

CHAP.
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increased as we advanced, and before the Diomed Islands came in sight it blew so violently that there was no alternative but to endeavour to push through them before dusk. At this time there was a very thick haze, with a bright setting sun glaring through it, which with the spray around us prevented any thing being seen but the tops of the mountains near Cape Prince of Wales. It was consequently with great pleasure we perceived Fairway Rock, and found the strait quite free from ice.

Having no choice, we passed through it at a rapid rate; and as the night set in dark and thick, with snow showers, we were glad to find ourselves with sea-room around us. A little before midnight the lee-bow port was washed away, and so much water came in that it was necessary to put before the wind to free the ship. In half an hour, however, we resumed our course, and about two o'clock in the morning passed King's Island.

We were now in a situation where, by rounding to, we might have awaited fine weather to return to Cape Krusenstern, and execute the whole of the plan that had been contemplated; but considering that our being able to do so was uncertain, as the barometer, which had fallen to 28.7, afforded no prospect of a change of weather, and that the period I had fixed for my departure might expire before I could repass the straits; together with the state of our provisions, and the improbability of meeting with Captain Franklin after all, it appeared to me that the risks which it involved were greater than the uncertainty of the result justified; and painful as it was to relinquish every hope of this successful issue of our voyage, it became my duty to do so.