

NARRATIVE
OF
THE EXPLORING EXPEDITION.

CHAPTER I.

TAHITI.

1839.

THE beauty of the distant view of Tahiti has been celebrated by all navigators, but I must confess that it disappointed me. The entire outline of the island was visible for too short a time and at too great a distance to permit its boasted features to be distinctly seen. Upon a second and nearer view, its jagged peaks and rugged inaccessible mountains were visible, but we looked in vain for the verdant groves which are said by all writers to clothe it. These indeed exist, but are confined to a narrow belt of low land, lying between the mountains and the shore, and being unseen at a distance, the general aspect of the island is that of a land recently thrown up by volcanic action.

When, however, Tahiti is approached so near as to make separate objects visible, the contrast between it and the barren coast of Peru becomes striking. Even upon the steep surface of its cliffs, vegetation abounds; the belt of low land is covered with the tropical trees peculiar to Polynesia; while the high peaks and wall-faced mountains in the rear are covered with vines and creeping plants. This verdure is seen to rise from a quiet girdle of water, which is again surrounded by a line of breakers, dashing in snow-white foam on the encircling