

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN that fleet was dismantled which, pending the differences between Great Britain and Russia relative to the possession of Oczakow, had been kept at Spithead during the summer of 1791, the ship to which I belonged, among others, was paid off. Without professional employment, young,* and not inclined to be inactive, I turned over in my own mind in what way my time could be completely, and, at the same time, usefully employed. Any thing I thought better than lounging about the capital.

I had a great wish to be acquainted with both our northern and southern whale fisheries, and therefore intended to go out, as a passenger, in some ship employed in those trades, in order to make myself master of the subject. The season was gone by for the former; I was therefore confined to the latter; and went, in consequence, to a house at Paul's Wharf, which owned a great number of ships in the southern whale fishery; and inquiring for the gentleman of the house, to whom I was totally unknown; "Sir," said I, "I understand that you have several vessels employed in the southern fishery?" "Yes, Sir," he replied. "A young friend of mine," I continued, "wishes very much to see your mode of killing the fish, cutting them up,

* At that time twenty-five.