

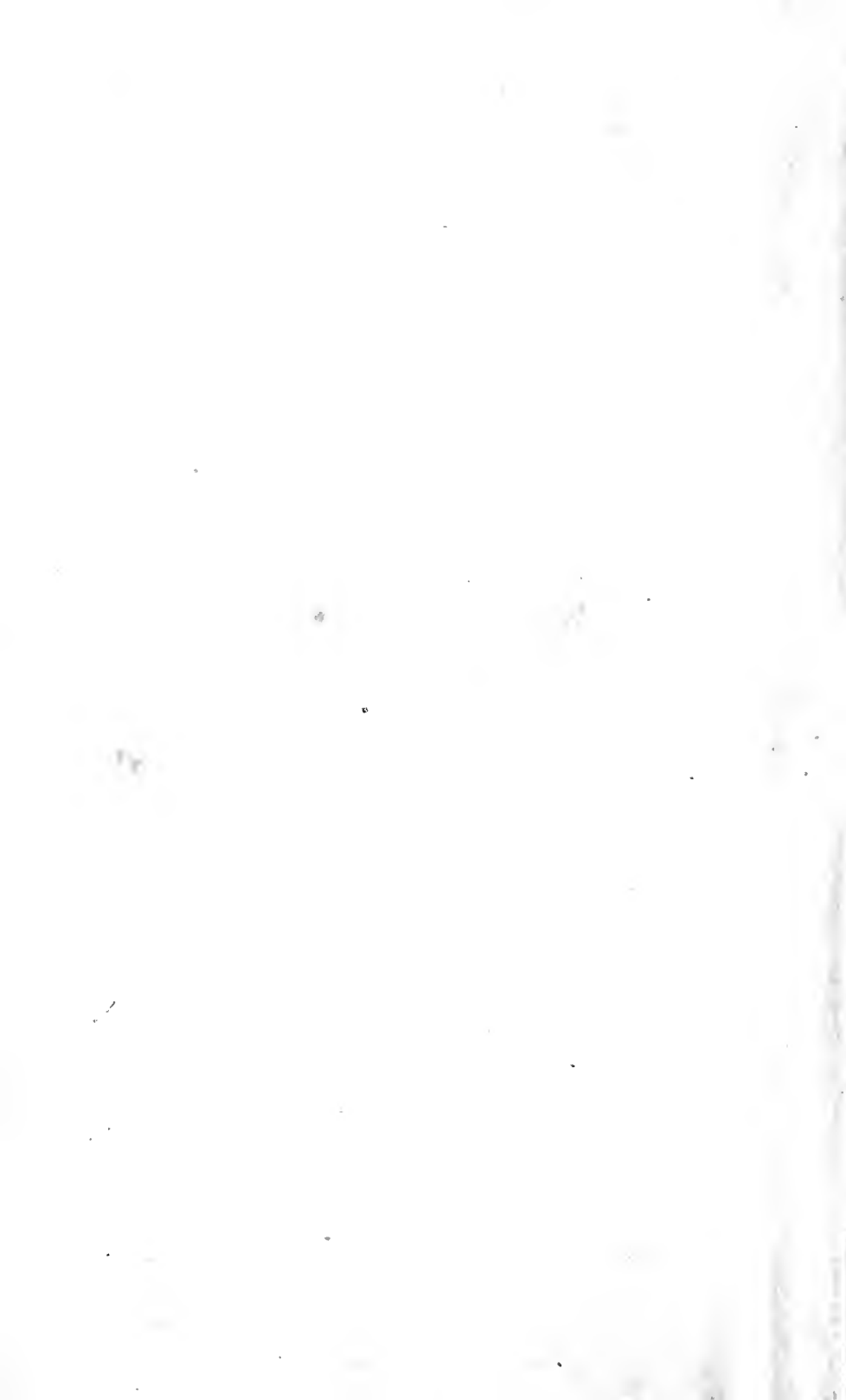
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LETTERS

FROM

P A R A G U A Y .

Printed by T. DAVISON, Whitefriars.



LETTERS
FROM
PARAGUAY:

DESCRIBING
THE SETTLEMENTS OF
MONTE VIDEO AND BUENOS AYRES;
THE PRESIDENCIES OF
RIOJA MINOR, NOMBRE DE DIOS, ST. MARY
AND ST. JOHN, &c. &c.

WITH
THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, &c.,
OF THE INHABITANTS.

*Written during a Residence of seventeen Months in that
Country.*

BY JOHN CONSTANSE DAVIE, Esq.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-RROW.

1805.



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D. 601

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE writer of the following letters, a gentleman of liberal education and considerable property, having been disappointed in his hopes of happiness with a beloved female, to relieve the distress of his mind, resolved to travel; and leaving this country for New York, on his arrival commenced a correspondence with his most intimate friend — Yorke, esq. of Taunton-Dean, in the county of Somerset, his half-brother. After remaining at New York a short time, he suddenly formed the resolution of embarking on a trading voyage to Botany Bay—with which these letters begin.

Soon after they had sailed, a tremendous storm obliged the captain to alter his course,

L. 1342

and make for the river Plata. They safely reached Monte Video, and afterwards went up to Buenos Ayres, to repair the vessel ; where Mr. Davie was seized with a dangerous disorder, which usually attacks Europeans upon their first landing in that country ; and the captain, having repaired his damages and completed his stock of provisions, was under the disagreeable necessity of leaving him in the care of the fathers of the convent of St. Dominic, by whose unremitting attention he recovered in about three months.

The jealousy of the Spanish government causing him, upon his recovery, to be confined to the limits of the convent, he, to obtain more liberty, took the dress of a novice ; and, in consequence, after a short time was permitted to visit in the town, and soon after to attend father Hernandez on a visit to some of the presidencies in the interior of the province of Paraguay, which were understood to be in an unsettled state : this enabled

him to make many observations, which he took every opportunity of communicating to his friend in this country, through his agent at New York, by means of the American captains trading to South America.

After his return to Buenos Ayres, it is certain that he went to Concepcion, in Chili; as he was last heard of from that place, in the year 1803: but whether he lost his life in any insurrection of the natives, or was imprisoned by the government in consequence of his correspondence being detected, is unknown.



LETTERS

FROM

P A R A G U A Y.

LETTER I.

New York, Nov. 1796.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU have known me too long as a whimsical wanderer to feel much surprise at a strange caprice which I have adopted since my last letter: I was then about to return to Philadelphia; but I have given up that idea, and am now actually employed in preparing for a voyage to Botany Bay. 'Botany Bay!' methinks I hear your wife exclaim; 'why, what an unaccountable vagary is this!' Very possibly it may be so; I am not at all disposed to dispute that point: but what then? I have been an unaccountable mortal from my cradle, therefore no absurdity I am

guilty of should be wondered at. I am resolved, God willing, to take a trip to New South Wales, on purpose to view a place of which I have heard and read so much not only in *Old* England but in New.

About three weeks since I chanced to meet at doctor Jones's an old schoolmaster of ours. You may remember William H——, of N——, nephew to the celebrated H—— of the congress. This young man left his native country about five years ago to settle here, under the protection of his uncle, who is an austere methodical kind of man, and very much attached to money. William had no sooner arrived at New York, than the old gentleman proposed sending him as supercargo on board one of his vessels to Port Jackson, between which place and this country there is now a constant communication by the merchants here sending thither every kind of article the colony may be supposed to stand in need of. When the cargo is disposed of, they proceed to the East Indies, and freight back with Asiatic produce. All this turns to a good account in the sum total, and is therefore extremely well adapted to the multiplying geniuses of the Americans, whose souls seem sensible of nothing but the pursuit of gain.

Young H—— has been three voyages to Port Jackson, the profits of which have more than an-

swered his uncle's expectations. He represents this settlement of ours in so peculiar a point of view, that I cannot resist the temptation I feel of going thither with him to examine into the state of affairs personally. I shall therefore take my passage in the brig *Ann and Sarah*, bound from hence to Sydney Cove, where I intend to remain until my thirst for novelty is gratified; whither I shall then direct my wandering steps Heaven only knows.

H—— goes this voyage as captain; so that, in him, I may rely upon having a valuable and intelligent companion.

You shall hear from me again before I quit the bold and majestic scenery of these northern regions, where every thing is gigantic save the ideas of the men and women, whose contracted intellects have more than once excited my indignation if not contempt. It seems to me, as if Nature, when forming this nether world, had exhausted all her treasures upon the inanimate part of the creation, and consequently had been obliged to cobble up the inhabitants out of what shreds she had remaining; but, perhaps, when the states are once established, rich and powerful, the ideas of the Columbrians may expand. Then philosophers, astronomers, metaphysicians, and all the votaries of art and science, may spring up with in-

tellects as capacious and profound as this overgrown country seems to demand, that all the component parts may be in unison. This is

‘ A consummation devoutly to be wished,’

By, yours, &c. &c.

LETTER II.

New York, Nov. 1796.

I VERILY believe that in the mind of an American the love of gain supersedes every other consideration; they estimate the loss of time by the same ratio that a Jew merchant counts grains and carats when valuing the finest diamonds. How far this may be commendable I know not, but certain I am that their ideas and mine differ most surprisingly: not that I am by any means an advocate for a waste of time; I regard it in as precious a light as the New Yorkist, but for a very opposite purpose. I cannot possibly conceive how any man, possessing the divine light of reason, can rise with the dawn, apply himself instantly to work, and continue unremittingly at it until the day closes, except during the short intervals dedicated to breakfast, dinner, and supper, which are here hurried over as though each individual's eternal welfare depended on his dispatching his meals with more expedition than his neighbour; and, in all the common concerns of life, in every different class of people, the same economy is observed. No luxuries, either in eating or clothing, are here

introduced, even in the houses of the most opulent: the food is all plain, but wholesome; and, to speak in Jack Barker's phrase, 'No belly-cheating kickshaws are introduced to tantalise the appetite;' these honest members of the commonwealth, ever emersed in business, require something more substantial. Neither is their attire more splendid than their diet. The females here are all of that delectable class distinguished in England by the name of good housewives. The domestic concerns of the house are not, as with us in most families of fortune, committed to the management of servants, to regulate their masters' or mistresses' property as shall best suit their own convenience; every woman of American education personally inspects her own habitation (sometimes perhaps her acquaintances' also), and attends to the cooking, washing, and other important matters of the like description. No one is ashamed, however exalted her station, of being seen in a plain morning cap, with a coarse apron before her, instructing an ignorant servant in her duty; and these directions are given with such promptitude and exactness, that few if any errors can arise, but from a wilful misapprehension: thus every thing is executed with a neatness and dispatch that would astonish a modern servant on your side the water. I have often during my frequent visits to M—— noticed

his lady, in the midst of seven or eight servants, giving orders how such a room should be white-washed, or such a batch of bread should be baked, and even in what manner a sick horse should be physiced. I came in one day and found her making a mop, to shew a girl she had from Boston how it ought to be done, observing at the same time to me that she could not imagine how any person could exist so intolerably stupid as not to know how to make so simple an article. I took shame to myself at her remark; and, by the change of my countenance, she should plainly perceive I was equally ignorant and surprised at this elegant female accomplishment, for in fact it was a piece of frugality I really had no conception of; but we are never too wise to learn, and I could not help calling to mind the story of the basket-maker. Such is the force of habit formed by an American education.

