

CHAPTER II.

ELLICE'S AND KINGSMILL GROUP.

1841,

ON the 6th of March, the Peacock and Flying-Fish sailed from the roadstead of Mataatu, for the islands known on the chart of Arrow-smith as Ellice's Group.

On the 7th, they lost sight of the Samoan Isles.

The vessels pursued their course to the westward, with a fresh wind from north-northeast, until the 14th, when they crossed the meridian of 180° , and dropped a day in their reckoning.

The temperature of the air during this part of the passage from the Samoan Isles had increased from 76° to 84° , and that of the water from 78° to 86° .

At noon, on the 14th, they made land, and by 2 P. M., they were close to what proved to be an extensive ring of small islets, situated on a coral reef surrounding a lagoon. These are so far separated as to give the idea of distinct islands, which has probably led to their having the name of "group." These islets are well covered with cocoa-nut and other trees, which give them a sufficient elevation to be seen at ten or twelve miles distance. The reef which links these islets is awash, over which the sea breaks with violence. There are two openings in its west side, and an island off its southwest point, at the distance of a mile, five miles in length by two in width. The island is thirteen miles long, in a north-by-east and south-by-west direction, and seven miles and two-tenths east and west.

When the vessels had approached within a short distance of the largest island, two canoes were seen coming towards the ship, only one of which came near. In it were five men; and from the familiar manner in which they came alongside, it was evident they had had frequent communication with vessels. They refused to come on board,