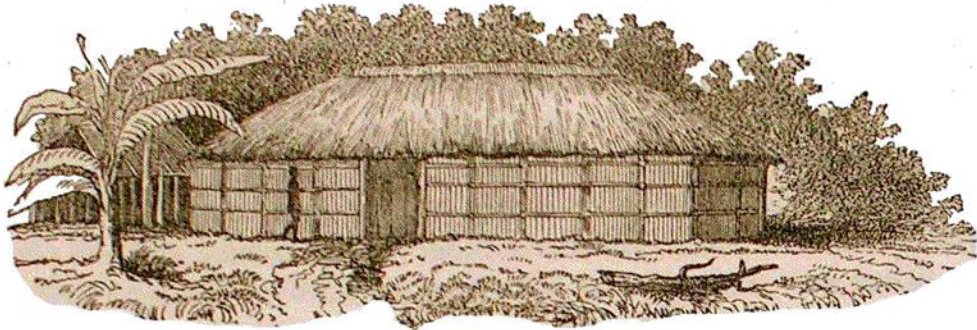


but tapa or matting is employed as an occasional screen. A building of this description may be erected for about fifty dollars.



NATIVE HOUSE, TAHITI.

The Tahitians use neither tables nor chairs. Their bedsteads are formed of a framework of cane, raised a short distance from the ground, upon which a few mats are laid. A pillow stuffed with aromatic herbs is in general use among the better class.

The natives are generally to be found in their houses, in a circle, chatting, reading, and singing, or smoking, unless they be, as is often the case, asleep. They are seldom to be seen engaged in manual labour, except on the sides of the streams where they are employed in washing, or at the residences of the chiefs.

I hesitate to speak of the females of this island, for I differ from all who have gone before me in relation to their vaunted beauty. I did not see among them a single woman whom I could call handsome. They have, indeed, a soft sleepiness about the eyes, which may be fascinating to some, but I should rather ascribe the celebrity their charms have obtained among navigators, to their cheerfulness and gaiety. Their figures are bad, and the greater part of them are parrot-toed. They are exceedingly prone to prattling, or may rather be said to have a tattling disposition, for they cannot keep even their own secrets.

This want of reserve is not confined to the women: the men are also incapable of keeping a secret. A crime is divulged almost as soon as committed, and for a small reward they will become informers against their nearest relatives and friends.

I have spoken of the incongruous character of the dress of the females. Among the men this is not as strongly marked as it is said formerly to have been, and they are no longer content with cast-off clothing. Those who can obtain it are dressed in sailors' garb. Others wear around their bodies, a wrapper called pareu, which extends to the calf of the leg. This is now usually made of blue cotton cloth, and with it some wear a cotton shirt of gaudy colours. Others