From saving of money to getting it is but an easy gradation: M—— is rapidly acquiring an immense fortune by sending out several small vessels laden with European goods to the East Indies, where he finds a certain and quick return. I am told by H——, that he can greatly undersell the British merchants trading thither, even at their own settlements, for a special reason:—he builds his own vessels, victuals them, and mans them at

one-third of the expence incurred by our people, every necessary article for naval architecture being contained within the limits of this enterprising country: but the principal advantage of this traffic arises from its not being clogged in India with any civil or military establishments, to maintain which must of necessity take from the British traders an immense revenue.

This American speculation appears to be daily increasing in a manner that must in a very short time create a considerable degree of jealousy and alarm in our British merchants, who cannot be too much on their guard against the dangerous consequences of such proceedings: not the most trivial advantage is here lost for want of foresight in the state or exertion in individuals, which is, I must own, most truly commendable; and the more I consider the actions of these people, the more I admire and wonder at their industry and perseverance, which is now indeed become habitual, I had almost said involuntary.

Surely there must be something singularly patriotic in the minds of those men who can, for the sake of securing the prospect of riches and splendour to their successors, dedicate the whole of their own lives to toil and trouble; only anticipating the period when, in the hands of their posterity, their country shall arrive at such a height

of eminence and glory as shall enable her to hold the rod of power over surrounding nations, and dictate laws in every quarter of the globe, as England—envied England—does at present.

But why does gain narrow up and trammel the genial effusions of the soul, which in itself is free and liberal? This is a question I have frequently asked myself, but never yet could frame a satisfactory answer. ‘It will be time enough,’ says an American, ‘to be profuse’—for with them there is no distinction between liberality and profusion—‘when our state is rich, and our children affluent: a pound turned in trade, becomes two; when spent in pleasure, is annihilated.’

I hear this, and am abashed. Their impressive manner of silencing a cavilist is laconically convincing; there is no room for reply when every thing around bears testimony to the truth of the assertion. Adieu.

LETTER III.

New York, Nov. 1796.

I DINED yesterday with Mr. H——, at whose house I was introduced to three emigrants from the North of Ireland; two of them were well-informed intelligent men, the other a mere matter-of-fact man, who, with his family, chose to leave his native country because his friends did so, and he had heard besides that a prudent man could do no otherwise than well in America. They all hope to find on the banks of the Ohio more happiness and wealth than they have ever experienced or could ever expect at home. How these expectations will be realised time must shew; for mine own part I think the British government highly to blame in suffering so many useful members of society to leave their mother country, where, if properly encouraged, they might render most essential service to the community at large. Here they meet with a ready welcome, and purchase ground at a cheap rate, but then it is with all its incumbrances of wood, bog, and quagmire, the whole of which they are compelled by the nature of things to clear before they can hope to

sow, build, or establish manufactories; and if so many individuals must have recourse to the culture of land as the means of independence, why are they not employed on the now useless acres of Old England and her sister kingdom? There are hundreds of enterprising spirits, who, with a little encouragement, would gladly transform the neglected wilds of Ireland into proper cultivated farms, and be content to wait with patience the reward of their industry. Why do not those who hold the reins of power in Britain exert themselves in the most effectual manner to check the dangerous increase of emigration? It surely must be more for the interest of every well-organised and wealthy monarchy to keep as many of its subjects at home as possible; and that not by merely depriving them of the power of quitting their country, but by furnishing them with the means of continuing in it as good subjects ought: a trifling assistance to an active intelligent mind will be received with gratitude, and improved with alacrity. The peasant who labours with hope for his companion lies down at night on a hard bed with pleasure; his sleep is sweetly refreshing, and he rises at the dawn to renew his daily toil with equal vigour and application, joyfully anticipating the moment when he shall receive the well-earned reward of his exertions. This hypothesis you

have seen realised on your own estate in Devonshire; and what advantages do you not now derive from the improvements on the once barren farms let to your father's old tenants!—it is true they were content to grovel on in the same dull unimproving routine pursued by their predecessors, and because large tracts of land had remained for ages waste, it was necessary that they should remain so still—‘no good could possibly arise from speculating innovations.’ I cannot keep my temper when I reflect on such despicable meanness of intellect: but for *speculation*, this immense continent from which I am now writing might never have been discovered; and but for *innovation*, whence would have arisen that happy code of laws on which the heart of every Englishman dwells with enthusiastic pride? The same mode of reasoning, my friend, will hold good with respect to small matters; and I was happy to see you adopt a more enlightened plan: by letting your estates at low rents, upon condition the whole of the waste land was improved and cultivated, you have the pleasure of seeing from the windows of your library acres heretofore a mere green desert now yearly crowned with the blessings of a plentiful harvest, and daily improving both in look and value. Now I am of opinion, that were the nobility of Ireland, and others of large landed property, to follow your

example, there would be few or no emigrations thence, nor would rebellion raise so often its dreadful and destructive head. No man likes to sow where he is not certain he shall reap in safety; nor can the miserable starving cottager emerge from his poverty unless he first receive assistance from those above him: neither should this assistance be considered as a gift, since the benefactor himself ultimately enjoys the benefits arising from such a mode of conduct; for, at the expiration of a few years, he finds his estates return to him, not in a barren unproductive state as when he let them, but exhibiting in every different form the beneficial effects of agricultural improvement; and every succeeding proprietor feels the blessing in a more extensive degree. His grace of Bridgewater's canal is a most surprising proof of the essential service that may be rendered to the community at large, and ages yet unborn, by a temporary sacrifice on the part of a liberal-minded enterprising individual. But it is useless for a person of moderate fortune to attempt this universal reformation; for if a man has not property sufficient to complete his improvements when begun, the whole scheme had better at first be abandoned. I have therefore made it an invariable rule never to project any plan or assist any object unless I could do it altogether effectually.

But to return to the Irish emigrants, from whom I have made a long digression, if indeed it deserves that name.—These gentlemen make but a very unfavourable report of the present state of Ireland ; it seems to me a devoted country, doomed to be a scene of anarchy and bloodshed : the inhabitants appear to be composed of none but restless and ungovernable spirits, whom nothing (while in their present state) but coercive measures can restrain. If those in whose hands the wealth of Ireland is disposed still persist in the erring line of conduct they have hitherto adopted towards their poor dependants, it would be much better I think for the government of England to interfere, and send thither a large colony of enterprising Englishmen under the protection of a strong armed force, and bring away in their stead a much larger number of the wild Irish, and transplant them to some of our settlements abroad, there to make them a free people with leave to act as they please, but give them at the same time the means of acting well, and improving their desperate fortunes by the cultivation of the place they are taken to. Why not, as we are on such friendly terms with the Turks, obtain the consent of the Ottoman Porte to plant a colony on the fruitful but neglected isle of Candia, where, without derogating in the least from their native pride, they might with very moderate

exertions grow independent, and in my opinion happy. This political proceeding would I am persuaded in a few years tend to the mutual advantage of both nations. The French at some not very distant period will need a powerful check in the Levant, if the rumours here circulated are to be regarded. They are indeed a nation capable of attempting any atrocity, in violation of every law divine and human. They certainly mean to wrest if possible Ireland from England, but I trust they will meet in all their attempts with the disappointment they so well deserve. And should they even succeed in their intentions to assist the rebels, I doubt the poor infatuated Irish would but too soon find they had only exchanged an indifferent master for the worst the modern world affords. Rapine and plunder have hitherto been the characteristics of the French revolutionary armies, nor do their generals strive to check the disgraceful impulse: bad indeed must that body of men be, who know no right but that given by the sword, and acknowledge no laws but what themselves impose. If they do not speedily meet with a repulse from England, I doubt if any other nation will be competent to make head against them; and woe to the states of the world should the balancè of power ever remain with France, whose

smile is like the eye of a serpent, and whose friendship is the tear of the hyena.

But you will perhaps ask if I have not seen any Scotch emigrants as well as Irish : indeed I have not, though I have heard of many. I do not wonder at *their* leaving their native place, for few I believe that could help themselves would stay to till the ground in Scotland, where nothing among the Highlands appears but barren unimprovable rocks that mock the toil of the labourer. Their poverty arises from the niggardliness of nature in withholding from them a sufficient share of those blessings which their indefatigable industry would speedily augment. But I must confess that of all people in the world the Scotch are best calculated to thrive in America ;—the same love of gain, economy in expence, horror of every species of liberal charity or amusement, and ardent anxiety for the future welfare of the state and their posterity, are qualities of which they may boast an equal portion with the already-established colonists. But I will still persist in saying, that the greater part of the families that come hither might be better employed at home in our different manufactures, which are, as you observed in your last, daily and hourly extending the vast increase of commerce which our country has acquired

during this war, must of course require an immense number of additional hands; and I must subscribe to the general and almost hackneyed opinion, that were the fisheries of Scotland more liberally encouraged not a man of them would leave his native country, but stay and enjoy the fruits of his labour at home: and where can there be a finer field for this kind of speculation than in Scotland, where what has been denied them in fertility of land has been trebly repaid by the fecundity of the sea? and if government did but reflect on the many advantages it might derive from a large body of hardy fishermen well organised and well supported, I do not think our ministers would hesitate long to establish upon a royal foundation this extensive branch of commerce, instead of letting it remain, as it now does, in the hands of a few mercenary individuals, who naturally enough prefer private emolument to public good. Were a royal fishery to be instituted, what a noble body of seamen would our sovereign have to depend upon in all cases of emergency! —seamen trained and competent to traverse any ocean: for certain I am the mariner who has for any length of time navigated the northern seas of Britain is sufficiently skilled to encounter the most hazardous maritime expedition.

I am encouraged in these sentiments by a long

conversation I have had this morning with a captain Woollett, of Newcastle upon Tyne: he is commander of the brig Nancy of that port, and arrived here about ten days since. He laments equally with me the progress and probable effects of the dangerous spirit of emigration. Does war, my dear friend, so totally engross the minds of ministers that they are wholly unmindful of this alarming evil? Surely if the same encouragement were given to the northern fishermen as is bestowed upon the linen manufactories, a short time would prove it of more real advantage to the country at large than any branch of commerce whatever; and among the many millions annually subscribed surely a small portion might, without the least injury to the state revenue, be appropriated to this great and valuable purpose, could but a clear and demonstrative estimate of its great utility be laid before his majesty, who has ever been the first monarch in the world for promoting trade and agriculture, and for consulting the general good of his subjects.

My political reveries are interrupted by a message from my friend B——. I must attend him for the present; therefore—Adieu!

