

GLEANINGS  
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LETTER I.

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Departure from England—Proceed under the convoy of a frigate—Dark and hazy weather—The tempestuous gales of the Bay of Biscay fortunately escaped—Porto Zanto—Remarks on the island of Madeira and the north-east trade wind—The tropic of Cancer crossed—Flying fishes—A singular circumstance of a swallow—Calms and variable weather prevalent in low latitudes—Description of a storm—The equator crossed—Ceremonies among the sailors peculiar to the occasion—Remarks on the south-east trade-wind—A look-out for the land of Africa—Good water an essential article at sea—Chinese mode of purifying it—The Lascar sailors harshly treated—Their dulness in cold, and activity in warm climates.

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TO my dear friend I cheerfully impart the various observations which I have made since my departure from old England, and, though you may have read many histories of the country whereof I shall treat, yet, as the remarks of mankind vary according to  
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their several dispositions, I flatter myself that these my communications will contain a sufficient portion of interesting, as well as original information, to claim your attention; at all events they have one strong recommendation, and that is, a strict adherence to *truth*, for it is not the part of real friendship (such as I profess) to deceive.

On the 17th of March we having got under weigh, favored with a light breeze from the north-east, the shores of dear England gradually receded from us. The novelty of the surrounding scene, added to the bustle and confusion which attended our departure, for a moment suppressed the rising sigh, and rendered less poignant those sensations, which a separation from our country, friends, and all that is dear, naturally excites.

We proceeded under convoy of a frigate, that kept at bay those sneaking privateers which infest the channel. The weather was so dark and hazy, that as we went along we could hardly discern the English coast. On the third day (March 20) we found

found ourselves clear of the British channel, and having entered the stormy Atlantic, were skirting along the Bay of Biscay, where ships generally meet with tempestuous gales; we were, however, fortunate in having escaped them. The weather still continued cold and cloudy, but the hope of soon feeling the enlivening influence of a southern climate, banished all gloomy sensations.

The more we advanced the less we were annoyed with the rolling of the vessel;—many of the passengers were fortunate enough to escape sea-sickness, while those who suffered became the objects of their sport. Custom reconciles us to these scenes,—what a novice might think a violent gale, the hardy son of Neptune would regard only as a gentle breeze.

On the morning of the 31st we came in sight of Porto Zanto, one of the Madeira islands. Under an easy press of sail, we found ourselves towards evening coasting along the island of Madeira, which is more generally known by that name.

Towards the middle, this island assumes an elevated appearance; and from the point of view we beheld it, by no means corresponds with those ideas of fertility which are entertained of it. A brisk gale from the north-east drove us rapidly along, and night approaching, its aspiring cliffs, and every other object, were enveloped in surrounding darkness.

We had now fairly entered the north-east trade-wind. The degree of north latitude that this wind is to be met with, is in some degree regulated by the season of the year, and the sun's distance north or south of the equator.—On the morning of the 4th of April we crossed the tropic of Cancer, and the weather became remarkably warm; but the cool, refreshing breeze that here invariably blows, gives a bracing temperature to the air, and renders confinement less irksome.

When about the latitude of  $13^{\circ}$  north, we for the first time perceived numbers of flying fish in every direction. At first sight they might naturally be mistaken for small birds skimming along the surface of the ocean: their flight, though rapid, cannot be long

continued, from the smallness of their fins. Even in this silent and solitary region of trackless ocean, these little sportive fish are not without their enemies; the larger fish prey upon them; and when, to escape impending danger, they betake themselves to flight, they are eagerly pursued by a variety of sea-birds. It is no unamusing spectacle, I assure you, to observe their dexterity in the pursuit;—thus, to avoid *Scylla*, they unfortunately strike upon *Charybdis*.

I must not here omit mentioning a circumstance which to me, indeed, appeared somewhat singular. Being in about 9° 30' north latitude, and the African coast more than three hundred miles distant, I was agreeably surprised by the appearance of a swallow that crossed and re-crossed the ship several times, without venturing to alight on any part of the rigging. Whence had it come? whither was it going? or, had it sustained so long a flight from land as our present distance from it? These were questions which naturally occurred, and a diversity of conjectures consequently employed my mind. At one time I imagined it had ac-

accompanied us in our passage from England, —that it might hitherto have been in a torpid state, concealed in some corner or crevice of the ship, and on feeling the genial warmth of our approach to the line, might have become re-animated. I should hardly have supposed that this poor solitary bird ventured across the deep unattended by any of its species. Such, however, was the case, and I shall leave my friend to form his own conjectures.

On a near approach to the equator, the north-east trade-wind gradually dies away, and we then begin to meet with those calms so frequently experienced by navigators in crossing this grand line of demarkation between the northern and the southern hemispheres of the world. Add to these the tainted atmosphere of a crowded ship, where disease and death already made great havoc, though the better half of our voyage was still before us. Amidst this darkening prospect, I felt quite resigned to my fate, and committed myself to the protection of that power who sees through all futurity, and whose omnipotence and wisdom are demonstrated

demonstrated by his mercies. Here, my friend, an eternal summer reigns. In vain we endeavoured to relieve the eye from the dull uniformity of the surrounding scene,—in vain we looked for the verdant meadow, or the flowery field: the heavens above, and the boundless ocean, day after day, alone presented themselves to our view. No longer we enjoyed the serene sky that accompanied us on running down the north-east trade-winds. Calms and variable weather alike prevail in these low latitudes. The forked lightning illuminated the whole horizon; the roaring thunder assailed the ear, and the violent torrents threatened destruction! In vain my feeble pen attempts to give a descriptive coloring to this truly awful scene! Picture it to yourself, my friend, and let imagination conceive what no tongue can express:—the night dark, but irradiated at intervals with vivid flashes of lightning;—the reiterated peals of thunder, rending, as it were, the heavens;—and quick in succession the descending torrents, that almost drowned even Neptune's sons. We hailed returning day with gratitude! we rejoiced

in having survived the storm. It seems, my friend, we had directed our course too far to the east, where ships are more liable to be becalmed. On the 30th we crossed the equator, and congratulated each other on entering the southern hemisphere. Among the sailors it was a day of merriment and festivity. It is customary, on crossing the equator, to initiate young sailors into the mysteries of their profession, by the performance of some ridiculous ceremonies peculiar to the occasion. Neptune, Amphitrite, Triton, and all the sea-born family make their appearance. They hail the ship, and are invited to come on board. They inquire whence comes the vessel? and whither bound? I own I am much entertained with the company of those who for the first time have visited the southern world. Such are paraded before the marine deity, who assumes a profound air of dignity and authority on the occasion. We all answered his commands in our turn. With some he would not depart from the mysterious rites of initiation; to others he was more lenient, excusing them altogether of submitting to the operation



operation of what sailors term *shaving*. From their intercourse with Europeans, Neptune and his attendants were taught to expect a portion of brandy, and having received the customary tribute, they departed to their respective stations.

