

obtained. We now discovered that the snow on the face of the cliffs, presented an appearance both novel and interesting, being apparently stained, or covered, by some substance which gave it a deep crimson colour. Many conjectures were formed concerning the cause of this appearance. It was at once determined that it could not arise from the dung of birds, as thousands of these, of various descriptions, were seen repeatedly sitting on the ice, and on the snow, but without producing any such effect.

At two P. M. it fell nearly calm, and I sent a boat with Mr Ross, Mr Beverley, and a party, to bring off some of the snow, and to make their remarks on the circumstances attending it: also to procure specimens of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, and to ascertain if this part of the country was inhabited: the boat arrived at the shore, nearly at low water, and found the tide had fallen nine feet. The party remained two hours on shore, and found the cliffs accessible at the spot where they landed, but they did not get to the top, being recalled in consequence of a breeze which sprung up. They were equally unsuccessful in meeting with natives, or their habitations, as in procuring specimens of the black fox, many of which they saw and fired at, but without effect. They found the snow was penetrated even down to the rock by the colouring matter—a depth of ten or twelve feet, and that it had the appearance of being a long time in that state. We examined the snow by a microscope, magnifying a hundred and ten times; and the substance appeared to consist of particles resembling a very minute round seed, which was of the same size, and deep red colour: on some of the particles a small dark speck was also seen. It was the general opinion of the officers, that it must be vegetable, and this opinion seemed to gain strength, by the nature of the places where it was found. These were the sides of the hills, about six hundred feet high, the tops of which were covered with vegetation of a yellowish-green and reddish-brown colours. The extent of these cliffs were about eight miles; behind them at a considerable distance, high mountains were seen, but the snow which covered these was not coloured.

In the evening, I caused some of the snow to be dissolved and bottled, when the water had the appearance of muddy port wine. In a few hours it deposited a sediment, which was examined by the microscope: some of it was bruised, and found to be composed wholly of red matter: when applied to paper, it produced a colour resembling that of Indian red. Dr Wollaston seems to concur in that which we originally held, of its being a vegetable substance, produced on the mountain immediately above it. It cannot be a marine production, as in several places we saw it at least six miles from the sea, but always on the face or near the foot of a mountain.

Whatever my own notions respecting the real nature of the space passed over in the foregoing run, from Cape Saumarez to