LETTER IV.

New York, Nov. 1796.

IT is really astonishing what crowds of shipping are daily issuing from every port in the United States employed in traffic between the different hostile powers; and now the trade of Holland is suspended it makes surprisingly in favour of the Americans, who, ever intent upon improving the smallest opportunity, will fail not to enrich themselves on the overthrow of the Dutch republic; for I cannot possibly consider it in any other light, the French being a people not easily got rid of where they have once obtained a footing, as long as they can, by finesse or compulsion, impose their plausible plans on their deceived allies. How such a slow, crafty, and penurious people as the Batavians could suffer themselves to be overreached by the impetuous and volatile French is to me, and many thousand others, a matter of the greatest amazement: but nations, whether ruled by kings or governed by democratic power, have their rise, their zenith, and their fall. The Dutch for the space of a century gave laws to every maritime power in the world, excepting in some measure the

English. The commercial concerns of the Hollanders were marked with the most brutal tyranny, and not a ship returned laden from the East but its cargo was stained with the blood of the innocent. They have had their day; and, if Heaven continue to smile on the British arms, the manes of our suffering countrymen and natives will be amply avenged on the heads of their perfidious oppressors, if we might venture to speculate on probable events: for surely so dissimilar a union as that of France with Holland can never continue long; and then woe to the grasping schemes of the plodding Batavian! for in proportion as they sink in the great scale of commercial policy so will the Americans rise. They are in many respects the exact counterpart of the Hollanders: the advantages of commerce alone engross all their thoughts and actions; and as the Phœnicians were of old so will the Americans in a short time be, should the war continue long, which, from existing circumstances, appears more than probable.

I am often entertained with the speculating views of your old friend B——, who is and ever was fertile and indefatigable in projecting plans for the general good; and no circumstance, I think, would give him greater pleasure than to hear that the proposed treaty between Great Britain and the

United States was completed ; and he indulges his fancy in the boldest flights that ever entered the mind of man whenever the wished-for event shall take place. I am to dine with him to-morrow with a large political party in Beak-street, previous to my leaving this place ; to which I think I never shall be disposed to return, unless it be to commence merchant. Adieu !

LETTER V.

New York.

EVERY thing is ready for my departure, and I am now going to take leave of my valued friend doctor Dingley, whom I much fear I shall never see again : he having relinquished the idea of visiting England, as he designed some few months since ; and it must be next to a miracle that should ever induce me to revisit America. Time, I trust, will give more stability to my wanderings. When I first declared my intention of going with H—— to Port Jackson, the good folks here seemed to consider me as little better than a lunatic ; but when they found I persisted in my resolution they with one consent began to importune me to take with me some articles for barter or sale upon my arrival in New South Wales, at the same time laying down to me, in the most circumstantial manner, the advantages I should derive from such proceeding. And when, in reply, I objected my total ignorance of all mercantile concerns, and the impropriety of incumbering myself with merchandise of which I knew not how to dispose, they one and all assured me that I should

find in H—— an excellent factor, and one who would be happy to instruct me during the voyage in every particular of commercial mystery; for it is a pity they say to let slip so fair an opportunity of uniting profit with pleasure, and turning money to advantage, at the same time that I gratify my inordinate desire of roving. All this I cannot but allow; and really, my friend, I begin to think there must be some charm in acquiring money, which it is time I should be acquainted with.

The questions and advice of these people display their real character better than volumes of description, and convince me they are an indefatigable interested generation, eternally on the watch for gain, and to make themselves well acquainted with every one's concerns. I cannot imagine from whence their inquisitiveness springs, unless from a desire to learn if by any means they can be of service to you, and by so doing serve themselves. But, be that as it may, I am willing to regard them as a very industrious good sort of people, who from a principle of fellow-feeling are anxious to instruct one in the best method of making the most of every thing: and every rising state should, in my opinion, invariably pursue the same maxim; for that is the way to render themselves not only rich, but competent to enforce respect from surrounding nations.

More from a wish to avoid an affectation of independence than any real inclination, I have yielded to the advice of my money-making neighbours, and purchased from our friend B—— a quantity of articles, for which, he says, I shall receive a very good return. How that may prove I neither know nor care: it is sufficient for me that I have given pleasure to this indefatigable man, who has bustled about in my behalf with the greatest alacrity, and given the most ample instructions to H——, who is to be my factor.

But what, you will ask, is the nature of the merchandise by which I am to gain a fortune? Why thus it is, my friend: When a man commences trafficker he should first carefully consider the circumstances of those he intends to trade with. He should neither carry wine to Constantinople nor furs to Seringapatam, nor yet should he turn goldsmith or wholesale mercer at Port Jackson. I have therefore—wisely appreciating the wealth and respectability of those to whom I am going—provided myself with a sufficient portion of old clothes. Old clothes! you cry, with a stare of surprise and incredulity—Old clothes! at the same time spelling the words, as if to convince yourself of their identity. Yes, sir; and no laughing matter either. From a troublesome custom, which the present generation is hardly enlightened enough

to shake off, most people have an ugly prejudice that they must cover their nakedness, though even in a new colony; and if a man will be dressed in the fashion of his country, and cannot afford new and fashionable raiment, he must be content, though even a settler of New South Wales, with the left-off finery of his betters: and upon this mode of reasoning I have formed my cargo. But, jesting apart, I assure you it is a fact; our merchants here, who have experienced it, say this kind of lading turns to very good account. Most of my wares are English. B—— has received a large quantity of second-hand clothes from London, in exchange for a cargo of wheat; and in one of the bales, which was opened for inspection at my request, I was fool enough to persuade myself I recognised a coat once worn on gala-days by yourself during our tour through Ireland, and is the same the mischievous Kitty L—— mutilated so ingeniously, for the sake of seeing how an Englishman looked with his sleeves slashed *à l'Espagnole*. You see how a man with a long memory may recollect an old acquaintance even across the Atlantic.

I am to see, by this voyage, that money expended in articles which we throw aside in England as un-serviceable makes—according to American calculation—cent per cent.

But I must hasten to conclude. The wind is fa-

yourable for our departure, previous to which I have many friendly people to take leave of. It will be some months, I suppose, before you hear from me again. The passage from hence to Port Jackson will not afford any kind of incidents to amuse you: there are seldom any circumstances occur at sea but what are amusing to sailors only. I need not say that I shall embrace the first opportunity that offers to inform you of my situation; for I know well enough that in whatever corner of the world I dispose of myself your friendship will be anxious for my welfare.

God bless you! Commend me to all whom you think I have any regard for. But, for the sake of my reputation with the ladies, I beseech you do not let any of our female acquaintance know that I am turned dealer in rags.

Yours, sincerely.

LETTER VI.

*Monte Video, on the banks of
La Plata, Jan. 1797.*

IF I surprised you in my last with the intelligence of my new occupation, how shall I astonish you when you perceive from whence this is dated! but it will serve to confirm the old proverb, 'What man appoints, God disappoints.' When I closed my last I was fully persuaded my next letter would be dated from the coast of New South Wales; but I was fated to return to America, though not that part of it I had last inhabited. I shall most assuredly commence fatalist; for many events of my life, and this not the least, have induced me at times to think that a superior power guides and directs every action and design of man: or in default of this position I shall believe in the power of inferior agents, who are permitted, for some great and wise purpose, to counteract and subvert the intentions of individuals. This latter hypothesis seems most agreeable to my ideas of the Divinity, but I doubt whether it will appear so to you.

The morning after my last communication to

you I went on board the Anne and Sarah, bound to Port Jackson, with a determined resolution to remain there for some months, in order to examine into the climate, soil, produce, and colonial improvements, of the island of New Holland, if island it may be called. But instead of completing my design—not to mention my commencing trader, which might of itself have engrossed a great part of my time, and perhaps even turned my ideas into a new channel—my whole arrangement was defeated by a violent hurricane, which succeeded a tedious calm of six-and-thirty hours. It overtook us about six weeks after our departure from New York, a short distance beyond the latitude of Rio Janeiro in Brazil. I had been for several days much indisposed, and during the calm particularly uneasy; but the fury of the wind soon created ideas more disagreeable even than sickness. I have been in many storms at sea, but never in one so alarming as this: we were borne over the surface of the water with a dreadful rapidity; now elevated as if to pierce the clouds that lowered on our heads, and now again precipitated into an abyss that seemed to threaten instant annihilation. My illness prevented my being of any essential service, but every man on board was obliged to exert himself for the general safety. For two days we ran as the wind directed us: on

the evening of the second the vessel sprung her bowsprit, and in less than an hour carried away her foretopmast, and to add to our distress, great part of our water casks had been staved. In this emergency captain H—— called a council of all the people on board, which consisted, besides himself, of a supercargo, three passengers, a mate, five seamen, and two boys; when, after a short deliberation respecting the latitude we were in, it was determined to make the best of our way for the isle of St. Catherine's. Thither we accordingly attempted to steer our course; but the wind still continuing to rage with unabating violence we were soon, in spite of every exertion, driven too far south to hope to gain that hospitable asylum: a second council was therefore summoned, the result of which was, that, as it was impossible in our shattered state to think of reaching the Cape, we had no alternative but to proceed immediately for the great river La Plata, and endeavour, if possible, to gain Buenos Ayres, there to repair our damage, and recruit our stock of water and provisions, the greater part of which had been materially injured.

This was no sooner decided on than put in practice. The wind, happily for us, a little subsided; and we steered for the largest river in the

world, which we were fortunate enough to reach without any fresh disaster.

The accounts which we read of the Plata, so far from being exaggerated, barely convey an adequate idea of its immensity; though I now find that its depth is by no means proportioned to its length and breadth. When we arrived at the mouth of the river—of which if I had not been told I should never have imagined it—I began to thank God that our perils were over; but I soon found that new ones awaited us, owing to the vast banks of sand dispersed in every direction. At our entrance, under something more than a brisk gale, it was as much as all hands could do to steer the vessel clear of a most dangerous shoal called the English bank, a place as much dreaded in those parts as the rocks of Scilly or the Goodwin Sands in our vicinity; and we had scarcely passed it in safety when we struck upon a smaller one, and thus we continued, for want of a pilot, to run off one sand and on another, shaking, jumbling, working and cursing, for near thirty leagues, with boats ahead sounding the whole of the course which we had to traverse before we could reach a place where we could hope for any assistance: however, by the help of a fresh breeze and constant watching, we made shift in four days to anchor in this

harbour. Monte Video is the first port of safety in this wonderful river : it is situated at the foot of a conical mountain of a stupendous height, which serves as a land-mark, for another mountain there is not in a vast tract of country, many hundred miles in extent; and the river, even here, is so wide as to appear to an inexperienced person more in the resemblance of a sea.