The south-east trade-wind having come to our relief, the face of the heavens was again mild and serene. This wind is by no means so steady as that of the northern hemisphere, at least we did not find it so, for it varied continually, and was sometimes as high as east north-east.

It has been remarked, that beyond the parallel of  $16^{\circ}$  south latitude, the south-east trade-wind has been found to incline to the north; but this is in some measure influenced by the season of the year, and the sun's greater or less distance from the northern tropic; and may in like manner be found to hang to the south, on the sun's return to the southern tropic.

You are probably, by this time, as anxious to get to the conclusion of this letter, as I was to the end of my voyage, therefore I shall spare you the dull monotonous detail  
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of the remaining part; suffice it to say, that we have just approached that point in our reckoning which promises in a few hours to show us the projecting land of Africa; and now, while all on deck are keeping a good look out, allow me to close this epistle with a few remarks, that have forcibly obtruded themselves on my mind.

During a long voyage we necessarily learn the value of a number of articles, which, when on shore, we totally disregard, or do not sufficiently estimate. Here we must have every thing within ourselves; our stores previously provided, our foresight exercised, and the experience of others consulted. Good water is an essential blessing at sea; and it is only when we find it bad, that we are fully taught its value. The same may with equal propriety be said of every enjoyment in life; "for he who the storm has never defied, can scarce enjoy the calm." From a variety of fortuitous circumstances incidental to a long voyage, it is not only necessary to be sparing in the allowance, but that every abuse of it be prevented. The water we had was far from being agreeable

able to the taste, and by no means improved by being long kept, which I am told is the case with Thames water. A great deal depends on the proper seasoning of the casks;—if new, the water is apt to retain a taste of the wood. The filtering stone, which most ships now provide themselves with, is peculiarly useful. The process of filtering takes away the rank foetid smell which water long kept at sea generally has. With equal advantage we might adopt a method of purifying this element, as practised by the Chinese, on the authority of Sir George Staunton's late embassy to China.—“ The Chinese put a small piece of alum in the hollow tube of a cane, which is perforated with small holes; with this instrument the muddy water is stirred a few minutes, and the earthy particles being speedily precipitated, leave the water above them pure and clear.”

Nothing so forcibly struck me as the degree of neglect, and harsh treatment, which the Lascar sailors meet with on board. In cold climates they are quite inactive and inanimate; but, on entering a warm latitude, their

their motions become proportionably rapid, and their exertions more useful.

The slow pacing clouds have become more settled and fixed to the horizon; and from amidst their collected mass, we fondly expect the aspiring cliffs of Africa will speedily terminate our voyage, in which hope I shall for the present bid my friend adieu.

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*LETTER II.*

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Mountainous prospect on approaching the Cape—Sterility of Table Mountain—False Bay—A storm—The general joy on hearing “land in sight” proclaimed—Cast anchor in Simon’s Bay—Village of Simon’s Town—Curiosity of strangers in a foreign country—Description of the capital of the Cape—Its buildings—Inhabitants, their religion—Climate—Government—A fashionable resort—Villas in the neighbourhood—Tremendous gales common in Table Bay—Dreadful effects of them.

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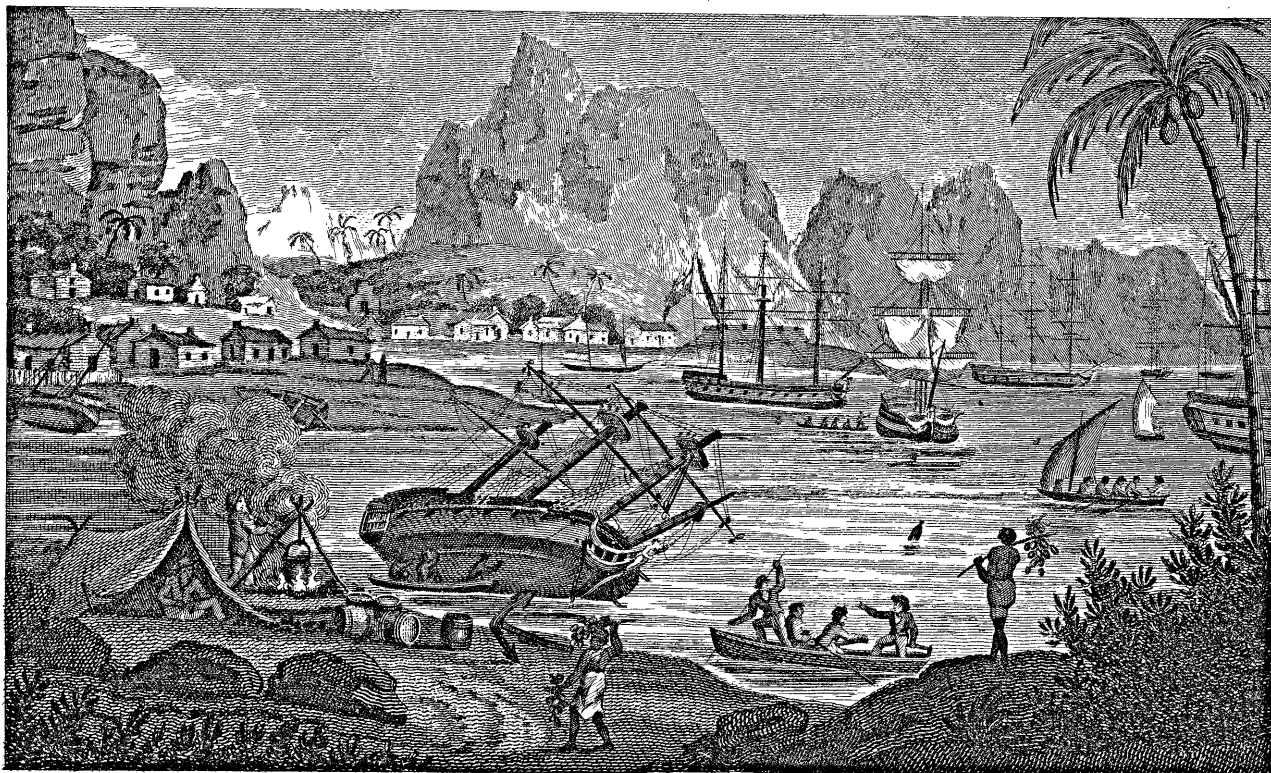
**AN** assemblage of bleak and barren mountains form the outlines of the prospect on approaching the Cape. The celebrated Table Mountain exhibits an awful picture of bold projecting rocks, and parched sterility. No lively verdure catches the eager sight; in vain we look around for the flowery meads of this fertile colony.

