

few tufts of the *saxifraga oppositifolia*, when closely examined, discovered some signs of life. A botanist, in short, might have considered vegetation as begun, but in the popular acceptation of the word it certainly had not. Such was the state of things on shore at the conclusion of the month of May. Upon the ice appearances were not more promising. Except in the immediate neighbourhood of the ships, where, from the constant trampling and the laying of various stores upon the ice, some heat had artificially been absorbed, it would have been difficult to point out in what respect any advances towards dissolution had been made upon the upper surface, where six or seven inches of snow yet remained in every part. Here again, without any undue partiality for our old winter-quarters, it was natural, as well as reasonable, to bear in mind, that before this time we had there experienced several hours of hard rain, than which nothing proves more effectual in dissolving the ice. The consequence was, that for the last week in May, at Melville Island, the surface of the ice had assumed quite a green appearance; while here it was still as white as a covering of snow could make it.

Under these circumstances I came to the determination, now that the ships were ready for sea, to try what could be effected towards their release, by sawing and cutting the ice; for it was vexatious to see open water daily in the offing, and not to be able to take advantage of it. Arrangements were therefore made for getting everything, except the tent and instruments, on board the next day, and for commencing this more laborious occupation on the following Monday.