We found in this port two Portuguese merchant-vessels, three French, and two privateers; which last had, like ourselves, been forced in by stress of weather. On a signal being made by our captain, the commander of the fort sent off a boat with three Spaniards in her to examine our papers; with which being satisfied, we were permitted to enter the harbour, and we immediately received every necessary assistance. It was evening when we arrived; and the next morning captain H—— and we three passengers went ashore. Myself being an Englishman, and presently known as such, I observed an eye of suspicion glance on me which way soever I turned myself. But this I cared not for; being resolved, since my destiny had landed me in Spanish America, to see as much of their town as I possibly could: though, God knows, besides the river and the mountain there is but little to excite a traveller's curiosity. The fort seems to be the only object on which any attention has been

bestowed ; it is large, handsomely built, and consists of four bastions, on which are apparently very good brass cannon. Another bastion is begun on the land-side, and when that is finished the fosse is to be extended a much longer way than at present on terra firma. I have not much opinion of the strength of this fort, or the force that might be collected to withstand any determined attack of the British arms. It may, and I doubt not would, resist any effort of the Portuguese or native Indians ; but they would not find it so easy a matter to repulse a select body of English soldiers and sailors, determined upon conquest.

The church is the next principal building ; it is large and clean, but has nothing remarkable about it: the houses, many of which lie scattered about in a very irregular manner, with very pleasing gardens and little plantations attached to them, are all low and meanly built, very few being higher than the ground floor ; but their tiled tops, with the green trees waving over them, have, taken altogether, rather a pretty effect.

The country round has nothing interesting, being, I am told, one continued plain every way for many hundreds of miles ; and must, therefore, appear with peculiar disadvantage to me, who have been so long accustomed to the rising hills and majestic mountains of the northern continent :

and for Monte Video itself, I can compare it to nothing but a solitary rock in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In native woods, too, they are greatly deficient; almost every tree and shrub is of artificial culture: and though the prospect on every side is luxuriantly beautiful in the humble walks and vegetation, yet the eye seeks in vain for the thick, dark, waving forests, which in North America are regarded but as natural evils to obstruct the labour of the industrious agriculturist, but which here would be valued alike for their novelty and beauty, and what is more for their utility, without being subject to the destroying axe, or more destructive firebrand. The Spaniards are not fond enough of agriculture to deprive themselves of shade; on the contrary, they have laboured to the best of their abilities to supply this great natural defect: nor have they laboured in vain, so favourable is this soil to the hand of cultivation; and groves of almost every kind of tree or shrub that could be imported now nod at one another in a very pleasing, though not very picturesque, manner; at least it appears so to my prejudiced taste. Another traveller might think and write widely different; but what others think of a scene or a subject never has nor ever will influence my pen.

I am no draftsman; but I have taken a view of

Monte Video from the most favourable spot I could select, and remit it for your edification. I am only sorry the subject is not more engaging.

Captain H—— requested permission to lodge us in the house of a wine-merchant whom he had known at the Canaries, which place his friend left about two years since, to settle at Monte Video. The request was granted, and I was received with great hospitality. My not understanding the Spanish language was rather an awkward circumstance: but the Canarian, though he did not understand English, had a smattering of French, and contrived to make us comprehend that we should all be treated as part of his family. He has a wife, and two daughters, sprightly lasses both: but our communication is all in dumb shew; very agreeable though, for all that.

We had not been settled above an hour when an order came for the three passengers to attend the governor. We immediately complied, and were conducted thither by a guard of one subaltern and six soldiers, all very slovenly accoutred, and distinguished by nothing but the extraordinary length of their swords and whiskers, and a most ludicrous affectation of majestic gravity. We found the governor, don Blas D'Hinojosa, taking a refreshment of fruit and coffee, attended by two negroes: he arose as we entered, and, slightly

bowing in a very stately manner, immediately re-seated himself, and gave some orders to one of the slaves, who left the apartment; and presently returned with two Spanish gentlemen and an officer very splendidly dressed, who, I observed, regarded me, during the whole time I remained in the apartment, with a stern and scrutinising eye. After a short conversation with the governor, one of the gentlemen, in tolerable English, asked us several questions; as, who we were—whither we were going when we left New York—and what had occasioned our arrival at Monte Video. As the discourse was chiefly addressed to me, I answered for myself and companions, who were both New Yorkists, and going on a voyage of speculation to Port Jackson. When their curiosity was satisfied we were permitted to retire, and were conducted back in the same state as we had been brought thither. The governor appeared to be about forty years of age, of a pleasant aspect, and, though he assumed a gravity, there was a playfulness about the mouth that indicated it was not natural to him. He is married, I find, and has a son and two daughters; the former is at present at Cordovo in the province of Tucuman, where there is a fine college for education. On our return we found a plentiful repast provided by our hospitable host; consisting of new cakes, fruit, coffee, and

several sorts of wine. When we had refreshed ourselves, I proposed to my companions that we should walk out to survey the town, and if possible ascend the conical mountain, being desirous to make the most of our short stay, and see as much of their country as possible : but our host, with concern in his countenance, informed me my desire could not be gratified ; a Spanish soldier had been stationed at his door, and he had been ordered to consider me only as a prisoner of war during the remainder of my stay at Monte Video. My companions however, not being Englishmen, were at perfect liberty to go wheresoever they thought proper. I cannot but say that this circumstance greatly chagrined me : not that I felt any great disappointment in not being permitted to go abroad ; but I felt like a Briton, and could not digest the idea of coercive confinement. My fellow-passengers, finding that I was thus laid under an embargo, very quietly relinquished the idea of visiting the mountain, being blest with too great a share of American philosophy to feel greatly interested in the beauties of nature ; and we set about making ourselves as comfortable as our situation would admit. Our friendly entertainer, who was extremely anxious to render my confinement agreeable, amused me very much with the history of the contraband trade constantly carrying

on at this settlement, in spite of every effort on the part of government to the contrary; and this is one cause of the shyness of the Spaniards towards strangers, who are never permitted to perambulate the town until licence has first been obtained from the governor: indeed it seems admirably calculated for such kind of traffic as silver, drugs, hides, &c. and very conveniently situated. It would, I am of opinion, if once in the possession of the English, be found a very valuable key to the riches of the southern world; and the proximity of the Portuguese would greatly facilitate our obtaining it. The only obstacle I can discover, is the difficulty there would be for our ships of war to penetrate thus far up the Plata with any degree of safety, the natural defects of the river affording a much better protection to the country than any artificial bulwarks the Spaniards could erect; but, the article of navigation alone excepted, I believe the conquest of the Plata might be effected with very little danger on the part of the invaders.

In our way up the river, I noticed, as we passed, an island that glowed with all the colours of the rainbow, being decked with, I think, every flower that art or nature hath produced in any part of the terrestrial globe. Such a prospect must be extremely grateful to the eye; and the sweet scents they emit when a fresh breeze agitates them, and

bears their fragrance towards the land, would induce one to imagine that all the odours of Arabia were transplanted to this beautiful spot, which is with singular propriety called the Isle of Flowers. There is likewise another island of a very different description in the Plata, which is called the Isle of Wolves, from being inhabited only by those animals; but of that I saw nothing, for I was below deck when we passed it.

The disorder which seised me on board the vessel, but which the bustle of the tempest for a time suspended, is, I fear, about to return: I feel very faint and languid, and have violent pains in my head. I cannot help thinking that, if they would let me go out, moderate exercise would soon relieve me; but this idea may arise only from a spirit of contradiction, inherent in every Briton when he finds himself restrained in any particular point. But patience, patience!—time, which releases us from every inconvenience, will me from this; and all will be the same a century hence.

Adieu, my dear friend! it is time I should close this very long letter.

LETTER VII.

Monte Video, Feb. 1797.

My friend H—— is using the utmost dispatch to get his damage repaired, which was found to be more serious than he at first apprehended; however, it is hoped a few days will now complete it. We have had to-day a tremendous gale of wind, which had like to have proved fatal to two of the vessels in the harbour that had not time enough to secure themselves in the manner necessary for safety: in this unruly river, however, by the aid of our crew, they were, though with great difficulty, properly secured. This wind, I am informed, is often destructive to ships lying in the harbour of Buenos Ayres; it blows from the west, and is termed the *pampero*, partly from its violence, and partly from its crossing the plains of Las Pampas, which lie to the south-west of Paraguay, and extend from thence to Chile, in an almost uninterrupted level of waving grass, for near nine hundred miles.

I have not been able to obtain permission to ascend the mountain, which majestically rears its

summit to the clouds; therefore am compelled to survey its beauties at a distance.

The Spaniards are never, at the best of times, disposed to grant any kind of indulgence to an Englishman: they regard every individual of our nation with suspicion and dislike; and now, from the circumstance of our being at war with them, they are more tiresomely vigilant than ever.

It is now eighteen days since we landed, and, excepting on my visit to the governor's, I have not exchanged a single word with any one inhabitant besides our host, who, though extremely kind and complaisant, is by no means communicative.

Provisions are very cheap; I mean such as are produced here: those from Europe are dear enough; but I am told they are so only in time of war, when the danger to be apprehended from the English cruisers prevents many from visiting this port and Buenos Ayres.

I am at present much and seriously indisposed, having for these last two days felt strong feverish symptoms. The quantity of James's powders which I have been accustomed to take have not had the desired effect: I feel an unusual pain in my limbs, a difficulty of respiration, and an uncommon tenseness over the eyes. Mr. H—— saw me about an hour since, and was very much alarm-

ed: he has requested a father provincial to attend me, who resides at the fort, and is well skilled in the remedies suited to this climate. M. Soderina, the merchant with whom I reside, has undertaken to report my case to the governor, that I may receive every assistance that can be obtained. Though the symptoms I feel are new to me, yet I am willing to think there is no danger in the distemper: my kind host assures me otherwise; it being, he says, an epidemic disease—brought on by the dense and heavy fogs, which are very troublesome at this time of the year—and which is frequently fatal to Europeans. He has been so obliging as to send for his wife from Buenos Ayres, where she has been these two months on a visit; and his daughters are extremely attentive.

There is no precise period for the termination of this disorder; it depends principally on the temperature of the patient: some linger in it for many months, others only a few months; and some only a few days, when it proves fatal. Should the latter be my case, this will be the last letter you will ever receive from me, for it is with great difficulty I now write. But this, with what I have already written since my arrival here, will, I trust, by Mr. H——'s means, reach you in safety, should he be so fortunate as to complete his voyage.

If you hear from him, and can by any means

serve him, I beseech you do it, and you will confer an everlasting obligation on the memory of your friend.

The good priest is come. Should I never see you more in this world, I trust we shall meet hereafter. Adieu! perhaps, for ever.

LETTER VIII.

Buenos Ayres, May, 1797.