It was on the evening of the 8th of June when we made the land; during the night  
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it was almost a calm; the unruffled face of the ocean, that seemed for a while to forget its tempestuous rage, and the glimmering of the moon on its glossy surface, in conjunction with the gloomy pile of mountains towards which we gradually tended, formed a sublime and impressive scene! Early next morning we found ourselves close in with False Bay, and from the appearance on all sides, a change in the weather was to be dreaded. The surrounding mountains were hid from our sight, and the lowering clouds seemed to forebode a storm. Almost in the very harbour, to be thus in danger of being driven out to sea, and again made the sport of winds and waves, struck a damp on our spirits. Towards mid-day the storm increased; the rain poured upon us in torrents without intermission for the greatest part of the day, and the genius of the Table Mountain seemed as if resolved to prevent our landing. In the evening the gale moderated, and we again anticipated the pleasure of getting rid of the cares and inconveniences of ship-board. By him who has been for months cooped up in a ship, and to whom

day after day the face of nature has been continually the same, by him alone can the gaiety and happy expressions of the countenances of all on board be conceived, when the mariner from the mast-head proclaims aloud the joyful cry of *land in sight*. We hailed it as an old friend with whom we have enjoyed the happiest moments of our lives; and in our first transports of congratulation, the barren rocks possess charms equally attractive with the most highly cultivated fields. On the morning of the 9th we anchored in Simon's Bay, which was crowded with ships from all quarters of the globe. The winter season having set in, it was no longer safe for ships to remain in Table Bay. The village of Simon's Town, running along the beach, almost at the foot of the overhanging mountains, presented a gay and picturesque appearance, rendered still more striking when contrasted with the dreary prospect of the surrounding country.

When a new page in the volume of nature is, as it were, laid open before us, impelled by a spirit of novelty, we are hurried from the contemplation of one object to that of another,



*Engraved from Drawings made from Pictures by the Author.*

*View of Limon's Bay.*



another, with hardly a moment left for reflection; prompted by a laudable curiosity, we wander over the diversified scene with emotions of pleasure, at one time pleasingly employed in observing the different appearances in the newly discovered land, and at another time the customs, habits, and manners of those among whom we are going to reside.

To attempt, after the numerous descriptions with which the world has been amused, to lay before you my poor picture of Southern Africa, may be deemed somewhat presumptuous; it is, indeed, pursuing a hackneyed path; still, though the harvest has been already gathered in, the *industrious gleaner* may have it in his power to collect some *neglected ears* that lie scattered around. With this humble hope I shall cheerfully engage in the delightful task of wandering from field to field, and from flower to flower. After the labors of the day, permit me to present my *collected sheaves* at the shrine of friendship, and may the unvitiated palate of my friend be inclined to partake of my sober meal.

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The capital of the Cape is a neat, regular, well built town, and occupies a greater extent of ground than is generally imagined;—it contains some handsome buildings, but, from the prevalence of violent winds, they are generally built low. They make use of clay as mortar, and give a coating of plaister to the outside when finished;—this is decorated according to the taste and fancy of the builder; the doors and windows generally painted green, a favorite color with the Dutch. \*

A stone terrace, extending the whole length of the house, and elevated a few feet above the level of the street, is the grand promenade of the family; this is called the *Stoop*; and towards evening it is commonly thronged with visitors. Mynheer seats himself at one end of it, enjoying the luxury of his tobacco, and with apparent unconcern eyes the passing throng.

There are two churches within the town, and the religion of the inhabitants is that of the reformed church, the calvinists being the most numerous. In the external duties of religion they are sufficiently zealous, and

regular attendants of church on Sundays; but in the after part of the day, when the exercises of devotion are finished, it is no unusual thing among the young ladies to form parties of pleasure, and spend the evening in the ball-room.

Though now the middle of winter, or, as it may be termed with greater propriety, the wet season, yet, when the sky is clear, the influence of the meridian sun is still powerful; but suddenly it becomes remarkably cold, and a person is at a loss how to clothe himself, for the transitions from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, can hardly be equalled in any other climate. Sore-throats, and similar complaints, are the natural consequences of these sudden changes.

The Government Garden situated at the higher part of the valley, which forms an amphitheatre, is a fashionable resort in the cool of the evening; and when the scorching rays of a summer's sun render every other place about town unpleasant and oppressive, here one may enjoy a delightful coolness under the shade of the spreading oaks. It is about a quarter of an hour's walk

walk from the top to the bottom. It has been lately inclosed with a brick wall. In the immediate neighbourhood there are some charming villas, although, from the aridity of the soil, and the consequent want of water, these cultivated spots do not extend to any considerable distance from the town.

At this season we naturally look for those tremendous gales from the north-west, which render Table Bay the terror of seamen from the month of May to September: indeed, from a recent mournful event, we are apt to believe, that no season is secure from those storms which blow from the Western Ocean, and that roll into this ill-fated bay those destructive billows, which carry along with them ruin and dismay.

The last melancholy spectacle of the kind which the inhabitants had an opportunity of witnessing, was on the 5th of November, 1799. Nature at times delights in departing from that systematic order, by which mankind presume to fetter her operations. When least expected, she breaks from her

trammels, and shews that the boasted wisdom of man is nought but vanity.

His Majesty's ship Sceptre was unfortunately one of the sufferers on the occasion. Soon after the salute in commemoration of the King's birth-day, the canon's roar spoke a different language than that of rejoicing; it conveyed to the soul the deep hollow groans of distress; the storm increased apace as the evening approached; a dark night succeeded, to add, if it were possible, to the horrors of the scene; and the shrieks of the dying were borne on the wings of the roaring winds, until the awful catastrophe was at length completed. The following morning presented a distressing sight, the miserable remains of the vessel, and the mangled bodies of the dead half-buried in the sand! Here let me pause. May the arrogant be taught humility, and the compassionate bosom sympathize with suffering humanity.—Leaving my friend to the enjoyment of those feelings which the tragical recital is calculated to excite, I remain, &c.

