

of structure, which they offer to our observation, is the laborious, yet fascinating, occupation of the Botanist. Here, also, we are lost in admiration at the never-ending variety of forms successively displayed to view in the innumerable species which compose this kingdom of nature, and at the energy of that vegetative power, which, amidst such great differences of situation, sustains the modified life of each individual plant, and which continues its species in endless perpetuity. Wherever circumstances are compatible with vegetable existence, we there find plants arise. It is well known that, in all places where vegetation has been established, the germs are so intermingled with the soil; that whenever the earth is turned up, even from considerable depths, and exposed to the air, plants are soon observed to spring, as if they had been recently sown, in consequence of the germination of seeds which had remained latent and inactive during the lapse of perhaps many centuries. Islands formed by coral reefs, which have risen above the level of the sea, become in a short time covered with verdure. From the materials of the most steril rock, and even from the yet recent cinders and lava of the volcano, Nature prepares the way for vegetable existence. The slightest crevice or inequality is sufficient to arrest the invisible germs that are always floating in the air, and affords the means of sustenance to diminutive races of lichens and mosses. These soon overspread the surface, and are followed, in the course of a few years, by successive tribes of plants of gradually increasing size and strength; till at length the island, or other favoured spot, is converted into a natural and luxuriant garden, of which the productions rising from grasses to shrubs and trees, present all the varieties of the fertile meadow, the tangled thicket, and the widely spreading forest. Even in the desert plains of the torrid zone, the eye of the traveller is often refreshed by the appearance of a few hardy plants, which find sufficient materials for their growth in these arid regions: and in the realms of perpetual snow which surround the poles, the navigator is occasionally