THREE months, my dear friend, have now elapsed since I last addressed a line to you. The greater part of that time I have been a helpless lunatic; and now I am once more, through the mercy of Heaven, restored to reason, it is but to find myself a prisoner and alone in a land of strangers. They tell me I am at Buenos Ayres, in a convent of brothers dedicated to St. Dominic: how long I have been here or how conveyed hither they have not yet informed me. It is but this morning they have allowed me the privilege of writing to you; and when I have done, I fear it will be a long while before I shall be able to gain an opportunity of sending it to England, since I find news have arrived here, during my insanity, of the total defeat of the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent, by admiral sir John Jervis. This was imparted to me in confidence by one of the lay brothers, whose office it has been to attend me. My hair has been cut off, and I am in the habit of a noviciate: they shaved my head too, I believe; and I am led to think I owe my life to the care

and attention of the holy fathers. I do not think my head is rightly settled yet : all the past seems a kind of chaos. I have some recollection of being seised with an epidemic distemper at Monte Video, and likewise of some operations they performed upon me, but when and where I know not. I cannot write you any more at present ; I am too feeble : to-morrow, if better, I will resume the pen. God bless you ! Adieu !

LETTER IX.

Buenos Ayres, June, 1797.

It is a fortnight since I was permitted the use of pen and ink; and though I have requested this indulgence repeatedly, in the most earnest manner, it has been—through a motive of kindness, I believe—denied me. I am now much stronger, and my head is quite composed; and though I shall not be able to give you a regular account of all that has occurred for these three months past, yet I will endeavour to relate as many of the particulars as I have been able to obtain from my attendant, who still watches me with unremitting assiduity. He is a Frenchman by birth, born at Bourdeaux; but being left an orphan at an early age, he was taken by a Spanish merchant to Mexico, where he resided eight years, in the capacity of clerk to his benefactor, who dying at the end of that period, recommended him to the notice of his brother residing at this place, whither the young man immediately repaired. He had lived with this latter gentleman about five years and a half when an English merchant, a friend of his master's, arrived here, and

fell ill at the Spaniard's house, where he remained indisposed for some months, during which time the assiduous Frenchman attended to the whole of his business, and transacted it so much to his liking, that on his recovery he made him a present of a sum sufficient to procure his admission into this convent, where, though in the prime of life, he means to end his days.

Brother Jerome—for that is his name—is one of the most kind-hearted creatures that ever existed; and to his indefatigable attention I am convinced I owe, in a great measure, my restoration to reason. He has given me a succinct detail of all that has happened to me in this part of the world; and as many of the particulars as I can repeat I will.

When I closed my last, dated from Monte Video, I was introduced to a venerable man, who, as my host informed me, had been sent by the governor from the fort. He examined my tongue, and the roots of my nails; when perceiving upon them some black spots, which I had not, nor should, perhaps, have noticed, he instantly declared that I was attacked by the *faitfa*, and must immediately be put to bed; but first it was necessary I should be blooded. To this I consented, and he performed the operation in a very dextrous manner; not with a lancet, as our sur-

geons do, but with an Indian instrument very curiously made. It is a small and remarkably sharp flint, ground to an almost imperceptible point, and set in a small bit of ebony or cedar, in much the same manner as our glaziers' diamonds; with this difference—as theirs is placed perpendicularly in the wood, so this is set horizontally, with as much of the flint projecting as is sufficient to make the incision. The arm is bound up as with us; the instrument is then laid on the vein, and struck with a kind of small hammer; the blood flows copiously: and so skilful are the Indian surgeons, that the patient runs no hazard of having the artery injured by this peculiar mode of bleeding.

When I had submitted to the operation of phlebotomy, and retired to bed, my doctor ordered an application of boiled herbs in a cotton bag to my stomach and bowels, in which I began to feel the most excruciating tortures, attended with a violent sickness. The water in which the herbs had been boiled was ordered me to drink; but before it could be administered I was seized with a vomiting, attended with a burning heat on my brain. In an interval of ease I took the prescription, the father standing by the whole of the time; but neither application had the desired effect: other remedies were tried, but to no better purpose; the pain in my bowels and burning heat

on my brain increased every moment. In this state I continued five hours, when suddenly the torment in my bowels abated, and the pain of my head became so excruciating as to bring on a delirium; and before midnight I was insensible to every thing around.

Brother Jerome, who was then at Monte Video on business for the superior of this convent, was one among the other religious in the town that attended me during the first and most dangerous paroxysms of my disorder, which lasted one-and-twenty days; the fever then abated, but my reason was pronounced irrecoverably gone. In the mean time captain H———, having repaired his damage effectually, prepared to sail: but when he came to consult my host and the fathers respecting my removal, they were all of opinion it would be highly imprudent for him to think of taking me on board, as they were certain I could not survive such a step four-and-twenty hours; but if I was left in their care there still remained a shadow of hope that I might recover. In this dilemma my poor friend was almost distracted how to act: he was, as you may suppose, very unwilling to leave me behind, and equally averse to run the hazard of removing me, as in that case the fathers very charitably assured him they could consider him in no other light than as my im-

mediate murderer. At last, however, with great difficulty he was persuaded by father Daro—the governor's physician—and M. Soderina to confide me to them; at the same time assuring him, in the most solemn manner, that nothing on their parts should be neglected to forward my recovery; and if, in despite of every endeavour, the disorder should at last prove fatal, a proper attested account of my death should be transmitted to New York. This satisfied him; and, leaving with Soderina a letter of credit on his uncle at Philadelphia for whatever I might want, he left me, though by Jerome's account with great reluctance; so much, indeed, that he even shed tears as he quitted the apartment. Worthy, affectionate creature! and if Heaven spare me but to see him once again I will amply recompence his disinterested friendship.

Before his departure he made the fathers a present of rum and tobacco; which, it seems, serves as barter between them and the Indians.

The father provincial at Monte Video kept me there until there was no longer any danger to be feared from the fever, and his whole attention was then devoted to the restoration of my reason. My head was shaved, blisters applied, and every other remedy that came within the knowledge of my spiritual physicians. The priests in this part

of the world are the only Europeans that profess any knowledge of medicine: they therefore administer to the health of both soul and body with unremitting diligence; and I will do them the justice to say, that, notwithstanding the dissipated lives led by the generality, none can be more attentive to the sick than they are. Not that they study pharmacy with any degree of science, as our practitioners do; but their knowledge in the effects and quality of herbs and simples is very extensive. The virtues of every plant they have discovered; and as the waters of La Plata, when drunk by Europeans, are in many cases fatal, Providence has planted, for the benefit of man, in all the different islands on this wonderful river a vast variety of medicinal herbs, which, when applied by a skilful botanist, serve as an antidote to the pernicious beverage, as well as for the dangerous effects arising from too great an indulgence in the eating of fruit—with every kind of which, peaches in particular, this country abounds.

When my holy friends had exhausted their whole stock of prescriptions, and I still remained in the same melancholy state, it was judged proper by the governor—to whom my case had been daily made known—to have me conveyed to this town, which is the capital of the province of La Plata, and placed under the care of the fathers of

St. Dominic, from whose monastery I now write. I was, in consequence, immediately removed hither. The letter of credit gained me admission, and at the same time particular attention. My friend brother Jerome having had the care of me in a great measure at Monte Video, obtained leave of the superior to continue that charitable office upon my coming here ; which he has done, I am certain, in a most exemplary manner.

But my restoration to reason, he says, does not arise from any exertions of his, but the interposition of the blessed Virgin, and a good Indian, who, among many others, comes once a year to barter the herb paraguay—a leaf so called, which is here infused and drank in the same manner as tea in China, and which equally serves to counteract the pernicious qualities of the water ; with this difference, it does not give that ashy paleness to the countenance which is the certain consequence of drinking an inordinate quantity of tea.

This Indian, being informed of my malady, gave to Jerome a paper of dried leaves, nearly beat to powder, and a small bottle of liquid : of the first he bade him take a certain quantity and lay flat upon a stone made very hot ; he should then sprinkle them with the liquid, and, when the fumes arose, hold my face over it, and endeavour to

make me inhale as much of the smoke as possible. This was to be repeated two or three times a day ; always remembering to cover my head quite over with cotton, and keep me for an hour warm in bed.

All these instructions my attendant carefully observed. The first application in a few minutes stupified me ; and he covered me up before half the herb was evaporated, at the same time condemning himself as having actually killed me. I remained in this state for near two hours and a half, when, to his great joy, I moved, sat up in the bed, and made signs that I wanted drink. This encouraged him to try again, and every succeeding trial answered better than the former ; when in the space of four days, during which time he had fumigated my head eleven times, he saw evident marks of returning reason : and before a fortnight had elapsed I was perfectly rational, though still weak, languid, and confused. My recovery, which had been for some time totally despaired of, seemed to give pleasure to the whole of the community. They are thirty-four in number, besides the superior ; and very much respected both in the town and adjacent country, being by far the richest order in these parts, that of St. Francis alone excepted.

As soon as my senses were sufficiently collected

I asked my kind attendant for pen and ink, which he indulged me with, and I made use of them to write a short and incoherent letter to you, and which is now on the way to England, in the hands of a captain Frampton, of Boston, who sailed from hence two days ago ; and I trust you will receive it as soon if not sooner than that which my worthy friend H—— was to transmit from Port Jackson, by which means you will be spared a great deal of painful anxiety on my account.

It is impossible for me to do justice to the kindness of father Jerome, who told me, with great concern in his countenance, that an order had been received from the governor, on my recovery, to detain me as a prisoner.

This, I think, I hinted to you in my former letter ; but as all parts of the world are alike to me, the knowledge of my being in confinement does not now affect me : and as I can afford to pay for a few indulgences, I may, I doubt not, make this place comfortable enough ; at least I am very well disposed to think it so. And where a man is willing to make the best of every thing, it is no difficult matter to find means of amusement : and so they will but permit me to stir abroad a little and examine the country, I shall be very much at my ease, and perhaps forget I am a prisoner. But the best part of the whole is, that these reverend

fathers regard me as a very pious and devout Catholic. This strange prejudice I can no otherwise account for than by their finding on my neck the precious cross worn by my lost ——. I missed this valued relic immediately upon regaining my senses, but was diffident of asking for it, as not knowing where or how I had lost it. However, when I was, in their opinion, sufficiently recovered, the jewel was restored to me, and in a transport of joy I seized and carried it to my lips. This motion of mine was attributed by the brethren to a motive of grateful piety, and they very readily conceived that I was one of their own persuasion: and Jerome observed, that the restoration of the jewel would remind me of what the holy Virgin had done for me, by interceding with her blessed Son for my recovery, the miracle of which should be celebrated in their church on the festival of Corpus Christi, which, he said, would take place in a few days; and in the meantime it would be expedient for me to receive the sacrament, and return thanks to the holy mother of God.

I was about to undeceive the father, and assure him I was no pious Catholic, but a miserable heretic, when a thought struck me, that the error he was in respecting my religion was a very fortunate circumstance, and with a little contrivance

might be made to answer more purposes than one in my behalf. I therefore very devoutly acquiesced in all he said to me; and as I look upon all externals in religion to be matter of no importance, so I trouble my head but little about what they may require of me, in consequence of my supposed belief.

