

floating ice of the vast southern ocean ; that the ice would not spread so far were there not a tract of considerable magnitude situated to the south. He admits, however, that the greater part of the supposed austral continent would lie within the Antarctic Circle, where the sea is so encumbered with ice that it would be inaccessible. The dense fogs, the terribly severe cold, and the frequent whirlwinds of snow would also combine to increase the perils of the navigator. The aspect of these coasts is more horrible than any one can imagine. They seem condemned by nature to remain deprived of the cheerful sunshine, and buried under eternal ice and snow.

These desolate regions to which the great seaman applied the words of Pliny—"Pars mundi à natura damnata, et denso mersa caligine"—have not daunted the courage of Cook's successors ; and, in our own days, several expeditions have been directed towards the realm of desolation, silence, and death.

In 1823 a free passage opened up into the Antarctic seas, of which a Scotch whaler, Captain James Weddell, took advantage to penetrate as far south as lat. 74° (in long. 34°), but the season being too far advanced, he found himself compelled to retrace his steps.

Weddell's voyage caused a great sensation, and led men to believe in the possibility of more serious explorations. Fifteen years later, the expeditions of the French navigator, Dumont d'Urville—of the American, Wilkes—and of the Englishman, Sir James Clark Ross, were dispatched towards the South Pole.

Dumont d'Urville, who was fated to perish miserably, in 1842, by an accident on the Versailles Railway, sailed, on the 9th of January 1838, from Magellan's Strait, with the two corvettes *Astrolabe* and *Zélée*. After having passed beyond the first barrier of ice, he expected to find, like Weddell, an open sea ; but was soon constrained to renounce his sanguine hope. The icebergs became more numerous and more dangerous. In the South Polar Seas, they do not circulate in straits, or well-defined channels, like those of the North Pole. Detached from the enormous ice-fields which block up