

ART. XVII.—*Notice of the Voyage of EDWARD BARNFIELD, Master of his Majesty's Ship Andromache, to New South Shetland* *.

ABOUT a twelvemonth ago, an English merchant brig, in performing a voyage to this port, made what they supposed to be land, several degrees to the southward of Cape Horn, and in a situation in which it is positively asserted that no land *can* exist. From the difference in opinion of those on board the vessel, and, from some other circumstances, little credit was attached to it at that time; but the master being fully convinced that what had been seen was actually land, determined to put it beyond a doubt, should he come round again. He accordingly made the land again last October, and having sailed along it for some considerable distance, he returned about the beginning of December to this port, and laid before the Naval Commander in Chief here, such charts and views, as induced him to hire the same brig on account of Government, to complete the discovery. The command of the expedition was given to Mr Edward Barnfield, master of H. M. S. *Andromache*, with three midshipmen from the same ship, to assist him in his nautical researches; and as it was deemed necessary to send a medical officer, I went as a volunteer on the occasion. We sailed from Valparaiso on the 20th of December 1819, but did not arrive on cruising ground till the 16th of January 1820, having been almost constantly harassed with baffling winds and calms till we arrived in a high southern latitude. On that day, however, we had the good

* See this *Journal*, vol. III. p. 367, particularly p. 374. and Plate XII. of that volume.

fortune to discover the land to the south-eastward, extending on both bows as far as the eye could reach. At a distance, its limits could scarcely be distinguished from the light white clouds which floated on the tops of the mountains. Upon a nearer approach, however, every object became distinct. The whole line of coast appeared high, bold, and rugged; rising abruptly from the sea in perpendicular snowy cliffs, except here and there where the naked face of a barren black rock shewed itself amongst them. In the interior, the land, or rather the snow, sloped gradually and gently upwards into high hills, which appeared to be situated some miles from the sea. No attempt was made to land here, as the weather became rather threatening, and a dense fog came on, which soon shut every thing from our view at more than a hundred yards distance. A boat had been sent away in the mean time to try for anchorage; but they found the coast completely surrounded by dangerous sunken rocks, and the bottom so foul, and the water so deep, that it was not thought prudent to go nearer the shore in the brig, especially as it was exposed to almost every wind. The boat brought off some seals and penguins which had been shot among the rocks; but they reported them to be the only animated objects they had discovered. The latitude of this part of the coast was found to be $62^{\circ} 26'$ S. and its longitude to be $60^{\circ} 54'$ W. (See Vol. III. of this Journal, Plate XII. Fig. 2.)

Three days after this, we discovered and anchored in an extensive bay, about two degrees farther to the eastward, where we were enabled to land, and examine the country. Words can scarcely be found to describe its barrenness and sterility. Only one small spot of land was discovered on which a landing could be effected upon the Main, every other part of the bay being bounded by the same inaccessible cliffs which we had met with before. We landed on a shingle beach, on which there was a heavy surf beating, and from which a small stream of fresh-water ran into the sea. Nothing was to be seen but the rugged surface of barren rocks, upon which myriads of sea-fowls had laid their eggs, and which they were then hatching. These birds were so little accustomed to the sight of any other animal, that, so far from being intimidated by our approach, they even disputed our landing, and we were obliged

forcibly to open a passage for ourselves through them. They consisted principally of four species of the penguin; with albatrosses, gulls, pintadoes, shags, sea-swallows, and a bird about the size and shape of the common pigeon, and of a milk-white plumage, the only species we met with that was not web-footed. We also fell in with a number of the animals described in Lord Anson's voyage as the Sea-Lion, and said by him to be so plentiful at Juan Fernandez, many of which we killed. Seals were also pretty numerous; but though we walked some distance into the country, we could observe no trace either of inhabitants, or of any terrestrial animal. It would be impossible, indeed, for any but beasts of prey to subsist here, as we met with no sort of vegetation except here and there small patches of stunted grass growing upon the surface of the thick coat of dung which the sea-fowls left in the crevices of the rocks, and a species of moss, which occasionally we met with adhering to the rocks themselves. In short, we traced the land nine or ten degrees east and west, and about three degrees north and south, and found its general appearance always the same, high, mountainous, barren, and universally covered with snow, except where the rugged summits of a black rock appeared through it, resembling a small island in the midst of the ocean; but from the lateness of the season, and the almost constant fogs in which we were enveloped, we could not ascertain whether it formed part of a continent, or was only a group of islands. If it is insular, there must be *some* of an immense extent, as we found a gulf nearly 150 miles in depth, out of which we had some difficulty in finding our way back again.

The discovery of this land must be of great interest in a geographical point of view, and its importance to the commercial interests of our country, must be evident from the very great numbers of whales with which we were daily surrounded; and the multitudes of the finest fur-seals and sea-lions which we met both at sea and on every point of the coast, or adjacent rocky islands, on which we were able to land. The fur of the former is the finest and longest I have ever seen; and from their having now become scarce in every other part of these seas, and the great demand for them both in Europe and India, they will, I have no doubt, become, as soon as the discovery is made

public, a favourite speculation amongst our merchants. The oil procured from the sea-lion is, I am told, nearly equal in value to that of the spermaceti whale. And the great number of whales we saw every where near the land, must also be an important thing to our merchants, as they have lately been said to be very scarce to the northward.

We left the coast on the 21st of March, and arrived at this place on the 14th of April, having touched at Juan Fernandez for refreshment.

H. M. S. SLANEY, }
VALPARAISO, 26th May 1820. }