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*LETTER III.*

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Superiority of the waggon-drivers—Oxen commonly employed  
 —The horses chiefly of Spanish breed—Their peculiar pace  
 —Races established by the garrison—Dutch ladies ride in  
 covered waggons—Cruelty of the English in lopping off the  
 tails of their horses—Characteristics of the Dutch—English  
 manners adopted, particularly by the ladies—Their levity and  
 familiarity accounted for.

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**T**HE dexterity which the waggon-drivers at the Cape display in the management of their horses, cannot fail to be remarked by the European on his arrival. Seated in the front of his waggon, he can with astonishing precision strike with his long whip any part of the animal that he pleases. Eight in hand, he can direct, seemingly with as much ease, as if there were only two in the yoke, let the road be steep or rugged, or the turnings ever so sudden, yet in all the intricacies of

c 3                      driving,



engraved from Drawings made from Nature by the Author.

*A Bullock-wagon of Hottentot Holland, crossing a Mountain.*

driving, and the nice management of the whip, his superiority to the European is universally acknowledged. Such as are destined for this employment are early instructed in the rudiments of the art, and from the time that the young colonist can make use of his hands, his favorite amusement is to handle the whip, and to charm his ears with its music. From its length it requires both hands to guide it; and its cracking is heard at a considerable distance. In their heavy draught waggons they employ oxen, which convey from the distant parts of the interior the produce of the land to the Cape market. The team commonly consists of twelve or sixteen. The two leading oxen are always the best, and most tractable. A Hottentot boy runs at their head, to guide them in the road, and to assist the driver. The oxen that perform these long journeys are well looking cattle, with large, branching horns. While they travel in the dry season, it may naturally be supposed that from fatigue, want of care, and the parched tracts of country they must necessarily pass through, they cannot be  
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in good condition on their arrival at the Cape.

The horses of the colony are not remarkable for strength or shape; they are mostly of the Spanish kind, imported from the opposite continent, by no means deficient in spirit, and well calculated for undergoing fatigue. They have a peculiar pace, which is called *the bungher*, but when once they come under the hands of an English jockey, they soon get rid of it. Since the possession of the Cape by the English, the breed of horses has been now attended to, and materially improved. The races, which have been established by the garrison, have contributed greatly to this end;—they are regularly held twice a-year, and continue a week at each time. The prizes are made up by subscription, and excellent sport is frequently to be met with. The Dutch ladies ride in covered waggons, and animate the scene by an assemblage of beauty and fashion.

A Dutchman cannot easily reconcile himself to lopping off the tail of his *paard*. On passing from a Dutch to an English master,

the poor animal immediately finds himself robbed of his long tail, which, in the eyes of his former master, appeared not less ornamental than useful. Attached to the customs of our country, we are but too apt to overlook, in an implicit compliance with them, the comfort of an animal that so essentially contributes to our profit and pleasure. Vast number of flies, during the hot season, incessantly teaze, and torment the horses of this country; it is, therefore, a barbarous practice to deprive them (especially here) of an appendage which bountiful nature has furnished them with as the best means in repelling the attacks of those troublesome visitors. When annoyed by swarms of flies, I have frequently seen them writhing and distorting the part of the tail left them, as if to reproach the cruelty of their new masters!

The Cape is no longer that cheap country as it has been formerly represented; and I may even venture to assert, that the ideas which are generally entertained of this part of the world, are far from being correct. The gay illusion passes from hand to hand,  
and

and the southern part of Africa is painted as a paradise.

Industry has been always held up to us as a prominent feature in the character of a Dutchman; but I am afraid this characteristic of the mother-country is not so well supported in Africa.

At a general survey, you would be inclined to pronounce the inhabitants indolent and inactive; or, at least, where exertions are discovered, they are comparatively trifling, and confined to narrow bounds. I shall not, however, be too forward in exhibiting a picture, which requires more leisure, a longer residence in the country, and better opportunities, than I yet can boast of. I shall cheerfully, with a strict and inviolable regard to truth, endeavour to amuse my friend from time to time with my Gleanings in the physical, moral, or intellectual world, and in the prosecution of this,

—“ Nothing extenuate,  
Nor aught set down in malice.

English manners begin more and more to  
prevail;

prevail ; but it seems the peculiar province of the fair sex to copy after the fashions of our country. The Cape ladies possess an elegance in their manners, and a degree of symmetry in their persons, conjoined to an agreeable expression of countenance, which cannot fail to attract our regard. No doubt that portion of levity and familiarity which has been ascribed to them, in a great measure arises from their intercourse with strangers, for, to the same intercourse, from the first establishment of the colony to the present time, their manners have assumed that mixed character which holds a kind of equipoise between Dutch composure, and French frivolity.

The plant that quickly arrives at maturity, is found in the same proportion to hasten to decay; this reasoning is found applicable to the Cape ladies. That beauty which only blows and blossoms, early dies and fades away. When this climacteric period approaches, they begin to assume that roundness of figure which evinces their original stamp. At some future period I shall probably

probably extend this part of my picture:—  
here I have given you only the outlines:  
—the varied colors, and requisite shades,  
shall in good time be furnished by

Yours, &c.



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*LETTER IV.*

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Cabos del Tormentos—Beautiful heaths between Table and False Bay—A diversity of charming flowers—Their vegetation quick—The flowers succeeded every month by different ones—Neat villas and rich plantations—A kind of sameness in the laying out of their pleasure-grounds—The cultivation of the vine chiefly attended to in the neighbourhood of the town—The sale of firewood another source of advantage—The slaves employed in conveying it to town—The silver-tree—The Scotch fir—The price of board and lodging, &c. increased since the establishment of the English—Butchers' meat cheap—Fish plenty—Table Bay frequented by whales in winter—The whale-fishery.

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**T**HE Portuguese were not far wrong in naming this promontory of Africa *Cabos del Tormentos*, (Cape of Plagues,) from the storms and tempests frequently encountered by their early navigators. I should be inclined to allot this part of the world as a proper residence for Eolus in the early ages  
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of heathen mythology; but when it opened a passage to the treasures of the east, these avaricious adventurers, in honor to the discovery, gave it the name it now bears.

