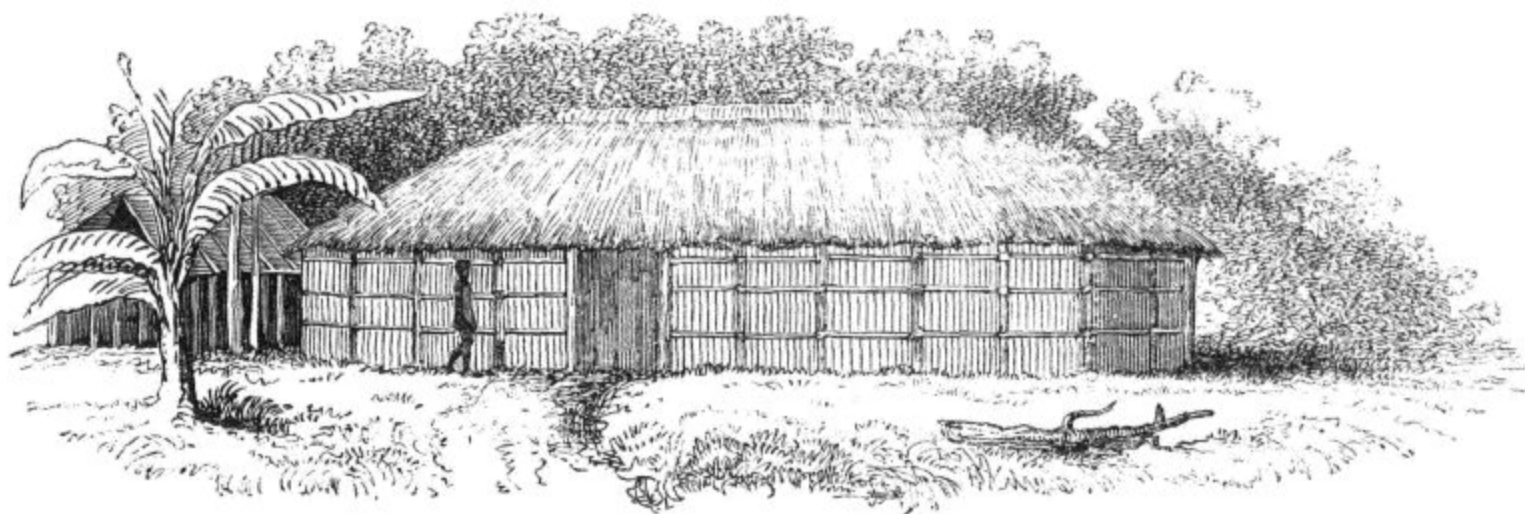


set in the ground, with intervals of about an inch between them, for the admission of light and air. To the top of these a plate-piece of the hibiscus, a light and strong wood, is lashed with sinnet. From this the rafters rise on all sides, and meet in a ridge, which is about half the length of the building. The rafters touch each other, and are covered with small mats made of the pandanus leaf. These are closely fitted together, and lapped over each other, forming an impervious and durable roof. The floor is the natural earth; there are no partitions, but tapa or matting is employed as an occasional screen. A building of this description may be erected for about fifty dollars.



NATIVE HOUSE, TAHITI.

The Tahitians use neither tables nor chairs. Their bedsteads are formed of a framework of cane, raised a short distance from the ground, upon which a few mats are laid. A pillow stuffed with aromatic herbs is in general use among the better class.

The natives are generally to be found in their houses, in a circle, chatting, reading, and singing, or smoking, unless they be, as is often the case, asleep. They are seldom to be seen engaged in manual labour, except on the sides of the streams where they are employed in washing, or at the residences of the chiefs.

I hesitate to speak of the females of this island, for I differ from all who have gone before me in relation to their vaunted beauty. I did not see among them a single woman whom I could call handsome. They have, indeed, a soft sleepiness about the eyes, which may be fascinating to some, but I should rather ascribe the celebrity their charms have obtained among navigators, to their cheerfulness and gaiety. Their figures are bad, and the greater part of them are parrot-toed. They are exceedingly prone to prattling, or may rather be said to have a tattling disposition, for they cannot keep even their own secrets.

This want of reserve is not confined to the women: the men are also incapable of keeping a secret. A crime is divulged almost as