

EXCURSION TO THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY.

Every one knows that Sheppey is a small island about ten miles in length, lying at the mouth of the Thames, at the distance of between forty and fifty miles east from London; but every one does not know that the Isle of Sheppey is an inexhaustible mine of fossil treasures; and that from its cliffs, and on its shores, may be gathered innumerable relics of tropical plants, of birds, serpents, turtles, fishes, crabs, lobsters, shells, &c. the greater part belonging to species that now no longer exist.

A visit to the town of Queenborough, when a boy, afforded me the first opportunity of beholding fossil remains in such a state of preservation, and in such profusion, as to excite in my mind an uncontrollable desire to investigate the nature and origin of objects, which I had been taught to believe were either produced spontaneously in the earth, or were left in their present situations by the waters of a universal deluge. At a short distance from the inn where we sojourned, was a vitriol manufactory, and considerable plots of ground were covered with the pyritous clay, obtained from the neighbourhood. To my great astonishment, I perceived that these layers of earth were almost wholly made up of stems, twigs, and fragments of wood, with innumerable fruits, seed-vessels, and berries, of kinds altogether unknown to me. These fossils were of a dark colour, some quite black, very heavy, and