

rendered our position very perilous. Steam was at command in four boilers; it was as much as the engines at full speed could do to keep station, and in a position considered safe from the ice. The barometer fell to 28.9, and the wind rose to a force of 10; soon there was a heavy and turbulent sea. As the darkness of the night closed, the wind moderated; still it was a very critical time, and all felt glad when daylight arrived, as we were then enabled to shape a course for the pack under sail. From the direction the wind had been blowing, the ice at its edge was scattered and sufficiently open to allow us to push on to within 15 miles of the supposed Wilkes' Termination Land; although, having a clear horizon, no indication of it could be seen, we sailed for two or three hours, picking our way among blocks of loose ice, varying in size from 5 or 6 feet to 60 feet across, and which no doubt are kept separate by the continual motion of the long swell. Their depth below the surface did not appear to exceed 20 feet. The greater part was washed into all sorts of fantastic forms, and showed evidences of decay and the length of time they had been in the water. In addition to this, hundreds of icebergs could be seen from the masthead. Having now gone as far as practicable in an undefended ship, course was altered, and once more we reached clear water. The weather was getting very unsettled; it was therefore deemed useless to remain in proximity to so much