I have been three days writing this. My head is still unsettled; but, as I am now on the rapid recovery, it will not be long, I hope, before I meet with some adventures worth relating.

Adieu! Ever yours,

LETTER X.

Convent of St. Dominic, June, 1797.

I AM just returned from walking in the convent gardens ; they are spacious, and well laid out, considering the taste of the gardeners in this part of the world : all is done under the directions of two of the fathers, but the whole of the community work in them by turns. The lay brothers, of whom there are seventeen, are constantly employed either here or in other domestic offices : a peculiar kind of harmony seems to reign among them. The orders of the superior—who is a Genoese by birth—are given in a mild, but impressive, accent ; and his being their head is hardly known but at meals and during church service. He is going, immediately after the festival, to Cordovo, where there is a university : it is an immense way from hence. He is to be accompanied by several Spanish youths, going thither for education ; and six or seven missionaries, who are to be dispersed over the provinces of Tucuman and Uruguay : of these places I am to learn a great deal, as soon as I am able to stir about with the fathers. At present I am very weak ; but now my

health returns my appetite returns with it, and I cannot help wishing for some of our delicious roast beef, with its usual appendages : but though beef is here more plenty by an hundred fold than in England, yet I believe it would be next to impossible for me to obtain my desire. They have not here the smallest conception of a large joint of meat served up as with us. They slaughter animals, it is true, for their tables : but then the flesh is cooked in such a mawkish way, or rather in no way at all that I can call cooking ; it is so messed up with fish, eggs, onions, oil, and garlic, that it requires the stomach of an Esquimaux to relish what they set *even before me, that am an invalid*. It is to no purpose I endeavour to make my friend father Jerome understand the meaning of roast beef ; I might as well talk of friccased hare to an Abyssinian.

The fish here are delicious, provided they were not spoilt in the cooking ; but the people mix so many heterogeneous spices with their abominable oil, to make what they call sauce, that the real flavour of the fish is lost in the sousing : however, I do all I can to swallow their salmagundi ; though my rebellious stomach will sometimes, in spite of good manners, and even hunger, persist in refusing to admit such dainties. The beautiful gold fish that we admire so much in Europe are caught

in shoals in the Plata : some of them a foot long, and proportionably large ; one of these I was favoured with to-day for dinner, cooked in plain water, and served up to me without any other sauce than pure unadulterated butter, instead of oil : understand me right though ; I do not mean butter such as we in Europe use, made from cream, but the fat of an ox melted down and refined, not unlike what our cookmaids call dripping. You smile, but I assure you it makes an excellent substitute for real butter ; indeed any thing is preferable to their everlasting oil. This was the best dinner I have made since I arrived in this part of America. The fish is delicately sweet, and the nearest to it I ever tasted in England is the red mullet.

The fishermen say, that when the pampero blows the gold fish hide themselves in the sands or holes of the rocks, and are never seen till the tempest occasioned by this dreadful wind is entirely subsided. Of this pampero I am told, that it rises in the mountains of Cordillera, and crossing the plains of Las Pampas, nine hundred miles in length—during the whole of which it does not meet a single tree or shrub to obstruct its progress—proceeds with increasing fury till it reaches the banks of La Plata, when, collecting itself into a kind of stream or current, it rushes with incredible violence

down the river, sweeping all before it; and unless the vessels in the harbours are secured with more than ordinary care they are sure of being driven from their moorings, and greatly damaged, if not lost, on the shoals in the river. It is this wind that has caused so many banks, by raising the sand from the plains and hurling it into the stream, where meeting with more or less objects to check its progress, it lodges or shifts about at the caprice of the wind. These sands, by daily increasing, have destroyed the harbour of Buenos Ayres: no vessel can approach nearer to the town than three or four leagues distance; the merchandise must of course be conveyed to land in small craft, made on purpose to navigate a little shallow river which conveys the goods to the town from the mouth of the harbour; and even these lesser vessels—which are made long, narrow, and high, but so constructed as to require but a very trifling draft of water—are obliged to take a winding course, and double two or three points of land round which the little river flows. Several plans for deepening and widening this river have recently been attempted, but I believe with very indifferent success.

To-morrow week is the festival of Corpus Christi: the whole brotherhood are bustling about in every direction, and preparing all their saintly

paraphernalia for a solemn procession round the town, in which, I understand, I am expected to join ; but it must be in the habit of a novice, which elegant array I have worn ever since I came hither. I would fain, upon this occasion, have exchanged it for one of a less mortifying appearance ; but was told by my friend father Jerome that it could not be done without the superior's orders, and if he had thought it proper for me to appear in the clothes left for me by Mr. H—— they would have been returned to me with the cross. I must, therefore, be content to wear this holy dress : but what induces me the more readily to acquiesce is the knowledge of the danger to which I should be exposed were I to mix with the inhabitants in an English habit, which in their most friendly humours is looked on with suspicion and dislike, but which now would be regarded with insult and abhorrence. Englishman and heretic have long been synonymous terms ; but when to these is added that of a victorious enemy, Spanish pride and superstition would be equally in arms, and God only knows what would become of me between them. My conversation with the fathers has hitherto been carried on partly in Latin and partly in French, but I am now very industriously engaged in the study of the Spanish language. I may want it more than I am at present

aware of : at any rate it serves to beguile time, that else would appear extremely tedious. You will say, the more tongues a man has the command of the better : it may be so ; I am sure within these last six months I have had occasion for every different language my provident father had me instructed in, and should have felt very awkwardly situated had I been deficient in either. But in each and every one of them I am, at all times, happy to subscribe myself

Your sincere friend.

LETTER XI.

Convent of St. Dominic, June, 1797.

THIS morning, as soon as the matin-bell rung, I was desired by father Jerome to attend confession, as a preparatory step to my taking the sacrament on the day of the festival. This was a circumstance I had never attended to, or even once thought about. I paused for a moment: my friend perceived it; and thinking—I suppose from the change of my countenance—that I had something on my conscience I was unwilling to reveal, smiled, and said I need not be particular, for father Ximenea was not very severe. I thanked him, and said I was not afraid of any penance the holy man might impose; I was only embarrassed at the idea of confessing to a stranger. Oh, that was nothing! he said; and, without waiting for any further observation, hurried me to the confessional, where I knelt down, and answered yes and no to all the questions the father confessor put to me; for being unacquainted with the form of auricular confession, I was necessitated to let him interrogate me without knowing what answers to make: however I got over it pretty well; a small penance

was enjoined me of abstinence during the ensuing week, and I received his holy benediction. I was then conducted, for the first time, to the refectory, where the young student was about to ascend a rostrum, and preach a dinner sermon. The fathers arranged themselves round a large table, on which were placed fruits, cakes, coffee, and sweetmeats. At another table sat the noviciates, with somewhat of less delicacies before them. I was seated among the latter company, and by one of the fathers addressed in Latin, saying that as I was once more, through the bountiful mercy of Heaven, restored to health from the very brink of the grave, I should partake of his blessings, and be grateful; not forgetting, at the same time, to offer up a fervent prayer of thanks for my recovery, through the intercession of the holy Virgin and St. Dominic. I having returned a suitable answer, grace was said in a very affecting manner, and we partook of the repast, which I really relished exceedingly, there being several kinds of fruits that I had no conception of, as none of them grew in the convent gardens. There were excellent small white cakes, and a sort of something soft and thick, which served instead of butter: what it was composed of I know not, but it ate very agreeably. Half a pint of Canary wine was given to each person: and all the time we were

eating the young priest in the pulpit was preaching a sermon; the subject of which was the merits and adventures of St. Dominic, together with two or three of his pious acquaintance.

The young man appeared to possess a good delivery, and the discourse was, no doubt, highly edifying, if it could but have been understood by me: however, be that as it may, he received the applause of his superiors, and retired with no small share of self-complacency. Adieu!

LETTER XII.

Convent of St. Dominic, June; 1797.

TO-NIGHT is the eve of the festival, which has been announced, with great ceremony, by the cannon of the citadel; and bells are ringing in every part of the town. I have attended mass regularly every morning this week, and am regarded by all the society as a very sincere and pious Catholic. How long this opinion will hold, I know not, but I shall not undeceive them if I can help it. I have likewise dined daily in the refectory, and am highly pleased with my associates. For two hours every day the noviciates dispute on theological subjects, which are attended to by the fathers with great assiduity. Three days this week several young Spaniards of distinction have been admitted to hold controversies with the novices on theology and natural philosophy. These youths are going with the father provincial to Cordova, there to be entered at the university in much the same manner as we do at Oxford, and nearly the same mode of study is adopted. On seeing me, they one and all seemed to be struck with surprise and curiosity. My sandy complexion, naturally fairer than is be-

coming in a man, and which illness has rendered still more delicate, made them, at first sight, conclude that I was an Englishman; and the novelty of an English heretic in the noviciate habit of St. Dominic evidently excited, in a great degree, their admiration. Their eyes were continually turned upon me, and the astonishment depicted in their looks was really very amusing. When the audience—which is the name given to those assemblies—broke up, they crowded round the superior, eagerly enquiring how I came there—where from—what I had been—and by what means converted to the holy faith—with many other questions, that I should have liked much to have heard the father answer; but before they gave him an opportunity the novices withdrew.

Most of these young men appeared to be from seventeen to three-and-twenty years of age, but not one of them possessed the natural gravity of the Spaniards: their dress was more airily made than in old Spain; and, instead of cloth, their trowsers, doublet, and cloak, were of black cotton; their hats Genoese velvet, and their stockings and shoes silk; with large tufts in the latter of ribbon or flos. But what surprised me most of all was, to see an English gold watch depending from a belt round each one's waist. Whether this is their usual way of wearing that useful appendage,

or whether it was only placed so for some particular purpose, I cannot tell; but it convinces me, that, though they detest our nation, they do not despise our manufactures.

The next time they came they were rather less free with their eyes, and seemed, by their manner, to consider me as deserving some degree of respect. They came round me as I was going out, and said with great gallantry, like so many *caballeros*, that they were happy to find one man wise enough to quit a nation of infidels; and they were certain that, if I consulted my own interest, I should never wish to return to England more. These fine things were said in Spanish, of which I have learnt enough to understand the common terms of conversation, though nothing more: however, I made shift to answer them pretty well, and said I did not doubt of finding as much, if not more, happiness in Paraguay than I had ever experienced in any other part of the world. They seemed pleased at my reply, and congratulated me on my recovery, and on my proficiency in the Spanish tongue, which they said was the finest language in the world. I bowed an assent, at which they seemed mightily pleased, and were about to ask me some more questions when a bell summoned them away.