In my walks I am delighted with the variety of beautiful heaths, that almost cover the extensive tract of flat country between Table and False Bay. The geranium is seen to grow almost from the sand, besides a diversity of the most charming flowers, '*that waste their sweetness in the desert air.*' I must confess myself ignorant of botany; and though, in my early days, I ventured to pursue its flowery path, yet, never did I experience till now the poignancy of regret, in having neglected so pleasing a study. The exhaustless stores of nature lie open before me, and I can only admire the beautiful collection, without being able to ascertain their several charms. But may we not enjoy pleasures of a superior kind, though ignorant of the minutiae of a science to which they may belong? It does not require a knowledge of anatomy to discover the fine proportions of a well-formed body; nor is it, in my opinion, absolutely essential to understand

stand botany, to derive pleasure from a well cultivated garden. June, July, and August, are the months at the Cape best suited to the excursions of the botanist, this being the rainy season. A succession of beautiful and charming flowers may be said to follow every shower; their vegetation is quick, and they in a manner start into existence. Every flower has its own particular season. When those of one month wither and disappear, the succeeding month produces others, differing in form, and variety of colors, from those that just preceded them; and this, perhaps, happens in almost the same spot.—This agreeable phenomenon I have more than once had occasion to observe.

When I cast my eyes around, I fancy myself in the depth of winter. The bleak and dreary appearance of the surrounding country, the naked oak, now shivering with every blast, form a kind of an unnatural group amidst the beauties I have been attempting to describe.

On the east side of the Table Mountain, and stretching along the bottom of it, a landscape of neat villas and rich plantations

is



is exhibited to the view. Myrtle and oak hedges inclose their vineyards. In the vicinity of their houses, a few large, full grown oaks are to be seen; but at this season they are stripped of their foliage, and while the naked trees proclaim the reign of winter, you have only to cast your eyes to the flowers on every side; and you will discover evident marks of a forward spring. Thus, my friend, spring and winter join hands, and become united. In the laying out of their pleasure-grounds, a kind of sameness prevails throughout, and the national character stands prominent,—every tree and shrub is so disposed as to form *a straight line*, from which the African Dutchman never deviates. In the immediate neighbourhood of the town, the cultivation of the vine, and the improvement of their gardens, from which they derive very considerable profits, occupy their chief attention.—Another source of advantage is in the sale of fire-wood. What the colonists call the Kreupel Boom, and seemingly adapted for no other use, is what they mostly cut down for this purpose. They employ their slaves in carrying it to town across

their shoulders;—probably, when I find a leisure moment, I shall call your attention to this unfortunate class of our fellow-creatures at the Cape.

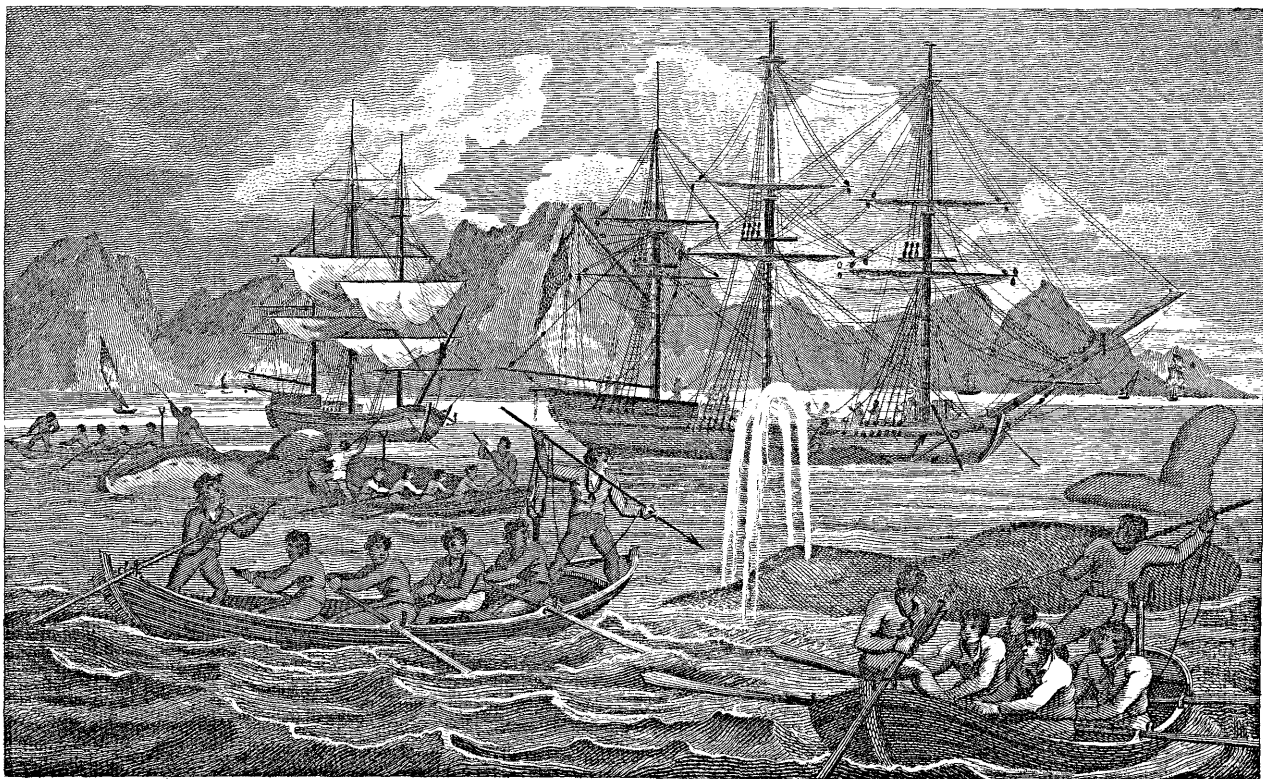
The silver-tree, which, I believe, is peculiar to the Cape, is so named from its beautiful white foliage; it is generally known by the name of the *Wittle Boom*. The finest plantations of these are to be seen in the vicinity of Constantia. I have remarked that the Scotch fir is here vigorous and healthy; and should the *Larix* be introduced, I make no doubt of its thriving equally as well. It may probably, at some future period, be thought not unworthy the consideration of government, (as a matter of colonial importance,) to bestow some attention to the plantation of trees here; to be guided in their operations by a proper encouragement to the planting of such only as are best suited to the soil and climate, and to pitch upon situations least exposed to those violent winds that prevail throughout the year. At present, great quantities of wood are conveyed in small coasting vessels from Mossil Bay to Cape town. An increasing

creasing population will occasion an increased consumption of so essential an article; and only by the adoption of timely measures, can every apprehension of future society be entirely removed.

