

PREFACE

TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

THE present Work was undertaken with the view of giving a complete and connected description of the varied phenomena of the Polar World, as well as an account of the more important voyages and expeditions, whether for profit or discovery, through which it has become known to Europe. Such a subject, it is believed, combining much that is interesting in natural scenery and maritime adventure, can hardly fail to prove attractive. In those climates, nature is marked by the most stupendous features, and presenting objects at once sublime and beautiful, the forms she assumes differ from her aspects in our milder latitudes almost as widely as though they belonged to another planet. The tempests and darkness of those wintry realms are strikingly varied by the brief but brilliant summer, the singular magnificence of the celestial and meteorological appearances, and the dreary grandeur of those enormous piles of ice which stud the land or float upon the water. Along with a characteristic range of vegetable productions, and a remarkable profusion of animal life wonderfully adapted to sustain existence in the extremity of cold, we are presented with a race of men singular alike from the circumstances to which they have conformed themselves, the manners and customs thence resulting, and the contrivances whereby they brave the