this ship would be lost in surveying the Feejee, &c., I determined to proceed at once to Sydney, expedite as much as possible the repairs of the ship, and be ready at the earliest moment to co-operate with the rest of the squadron.

The Vincennes was seen by us in the distance on the 19th, and the brig Porpoise on the 23d of January.

On the night of the 7th, and morning of the 8th of February, we had frequent and unusually brilliant displays of the aurora australis, one of which made its first appearance in the southwest portion of the horizon, but soon diffused its beams of light from east to west, throwing them up to a concentrated point in the zenith, where they were attended with continued quick flashes, resembling heat lightning, and extending over about a third part of the heavens. The rays or beams of light composing this magnificent spectacle, varied in colour from a light orange to tints of pale red, assuming in their changes hues I should in vain attempt to describe.

During intervals of the brightest flashes in the zenith, however, they lost their distinctive outlines, and mingled in the glow of bright twilight which nearly overspread the heavens.

This exhibition was to us so perfectly unique and strongly marked in character, as to excite the attention of those on board most indifferent to such phenomena, and called forth from all, exclamations of surprise and pleasure.

The ship's compasses were minutely examined on this occasion, but exhibited no symptoms of being affected by the presence of the aurora. The motion of the ship, however, from the effect of the sea at the time, would have rendered any change imperceptible, if the disturbing cause had not produced an oscillation of the needle beyond four or five degrees.