It seems to be a natural consequence attending the settlement of the English in any part of the world, to advance materially the price of the produce of whatever country they reside in. At the Cape it has been peculiarly the case, and the Dutch settlers are ever ready to acknowledge it. Every article of living may be said to be tripled since their arrival. Board and lodging, which, while under the Dutch government, could be had for about a rix-dollar a day, can now hardly be procured for two;—every thing has suffered a proportional increase. The single article of butcher's meat is, indeed, cheap. Nature has also acted her part, by storing the surrounding bays with variety of excellent fish, such as the steen brash, Hottentot, and Roman fish; the latter, esteemed the most delicate of all, is caught only in False Bay.

In the winter months Table Bay is frequented by whales, and they sometimes approach very near to the shore. The fishery is rather on the decline; but is still carried on with considerable success. The average fishing of a season is about sixteen whales, and a few of them measure seventy feet in length. There is a house erected near the shore for cutting up and manufacturing the blubber. Eighteen leagers of oil, of about one hundred and fifty-four gallons each, is what is commonly produced from a good whale. A leager of oil generally fetches eighty rix-dollars.

I shall not apologize for the brevity of this letter, as my communications shall always be constant: the task of gleaning for a friend is particularly delightful; and as I mean soon to resume it, for the present I must bid adieu.



*Engraved from Drawings made from Nature by the Author.*

*Whale Fishing near the Cape.*

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*LETTER V.*

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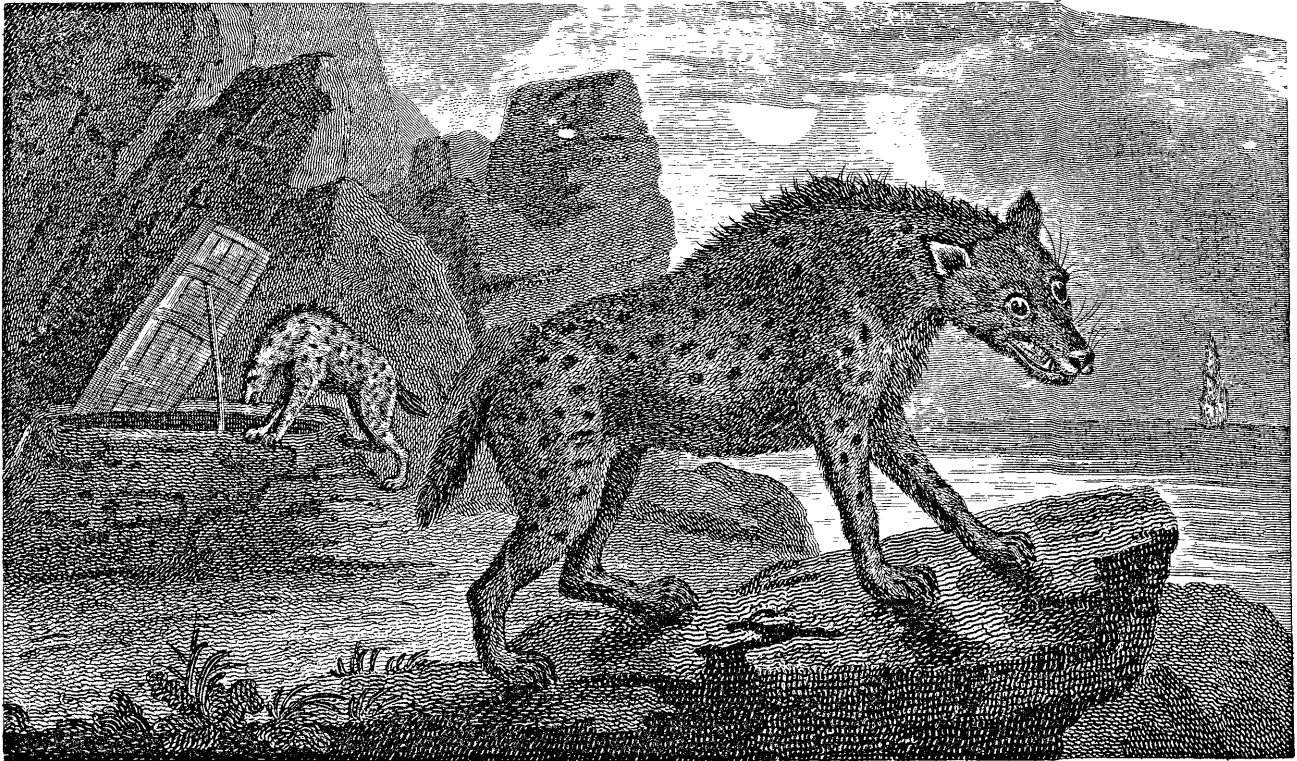
Visits from the hyena at night--Terror of the dogs at his approach--The farmer's snare for taking them alive--The uncommon strength, and chief residence of these animals--Reasons for expecting their total extirpation--The country favorable for sportsmen--The manner a colonist travels when on a shooting party--A farmer prefers oxen to horses--Remarkable birds--A society instituted for the encouragement of agriculture--A scarcity of corn--Remarks thereon.

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**I**T is from the east side of the Table Mountain that I again address my friend. Here we enjoy the cool, refreshing breeze wafted from the southern ocean. At night the hyena pays us a visit, and prowls around our camp. He gives notice of his approach by his hoarse and plaintive howlings. When the dogs find their enemy is at hand, they set up an hideous howling, expressive of their terror, and this mingled concert of dis-

cordant sounds banishes all sleep from the eye-lids. When the hyena boldly advances, the barking of the dogs suddenly ceases, and they remain in silent terror at his approach. The farmers in our neighbourhood lay a snare for taking them alive, which is a simple contrivance. A building of about six feet square, and as many feet in height, open at top, with a sliding door, is all that seems necessary for the purpose. The bait that attracts them is placed within, and fixed in such a manner, that on their attempting to devour it, the door falls down instantaneously, and thus they become prisoners. I have seen one caught in this manner;—it was the spotted wolf, which I believe to be the common hyena of the Cape. Our farmer called it the *Cape Bear*; indeed, the name seems sufficiently appropriate, for they bear no small resemblance to that animal in their form.

