that its dimensions have somewhat decreased since the voyage of Captain Cook, in 1774.

This formidable and impenetrable barrier can only be approached during the months of summer; that is, during December, January, and February.

The first navigator who penetrated into these deserts was the Dutch captain, Theodoric de Gheritk, whose ship formed part of the squadron of Simon de Cordes, destined for the East Indies. In January 1600, a storm having dispersed the vessels of this squadron, Captain Gheritk's was driven as far south as 64°, and sighted a coast resembling that of Norway, mountainous, and covered with snow, and extending from the Solomon Islands.

The narrative of Simon de Cordes was received with general incredulity, which was not entirely dissipated until the shores of New South Shetland were definitively recognized.

The idea of an Antarctic continent is, however, one of the most ancient conceptions of speculative geography—one of those which science finds it most difficult to drive from the imaginations of theorists and mariners. The existence of a southern continent seems necessary as a counterpoise to the Arctic regions. The *Terra Australis Incognita* is laid down, under this designation, on Mercator's charts, as extending around the South Pole; and when Kerguelen discovered, in 1772, the island which bears his name, he put forward Mercator's hypothesis as having suggested to him his voyage of exploration.

In 1774, the illustrious Captain Cook penetrated beyond the 76th parallel of latitude, under the 109th degree of west longitude. He traversed one hundred and eighty leagues between the 50th and 60th parallels of south latitude, without discovering the land of which some navigators had spoken; hence he was led to suppose that they had mistaken fog-banks or icebergs for a continent. Cook, nevertheless, does not reject the notion that one actually existed. In the narrative of his voyage, he asserts his belief that there lies near the pole an extensive area of land, where is formed the greater part of the