

## CHAPTER VI.

### TERRA DEL FUEGO.

1839.

ORANGE HARBOUR is on the western side of Nassau Bay, separated and protected from it by Burnt Island. It is nearly land-locked, and is the safest harbour on the coast. The hills on each side, after several undulations, rise into conical peaks, and the naked rock is every where broken into a jagged outline, with no creeping plants to soften or take off its harshness. Every thing has a bleak and wintry appearance, and is in excellent keeping with the climate; yet the scenery about it is pleasing to the eye, bounded on all sides by undulating hills, which are covered with evergreen foliage. Distant mountains, some of which are capped with snow, shooting up in a variety of forms, seen beyond the extensive bays, form a fine background. From the vessels, the hills look like smooth downs, and if it were not for the inclemency and fitfulness of the weather, they might be contemplated with some pleasure.

The hills are covered with dense forests of beech, birch, willow, and winter-bark. Some of the former trees are forty or fifty feet high, having all their tops bent to the northeast by the prevailing southwest winds. They are remarkably even as to height, having more the look, at a distance, of heath, than of forest trees.

The whole coast has the appearance of being of recent volcanic rocks, but all our investigations tended to prove the contrary. We nowhere found any cellular lava, pumice, or obsidian, nor was there any granite, or other primitive rock seen, though reported by Captain King as existing. The rock was trachytic, or of trap formation, apparently having undergone more or less action by fire.

Immediately on our arrival at Orange Harbour, active preparations were made for a short cruise to the Antarctic. Although the season