

## CHAPTER XVII.

The Admiralty Islands—History of their Discovery—Description of Nares Harbour—General Appearance of the Islands and Botany—Natives—Their Houses, Habits, Customs, Ornaments, Weapons, and Implements—Zoology—Polynesian Races.

ON the 3rd March the weather was so thick and rainy that, being close to the land without seeing it, it was necessary to "lay to" for a short time. After noon the weather cleared somewhat, and at 2 P.M., the three northwest islets of the Admiralty group (Buchanan, Murray, and Moseley Islands) were sighted and the ship steered to the eastward towards D'Entrecasteaux and Suhm Islands, after passing which a course was kept along the edge of the D'Entrecasteaux Reef, rounding its eastern extremity at dusk and anchoring in 18 fathoms.

D'Entrecasteaux's sketch of the north side of the Admiralty Islands was found very correct for a running survey, and no difficulty was found in distinguishing the points and islands laid down on it.

As the ship approached the anchorage several canoes came off, under sail, from D'Entrecasteaux and Wild Islands, through openings in the reef, though a stiff breeze was blowing. The natives were evidently in great excitement, and eager to reach the vessel; paddles were waved to show friendship, and various articles of barter exhibited. The constant cry was "laban, laban," which was found, like the "sigor" of Humboldt Bay, to mean iron, the form of wealth which they also coveted most.

After the ship anchored on the evening of the 3rd March, the chief ordered all the canoes away, and the vessel was left alone till the morning. On the 4th, at 7 A.M., several canoes came off from Wild Island, and, as the natives appeared well disposed and the weather favourable, a party landed on a small coral island (Observatory Islet) to obtain astronomical observations. After breakfast Captain Thomson landed on Wild Island, and found the inhabitants very friendly, so the boom boats were got out, the Naturalists went away exploring, and every preparation was made for surveying the anchorage, which was called, in compliment to the late captain, "Nares Harbour" (see Sheet 34).

The Expedition remained at Nares Harbour for seven days, until the 10th March, surveying the harbour and exploring the country, but the work was much impeded by rain, which fell on five days out of the seven, the total fall being 2.81 inches, the greatest in any one day being 1.21 inches. The wind, the direction of which was recorded bi-hourly, prevailed from the northward, its average velocity being  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles per hour. The sky was cloudy and the atmosphere damp and oppressive, the mean temperature being  $81^{\circ}$ , and the relative humidity 97. The mean pressure of the air at a temperature of  $32^{\circ}$  was 29.83, and the mean temperature of the sea surface  $83^{\circ}.8$ .