

CHAPTER VII.

MBUA BAY AND MUTHUATA.

1840.

ON the 26th of May, the Peacock was off Vatulele. Leaving Mbenga to the north, Kantavu on the south, and passing through the sea of Kantavu, they had surveyed the southwest side of Vatulele, and afterwards stood for the opening in the reef off the west end of Vitilevu, through which they passed after sunset, anchoring on the inside of the reef of Navula, in thirteen fathoms water. This is the limit of the king of Rewa's authority.

On the morning of the 27th, they coasted along the land inside of the reef. The shores of Vitilevu are here low; but the land within a short distance rises to the height of one thousand feet, and has a brown and barren appearance. It is destitute of trees, except on the low points along the shores, which are covered with mangrove (*Rhizophora*) and cocoa-nut groves. Here and there is a deep valley or mountain-top clothed with wood, which is seen in no other places. This was afterwards observed to be generally the case with the leeward side of all the islands, and particularly of the large ones. I do not think that this can be accounted for by the difference of climate, although it is much drier on the lee than on the weather side; but I deem it probable that the practice of burning the yam-beds and clearing the ground by fire, may have consumed all the forests, in dry seasons. The yam is extensively cultivated every where, and, from our observations, it would seem that the leeward parts of the island would afford most excellent pasturage for cattle; yet it is remarkable, that, although several head of cattle were introduced about five years before our visit, they have not in a single instance multiplied.