Brother Jerome came to me immediately after

vespers last night, and told me that two of the fathers meant to join him in soliciting the superior to permit me to accompany them on their visits about the town during his absence, and they had great hopes of succeeding. This information has given me great pleasure, as by that means I hope to have it in my power to send you some description of the country and the manners of the people I am compelled to live among; though God knows if you will ever receive what I write. I have tried several times to learn some particulars respecting the progress of the war, but on that head my friend Jerome is obstinately silent; and I am averse to asking questions of any other of the community, as not only the novices but the lay brothers appear to treat me with a kind of distant civility, and that is all. But there is one among the oldest fathers whose countenance is the index of good-nature and complacency: he has conversed with me twice in the gardens of the convent, but his discourse turned chiefly upon the properties of plants; and perceiving, by my remarks, that I had some knowledge of natural philosophy, he described to me the nature and qualities of two very beautiful shrubs, natives of this province, and both antidotes against the bite of poisonous reptiles. The juice is extracted by bruising the herb, laid flat between two large stones; the bottom one

of which is concave, to receive the juice, which is forced out by turning round the upper stone very quickly: the liquid thus obtained is placed in a short stone bottle, and left to ferment two or three hours in the sun. When it ceases to emit a kind of white froth it is fit for use, and is carefully preserved in small vials till wanted, which is not unfrequently. In case of using it, the wound or sting is first washed with clean spring water, when, being wiped dry, the preparation is poured either into or upon it. A bit of dry cotton is then spread over the part affected, and banded carefully down. This is repeated every two hours, until the cotton comes away green. The poison is then known to be extracted, the wound is rubbed with bear's grease, and the patient declared out of danger. One of these plants strongly resembles scurvy-grass; the other, which is taller, has a leaf which, in look and feel, appears like the thickest velvet, and is of a dark heavy green colour: it bears a bright crimson flower, faintly tinged with gold, but in size and shape very similar to the blue flag iris: both plants are esculent, and highly esteemed by the natives.

I have endeavoured, with father Jerome's assistance, to analyse the herbs left by my Indian physician, which so happily effected my restoration to reason: but we found it impossible to ascertain

their species, as throughout the whole convent garden not one appeared to bear any affinity to them, either in smell or taste. I remarked this circumstance to the botanical father, who said they were peculiar in the province of Tucuman, and that the Indians of the Tercero-river frequently brought small baskets full of them to Buenos Ayres for barter, together with a variety of other articles. That which had cured me, he said, was a composition of four herbs, which the Spaniards had vainly endeavoured to propagate in the district of La Plata, but never could succeed in rearing; they being constantly destroyed, when about three inches high from the ground, by the ants, which infest all the plantations in this province in such numbers as sometimes to cover and destroy almost every plant and shrub in a space of several miles in extent: so cautious is Providence in bestowing its blessings without a proportionate share of evils.

The soil here is light and sandy, but extremely rich and productive; owing, in some measure, to the overflowing of the river during the rainy season, which, in much the same manner as the Nile in Egypt, leaves a nutritious slime on the earth: there is, therefore, no great labour requisite on the part of the proprietor to prepare the ground for the reception of any kind of seed that

he wishes to cultivate; and matters are so contrived, that every garden is refreshed by water from the Plata, let in or out by a kind of sluice made of osiers woven very strong and thick, which open like our flood-gates used in the inland navigation. The water thus admitted, is sent in smaller channels round the parterres; and most commonly a quantity of it is retained in a large basin or reservoir, of which there is one in every extensive garden. The reservoir attached to our convent is formed of brick, strongly cemented, and surrounded with a wall about five feet high, with steps on the outside up to the margin, and down likewise on the inside to the bottom, which in ours is about twenty feet below the surface of the earth. When this supply is very low—which is often the case when the pampero has blown any longer time than ordinary, by which means the waters have been driven with greater violence towards the sea, and thereby prevented from dispensing their favours among the more remote garden grounds—it is rather troublesome to be got at; they therefore hasten to take advantage of any swell in the river, and fill the reservoir at once. These water repositories have likewise an opening, about two feet and a half wide, in the wall that surrounds them. This aperture is secured by a door let into grooves, on each side, to draw up

and down at pleasure: when the water is low, they raise this door, and the gardener goes inside, where, descending the steps that lead to the bottom, he stands as on the brink of a well, and draws as much as he has occasion for. The water here is beautifully clear and sparkling; but its coldness, when drank, is apt to bring on dysenteries and other dangerous diseases, such as I experienced while at Monte Video: for though I am now thirty leagues higher up the Plata, its good and bad qualities are the same, and even at this distance from the sea it is between seven and eight leagues across. You may guess from hence of what an amazing size this river must be.

But nature, in these regions, as well as in *North America*, seems to have worked upon a most gigantic scale when engaged in their formation, and to have studied well how the component parts could best be rendered worthy the immensity of the whole. She has played the niggard stepdame only with the feathered part of the creation, and even there what is deficient in size she has amply compensated for in variety and numbers. The province of Paraguay is famous for producing birds of the most beautiful plumage; the banks of the river being, as I am told by the fathers, nearly covered with those lovely little creatures, of almost every description; among which the

most remarkable is the celebrated humming-bird, so well and so often described by naturalists and travellers. Here they are natives; and frequently, when I am in the convent garden, I see swarms of them flying about on every side like so many large wasps, or resting on the shrubs and sucking the flowers, which form the principal part of their sustenance. They are very tame; so much so, indeed, as at times to be very troublesome, when they come by four and five together humming and buzzing round my head, till they confuse me to such a degree that I am obliged to lay about me in self-defence, and buffet them away as we do the blue-bottle flies in England.

Do you not pity me for being confined to a country, the very beauties of which, from being too abundant, degenerate into plagues? Adieu!

LETTER XIII.

Convent of St. Dominic, June, 1797.

THE holy festival was celebrated yesterday, with a degree of pomp of which I had not entertained the smallest idea. The morning was ushered in by the ringing of bells, firing of cannon, and other similar demonstrations of joy; sounds so new, and so widely different from any I had heard since my arrival here, that I began to feel very much alarmed, from an apprehension that the Spaniards had obtained some signal victory over the British arms, and the news had just then arrived at Buenos Ayres. My heart proudly palpitated at the humiliating idea, and I was very industriously tormenting myself, when father Jerome entered my room, and presently relieved me, by saying—"Are not these glorious sounds, which proclaim this blessed festival? What a pity it is so many of your infidel countrymen should be lost to this august ceremony!" I could have hugged the reverend enthusiast for so well removing my anxiety; but not caring to betray my real sentiments on the subject, I coolly answered, "We are not all endowed with an equal portion

of the divine spirit, brother Jerome;" and immediately accompanied him to the convent chapel. Divine service was performed three times in the course of the morning; the first mass at six o'clock, the second at half past seven, and the third at nine.

At ten o'clock, upon a signal given at the governor's house, the community prepared to join in the general cavalcade; and now, for the first time, I was to see the outside of the convent. We were arranged in order, in a large square, within the gates: first, the young choristers were divided into four bands, twelve in each; these are the children under the tuition of the fathers. The first division was to precede the whole, singing a particular service appropriate to the day. On either side these children walked lay-brothers, bearing ensigns, or pictures representing the different achievements of their patron saint. Then followed the novices, among whom was myself; every one bearing some precious relic or another, enclosed in boxes of ebony and ivory, curiously wrought.

To us succeeded another band of music, accompanied by all the visitors of distinction, of which there were not a few from the distant plantations. Next came the elder fathers of the convent, two and two, each carrying something re-

lative to the festival ; and after them the superior, drest in all the regalia of his office, surrounded by the young students going to Cordovo, and six lay-brothers, bearing banners. The remainder of the community, choristers, and several newly-baptized Indians, brought up the rear ; every one in this procession being arrayed in their richest and gayest attire. The cavalcade, having cleared the convent-gate, entered a large handsome square ; on one side of which stands the cathedral, a very fine well-finished edifice, crowned with a cupola, and open on all sides to the view. Round this square were assembled the societies of several other orders, all dressed in paraphernalia ; and a more curious scene I never witnessed. It seemed as if people from all nations of the earth were collected together, presenting every different shade of the complexion, from the silver-haired inhabitant of Denmark to the sable-hued native of Guinea.

Among the crowd some Indian caciques held a very conspicuous place. They wore party-coloured cotton habits, prettily decorated with a variety of feathers, arranged in a very judicious and elegant manner. Bands of wool, red, purple, and yellow, encircled their heads, and supported some of the most beautiful plumes I ever beheld. Several of the caciques wore glittering ornaments on

their chins; others on their necks, arms, and legs. But if these Indians pleased by the gaiety of their attire, another tribe interested me no less by their simplicity. These were clad in white cotton vestments, with no other ornament than large full white feathers, rising one above another round the head. This dress, contrasted with the dark copper colour of their skins, was peculiarly striking, and gave a most singular, though extremely pleasing, appearance to the whole.

The outsides of the houses round the square were hung with festoons of flowers, and live birds, tied with strings, to prevent their escape, but long enough to admit of their fluttering sufficiently to expand their beautiful plumage; a contrivance which I must confess had a very picturesque effect. The portico of the church was decorated with an uncommon quantity of real and artificial flowers, in the disposal of which a great share of taste had been displayed. Under the principal arch was placed a band of musicians, who sung and played most enchantingly. Indeed there is not a place in the world, not even Italy, where sacred music is more studiously attended to. Upon a volley being fired by some of the soldiers—who were all drawn up on one side of the square—the procession commenced by the military, fully accoutred, marching off two and two, to the sound

of drums, trumpets, and other martial music, at intervals halting, to discharge their pieces; the bells of all the churches ringing, and the ships in the harbour returning the firing in the town: so that altogether you may suppose the concert by no means a despicable one. First after the soldiers came the order of St. Francis; arranged in nearly the same manner as ourselves; then followed a second division of the military, and the choiristers of the cathedral: to them succeeded the order of St. James; and, thirdly, we came in. Between our rear and the advanced guard of the fourth community was borne on a very high altar, richly decorated, the elements of the eucharist, surrounded by a vast number of people of the first rank and quality; some of them bearing lighted wax-candles, highly perfumed; others incense, many banners, and not a few relics: the whole group flanked by soldiers on horseback, in their newest and best attire, firing alternately to the right and left; and wherever a cross was erected, which I believe was at the end of every street, the whole cavalcade halted to sing the appointed service.

After the eucharist came another division of soldiers, and after them all the remaining religious of the town, while on either side of the street—for we took the middle—marched the

mobility, men, women, and children, but, notwithstanding their numbers, all ranged in regular order, and observing a profound silence, except when they joined in the general choruses, and then blessed St. Dominic. What a din was there! Each division of the whole procession was attended by a band of music, which, halting at the crosses, played almost divinely; and sorry enough I was, when the devotion of the multitude, breaking forth into audible sounds, spoiled such excellent harmony.