He mentioned at the same time, that the hyena possesses uncommon strength in its head, and that the most violent and repeated blows on that part could hardly deprive it of life. I have seen it attacked by an English  
bull-



*Engraved from drawings made from nature by the Author*

*Manner of Catching the Hyena.*

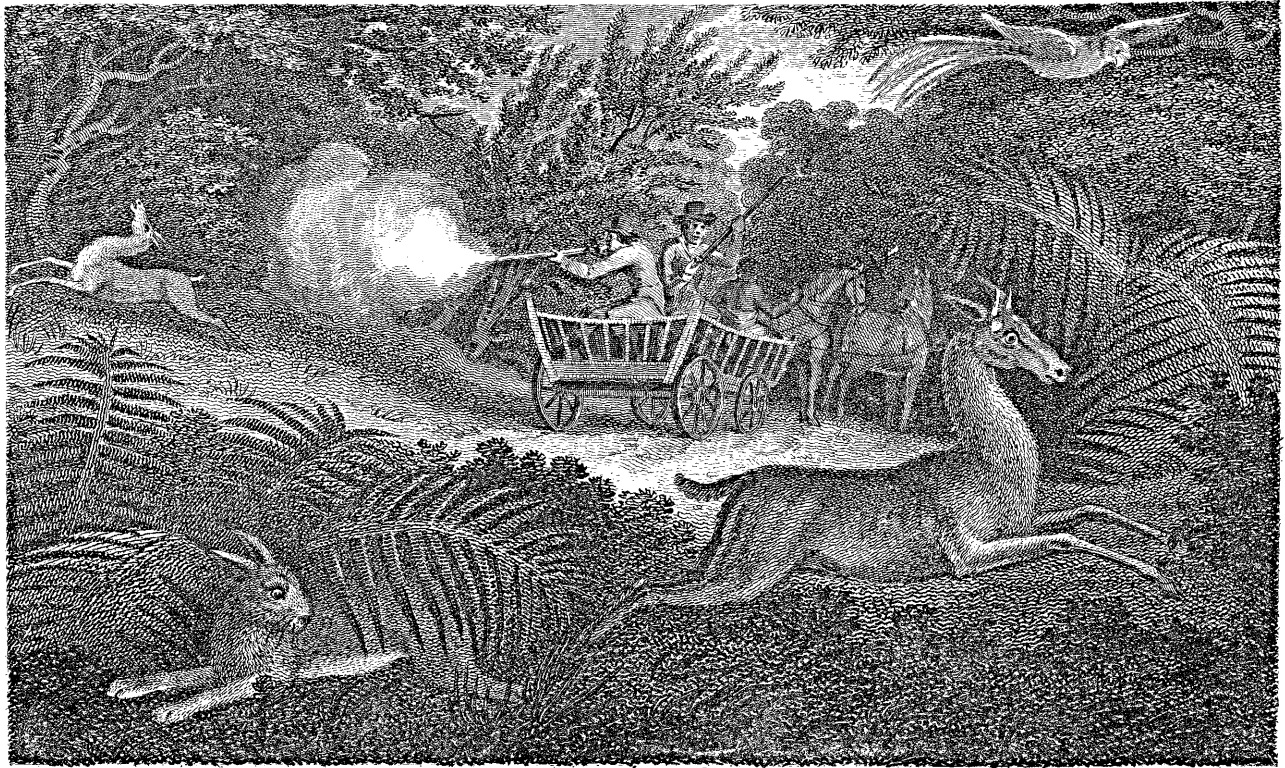


bull-dog with the most savage ferocity, but its hard, tough skin was impenetrable to the teeth of his opponent. The hyenas take up their abode amidst the rugged cliffs of the Table Mountain, and along that chain of mountains running in a southerly direction, till they terminate in what we may with propriety call Cape Point. At times they are met with by the traveller at night, on the road leading from *Wynberg* to Cape Town, but are never sufficiently daring to venture an attack. It is no uncommon thing to hear of their falling upon strayed oxen and horses, and when left alone in any sequestered spot, there remains little chance of their escaping.

These ravenous animals in the neighbourhood of the Cape, will, perhaps, at no very distant period, be totally extirpated, and only be met with in the more solitary regions of the interior. The tract of country they are now in, was doubtless at some former period frequented by the lion, tiger, and hippopotamus, and the rest of these savage quadrupeds that have receded from the approach of man. It is, perhaps, not

altogether fanciful to suppose, that traces may be discovered of their once inhabiting the country around us. At no great distance there is a district called Tigerberg, where, at present, the appearance of a tiger is somewhat rare; also, about eight miles hence, there is a lake that still retains the name of the *Sea-cow Lake*, though these huge monsters no longer disturb its repose.—The encroachments of man cause the savage tribe to recede.

The *Steen-bok* and *Grys-bok* spring from the thickets on every side. Jackalls and hares are also numerous, and this country is peculiarly favorable to the pursuits of the sportsman. When a colonist goes on a shooting party, he travels in a light cart made for the purpose, and he can thus carry along with him every conveniency suited to the journey. Seated in his waggon, with his gun by his side, he is driven along with rapidity. When the game is started, he stops his vehicle, and can then with coolness take his aim. Many of the farmers, when they have a mind to partake of this amusement, prefer oxen to horses, as the  
slow,



*Engraved from Drawings made from Nature by the Author.*

*Shooting the Steen Boks, in the Neighbourhood of the Cape.*

slow, deliberate pace of the former is, in their opinion, better calculated for ensuring sport, than the quick ambling step of the latter.

We have already been furnished with an accurate account of the ornithology of this part of Africa from the labours and researches of *Vaillant*. The feathered tribe here are more noted for variety and beauty of plumage, than for sweetness in their notes. The golden snipe of the Cape is a beautiful bird; it differs in nothing material from the common snipe, except in the spotted brightness of its wings. The paradise swallow has received a tint of colouring from the hand of nature, which the most exquisite pencil could hardly pourtray. It is a bird of passage, and commonly makes its appearance on the approach of the warm season. It seems fond of trees, and towards evening retires among the branches to repose during the night.

A society has lately been instituted in the colony for the encouragement of agriculture, and the arts and sciences; premiums have been offered for the amelioration of their

wines, and a more approved mode recommended. The grapes of the Cape are allowed to be equal to those of the southern countries of Europe, but in the happy art of making a proper use of this rich gift of nature, they are, indeed, miserably inferior to them.

