

CHAPTER IV.

U P O L U — M A N O N O — S A V A I L.

1839.

THE surveys of the island of Tutuila having been completed by the 23d November, we made preparations for our departure, and on the 25th we weighed anchor. In leaving the harbour we had a narrow escape from wreck; the almost constant southeast wind, which is fair to a vessel entering the bay, and makes it easy of access, is ahead on going out, which renders egress difficult; it therefore becomes necessary to make frequent tacks, and a vessel must be well manœuvred to escape accident, for to miss stays would be almost certain to bring about shipwreck. When we beat out, the wind was light, and it failed altogether just as we reached the most dangerous part of the channel; we were in consequence brought within an oar's length of the reef, on which a heavy surf was breaking. The moment was a trying one, and the event doubtful; all were at their stations, and not a word was spoken. Of my own feelings on the occasion I have no very precise recollection; merely remembering that I felt as if I breathed more freely after the crisis had passed and we were in safety.

The afternoon was fine, and we sailed along the southern shore of the island, admiring its diversified surface, its luxuriant groves, and the smiling villages that crown its bays. Where the valleys come out from between the ridges to the shore, there is usually a level plain extending inwards for a couple of miles; these plains are occupied for the most part by groves of cocoa-nut and bread-fruit, beneath whose shade lie the dwellings of the natives. Many of the inhabitants were abroad in their canoes, employed in fishing; some of them scarcely seemed to notice the ship, passing them rapidly with all sail set, while others appeared to regard her with intense curiosity. In the evening we had much lightning, but no thunder.