

these latitudes had passed, and that it was advisable for the vessels to proceed without delay to the north.

He remarks in his report (which, together with Lieutenant Walker's, will be found in Appendix XXXI.), "That it required more moral courage than I can well describe, to bring my mind to this decision, for we had at that moment less ice about us than at any time since we had entered among it; but I felt satisfied, taking all things into consideration, that nothing more could be done at this late season, and that it would be recklessly hazarding the lives of those entrusted to my care, jeoparding the vessels, and of great detriment to the future operations of the Expedition, which an honest conviction of the duty I owed my country, most decidedly forbade." The vessels accordingly steered to the northward.

The weather, during the cruise south, was exceedingly unfavourable; for, with few exceptions, during their stay in the Antarctic Circle, they were enveloped in dense fogs, or found only occasional relief from them in falls of snow. The crew during the whole time enjoyed an unusual degree of health, which is not a little surprising; for, since leaving Orange Harbour, the state of the ship had been such as to promote disease. The precautions and endeavours to keep the men dry, entirely failed, from the condition of the ship, heretofore referred to.

On the night of the 26th, they had again a slight display of the aurora, its radiations extending 30° in altitude. Fresh gales blew from the northwest, with a heavy sea, so that the tender found difficulty in keeping company, and they reduced sail in order to avoid parting with her.

The fresh gales continued on the 27th, accompanied with rain. Towards night it cleared a little, and, with the aid of the young moon, they were enabled to run through the ice.

The weather proved thick on the 28th and 29th, and they had little opportunity of making progress to the north, against the northwest winds, which were light. On this night a new danger beset them, that of being consumed by fire! At midnight, on the 29th of March, they were aroused by the smell of burning and smoke, issuing from the main hold. The usual orders were given relative to the magazine. The drum beat to quarters. On opening the main hatch, smoke issued out in volumes, and fire was discovered under it, proceeding from a bag in full blaze. This was soon passed on deck, and the fire extinguished. It was fortunately discovered in time, and was found to proceed from a quantity of coffee, which had been put below, in the bag, after it had been burnt or roasted, the previous afternoon.