The scarcity of corn which England has of late so severely felt, has with rapid strides visited us in Africa. What! methinks I hear my friend exclaim,—the Cape threatened with famine,—that magazine of plenty, the garden of the world! This is in fact the case, and sickly want begins to stare us in the face. We are already restricted to a ration of half a pound of bread per day, as if the whole colony had been ordered on a voyage of discovery to the south pole. During the time of the Dutch government, a failure in the crops was provided against, by storing up the superabundance of plentiful years. This wise policy has hitherto been neglected by the English, and the present scarcity speaks loudly in its favor. There is frequently a species of false alarm, so closely connected with a scarcity of corn in all countries,

tries, that we find it difficult to ascertain the fact, or the genuine grounds for erecting it, but once excited, it spreads like wildfire, and the whole herd of forestallers profit by the alarm. If, however, this necessary article cannot be procured, as usual, at a reasonable price, we may pronounce it *scarce*; but it should certainly be inquired into, whether providence has ordained such scarcity for the correction of national prodigality, or whether it proceeds from illegal monopoly; and if it can be discovered, (as I believe it was the case in England,) that heaven was bountiful, but man was avaricious, no punishment can be too great for those base wretches on earth who dare to withhold the blessings from above, and attribute to providence the distress which they themselves occasion!

My gleanings increase apace;—if they chance in the least to contribute to your amusement, or to pass agreeably away some of those tedious hours which few of us are without, then, indeed, I shall have attained my end. Methinks I hear the whispering voice of friendship bid me go on.—Yes,

amidst the noon-tide heat and evening shade,  
I shall cheerfully glean my way. May the  
winds prove propitious, and waft them safely  
to you. In the mean time,

Adieu.



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*LETTER VI.*

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Table Bay not a safe harbour—A curious phenomenon respecting it in some degree accounted for—The sublimity of an approaching south-east wind—Seldom or ever accompanied with rain—The weather succeeding it generally hot—Salubrity of the winds during summer—This season always in extremes—The evenings generally cool—The manner in which the Dutch exclude the heat from their rooms—Their buildings excel in decorations, and their towns in cleanliness—Stoves used in winter—Their propensity to parade.

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**T**HE south-east winds have set in, and Table Bay is again the rendezvous of the shipping; perhaps, at no season, can it strictly be said to be a secure and safe harbour. A violent south-east wind may at times endanger the shipping, by causing them to run foul of each other, or part from their moorings, and may drive them out to sea. At times you may perceive the north side of this



this bay agitated with a strong south-east wind; while the south side, or that next the town, seems hardly to feel its impression;— at the same moment a ship is seen going out with a fair wind on the north side, when, on the south side, another may be seen coming in enjoying a like advantage. This curious phenomenon may, in some degree, be accounted for. From the lower part of the Table Mountain, which terminates to the north-east in what is generally known by the name of *The Devil's Hill*, the south-east wind is first felt, and its approach announced by the curl upon the water in that part of the bay that is immediately opposite. This same wind, in its direction from the Indian ocean, is opposed by the promontory of the Cape, where, meeting with opposition, it directs its course along the intermediate bays on the west side, till it reaches Table Bay, where, acting thus partially, the wind seems to blow from the westward. It is only on the commencement of a south-east wind that this is to be observed, as the increasing violence of the wind soon overpowers the partial breeze from the westward.

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I have frequently with no small degree of pleasure contemplated the sublime picture of an approaching south-east wind,—marked its commencement and progress, and felt all the littleness of man in the grandeur of the scene! A thin, white vapour, seems at first to attach itself to the highest part of the mountain; it gradually becomes larger, and as it increases in size, the wind is proportionally violent. This congregated mass of vapour in a little time covers the summit of the mountain, and is big with the impending storm. No clouds obscure the sky, and the sun remains as bright as on the clearest day. This artillery of the mountain is quickly set in motion; the white fleecy clouds roll majestically along, and cling to the rugged cliffs. By degrees they acquire accumulated force, and are driven with impetuosity along the valley below. Columns of dust are whirled in the air, and the ships at anchor in the bay boldly bid defiance to the storm.

The south-east winds are seldom or never accompanied with rain; a drizzling, damp vapour is sometimes felt in the immediate neighbourhood

neighbourhood of the mountain. When this wind blows hot, it is extremely disagreeable, and apt to occasion languor, and depression of the animal spirits. At the season when they are most prevalent and violent, (that is from November to the month of February,) they continue to blow for three or four days without any intermission. They slacken about mid-day, but, towards evening, recommence with redoubled fury. The weather that succeeds the south-east wind is generally hot in the extreme.

Those winds that invariably blow during the summer season from the south-east, must essentially contribute to the salubrity of the climate, and are a powerful preservation of health. Nothing can withstand their violence, and all the noxious effluvia arising from the butchers' shops, and those pools which lie close to the doors of the inhabitants, are thereby happily dissipated.

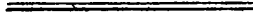
The summer weather of the Cape is always in extremes, either with violent winds, or scorching heat; but the evenings are generally cool, and delightfully serene. The rays of an ever bright sun, reflected from  
the

the craggy side of the Table Mountain, are here concentrated, and, together with the glare from the white houses, add greatly to the heat experienced in Cape Town. The Dutch exclude the external heat by darkening their rooms, and you always feel a refreshing coolness on entering them.

In external appearance, and fanciful decoration in their buildings, these people indeed excel; and few towns can boast of superior neatness and cleanliness. In winter they make use of stoves; not many, however, can boast of the comforts of a snug fire-side. In the arrangement of their furniture, perhaps, we may discover a propensity to parade and shew. Here I cannot help remarking, that when an Englishman travels, the strong prejudices of his country ever attend him; and, when in the course of his researches, any marked difference from the customs and manners of his country is perceived, he is but too apt to stigmatize it with the name of error, and consider it as an aberration from propriety.

To follow up my plan with assiduity and perseverance, so becoming the character I have assumed, shall be my utmost endeavour; while, with every sentiment of respect,

I am, &c.



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*LETTER VII.*

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Introduction to a Caffre chief—His hospitable reception—Description of his dress—The apparent gratitude and pleasure of his interpreter on recognizing a British officer, whose prisoner he had been—The peculiar shrill whistle of the Caffres—The chief's stature, features, &c.—Their present king—Necessity of establishing a friendly intercourse with them—Enmity of the Boors of the more distant parts of the colony—The Caffres made their dupes—Tranquillity restored by the vigorous measures of government—The most rebellious Boors imprisoned.

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**I** HAVE been highly gratified by having been introduced to the presence of a Caffre chief, who had accompanied a Dutch gentleman from Caffraria, in order to pay his respects to His Excellency the Governor of the Cape. He entered the room with a dignified step, and seemed neither startled nor abashed on being brought before a

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