The decorations of the houses in magnificence surpassed any thing I ever beheld in Europe on the like occasion. The streets are wide, and most of them in a straight line; the houses in general low, with here and there a very elegant church or public building, finished according to the rules of European architecture. Every habitation was hung either with tapestry or coloured cottons of various dyes, ornamented with feathers in a very ingenious manner; between which were suspended festoons of flowers, articles of plate, and even jewels, according to the riches of the owner. Across the streets, from side to side, were triumphal arches, composed of boughs of trees artfully interwoven; from which hung, as at the portico of the church, a great variety of living birds, all suspended in the most advantageous

point of view, and some of them beyond description beautiful. Between the arches were set out a vast quantity of eatables; such as cakes, pies, fruits, &c. all disposed in a very agreeable manner: and I could not help feeling a kind of peculiar *English pleasure* at *this* part of the exhibition. Close to the houses, on each side of the streets, were likewise placed living animals—young tigers, lions, wolves, dogs, and even monkeys of a particular large species—secured so carefully as to prevent any possibility of their escaping, or hurting those that might come near them. From the windows were suspended baskets; very neatly wove, of a lovely green colour, containing every kind of seed or grain with which they mean to sow the land, that the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD might bestow his benediction on them as he passes, which they think will undoubtedly procure them a plentiful harvest; and indeed they are seldom, if ever, disappointed.

There is not a street through which the procession passes but is adorned in this splendid manner: for on this festival the riches of every individual are displayed to the greatest advantage possible, and with a peculiar degree of art; which, I should think, occupy a considerable time in preparation.

In one of the streets leading to the great square.

I saw three of the largest and finest peacocks I ever beheld : also pheasants of an extraordinary size and beauty, not much unlike the peacocks in point of feather, but taller, with more slender legs ; and in lieu of a long sweeping tail, small tufts of feathers, composed of dark brown, beautifully shaded with green and gold ; but their eyes and plumage, in beauty and variety of colours, far surpassed any of the biped kind that had ever before met my inspection. They all appeared very tame ; and, with several other large birds fastened in a similar way, were not in the least disturbed by the firing, the shouts of the multitude, or the trampling of the horses. The ground was all over strewn with herbs and flowers, so regularly disposed as to resemble, in many places, the most delicate Persian carpets. - In fine, all the sweets of nature seemed collected in one spot, to honour the sacred festival : and a greater assemblage of people of all ranks, ages, and conditions, I never witnessed, even in the most populous city in Europe ; nor so profound a silence and regularity, except when the pious responses were made.

The governor was dressed in a rich Spanish habit, tastily ornamented with gold, jewels, &c. He was surrounded by a numerous and very splendid retinue, as none but the sick are exempt from assistance at this ceremony.

When the procession reached the cathedral the air was almost rent by the multitude of voices ; and we entered the edifice during a heavy discharge of artillery from the garrison and ships in the harbour, also volleys of musquetry from the soldiers in the streets. Here high mass was celebrated, and the sacrament administered ; which ceremony, of course, occupied a considerable time, and when ended the different communities retired in the same order to their respective convents. The principal visitors and caciques are invited to the governor's, where a plentiful banquet is provided for them, composed of every delicacy the country affords. The eatables, &c. with which the streets were adorned are taken down, and distributed by the parish priests among the inhabitants, who entertain all strangers that choose to partake of them. At night there is a general rejoicing ; when some very ingenious fire-works are displayed, and national games exhibited, such as hunting or baiting the wild bull, &c. and various martial exercises, in which the inhabitants of Buenos Ayres particularly excel.

These customs to an Englishman may appear strange, perhaps ridiculous ; but they are absolutely necessary in all catholic countries, where it is the object of the religious to make as many converts as possible. These public ceremonies, then,

are positively requisite:—you must attack the senses, not the judgment, of an ignorant people. The Indians, in particular, are powerfully attracted by church music: care is therefore taken by the clergy here to invite as many as possible to their splendid festivals, that by witnessing the grandeur and solemnity of the spectacle they might form a wish to become members of a church which, to all outward appearance, is so extremely fascinating.

At our return to the convent we sat down to a very sumptuous and elegant dinner, composed of every delicacy of the year. This is a peculiar indulgence granted them by his holiness the pope; otherwise our order profess abstinence and mortification. But I sincerely believe it is profession only; for though the rules of this society are neither rigid nor severe, I doubt me they are frequently enough infringed upon; in which case, and indeed in most other cases, a penance enjoined is quite sufficient, without spending much time in enforcing it.

LETTER XIV.

Convent of St. Dominic, June, 1797.

FOR a certainty the superior of this convent is an excellent, good man ; and I must confess, in spite of my heretical ideas, leads a truly holy and religious life, unbiassed by bigotry, untrammelled with superstition. He is going very soon to visit a presidency under the protection of St. Dominic, at a place above four hundred miles beyond Cordovo. I should like much to accompany him, but know not how to solicit the favour : for, since I must perforce stay in this part of the world, I would much rather be a wanderer in and about the missions than confined to this dull uninteresting spot. I am not fond of an inactive life. Man was never sent into this world by a beneficent Creator to slumber out his days in sloth and indolence, amidst a society of licensed drones, who live but to eat and enjoy, without the labour of earning them, the blessings of nature, in a superlative degree. Mistake me not, my friend : I do not include in this unqualified censure the adventurous missionaries who are dispersed over the

whole of Paraguay. These, if I may believe report, are true disciples of the primitive apostles, who existed only for the benefit of their fellow beings: but the lives of the clergy in local societies afford at the best but a questionable picture of Christian forbearance, benevolence, and meekness. Their power, where they have any, is exercised with a blind erroneous severity; and their persuasion, when employed, tends but to enslave, not merely the souls, but the bodies of their converts. Nevertheless, as they certainly are masters of eloquent dissimulation, they are never at a loss for agents to execute what their policy has planned.

The interior missions serve to provide for a multitude of young men, who must otherwise attach themselves to mechanical pursuits. This is repugnant to the pride of many, who would at any hazard prefer being at the head of a presidency, and governing a body of ignorant savages, in constant fear and turmoil, to a life of dependence, however secure, in more polished societies. For this, my friend, who can blame them? The love of liberty is inherent in the mind of man. It is an immortal blessing, which cannot be too highly valued, nor too dearly lost. I wonder no longer at the heroic, obstinate resistance the Indians made to secure this invaluable

treasure ; nor at their inveterate hatred of the Spaniards, who have strove, by the most stubborn unremitting cruelty, to enslave so many unoffending thousands, born free as air, and demanding an equal right with their merciless invaders to every bounty from the hand of nature. They have now flown from the heavy yoke they could neither break nor bear ; and few, very few Indians are at present to be seen in the Spanish settlements, except the peculiar slaves of the state and individuals. They live at a considerable distance from the towns, and studiously avoid holding any correspondence with their tyrants but during the time they come to exchange their commodities for those of Europe, which by former communication with the Spaniards they have learnt the use of. Some of these trading Indians come from an immense distance—many between six and seven hundred miles—bringing with them the annual tribute, and large quantities of the herb paraguay ; which, I believe, I mentioned in a former letter. It is here in much request, and used alike by the Spaniards and the natives, being mixed, in some sense, as tea is with us, and drank as a common beverage ; the want of wine in this province causing a great consumption of it. I frequently drink of it, and taste but very little difference between that and tea. They are both

astringents, but with opposite properties : for as the latter relaxes and weakens the stomach, so the former strengthens, braces, and invigorates the whole nervous system. I speak of the received opinion as to the effects of tea : for my own part I always found great benefit from the use of it ; but my constitution is a whimsical one.

I HAVE been out twice in the town since the festival, accompanied by father Jerome, who has been very busy for these last five days in preparing for the departure of the superior ; who, I find, is obliged by his office to visit the presidency once in three years ever since the expulsion of the Jesuits.

In one of our rambles Jerome took me to the house of a Spanish merchant, who during the peace had considerable dealings with some of our Bristol traders. I can now converse tolerably well in Spanish ; and from this gentleman I learned several particulars respecting the war. He is not over-rigid in his national principles ; but speaks of the English as a brave and generous people, and very much regrets our being in a state of hostility. He has a large family of children, and a very agreeable woman for his wife : her name donna Louisa. She visited England with him

about sixteen years ago; but did not, it seems, see the capital. She was at Bath and Bristol, but her travels extended no further. She expresses a great desire to see more of our island, and says she hopes to do so when her husband returns to Old Spain. He is a native of Barcelona, and came here, with many others, to improve his fortune by commerce. They are both very communicative, talk freely on all subjects, and are extremely fond of pleasure, which indeed every individual here seems to pursue with as much avidity as the North Americans do gain.

I could not help contrasting the manners of this lively Spaniard with those of my old friend Mrs. B—— at New York. There, all is frugality and management: here, nothing but gaiety and dissipation. Nothing here is more degrading to a woman of the better sort than attention to the domestic concerns of the house; of which, for the most part, they are wholly ignorant. The morning she employs in religion and visiting her particular friends; the middle of the day in sleep; afternoon and evening in dress, music, and conversations, for cards are not in fashion here. At their grand repasts, which they take at evening, it is genteel for every one to eat as much as possible; and the guests may likewise take away

with them as much as they please, without being esteemed in the least ill-bred : and I must confess, from the profusion which appears in this merchant's house, I begin to think that trade must be attended with very advantageous effects, as my friends in the northern hemisphere have so often asserted ; and of which, if my factor H—— is fortunate, I hope to have proof positive. I have learnt to consider this point more attentively since my visit to don Manuel Robledos than before ; as a trifling, or even comfortable, income could not support the style in which even the middling class of people here live : whether Spaniards holding places under government, merchants trading to foreign countries, or Creoles, who carry on a traffic with the Indians—all appear to live as though the only business of their lives was pleasure, and this place the emporium of the world. Not but I could discover in the wretched little hovels inhabited by the mestizes only—this is a mongrel race, sprung from the native Indians and the meanest of the Spaniards—a sufficient share of poverty and filthiness. Some of these people have voluntarily put themselves under the protection of their conquerors ; others are attached with the lands to the officers of state and superior grandees, and pass, like the boors in Russia, from one master to another, at the

caprice or pleasure of the crown, or the governor of the province, who exercises here an unlimited power of life and death over the miserable natives, whose situation, in many respects, is far worse than that of the African slave in our colonies.

LETTER XV.

Convent of St. Dominic, June, 1797.

FEW people are more disposed to make the most of life than myself. Is it possible, therefore, that I could long endure with patience the dull routine of a monastic life? I was tired of it in less than a fortnight; and my thoughts, which neither state policy nor stone walls can restrain, are eternally roving over these neglected provinces, picturing to myself what vast improvements I could make in the various presidencies, the concerns of which form the principal topic of conversation in this convent. I cannot help regretting that such immense tracts of fertile land between La Plata and Brazil should lie in a state of uncultivated nature, without contributing in the least to the comfort of any individual. Certain I am that great and unmanly tyranny must have been exercised by the Spaniards over the natives, to cause such an universal indolence and imbecility; nor, if I may judge from appearances, is this tyranny in the least abated.

Last Friday I went again to don Manuel Robledos'. After dinner we walked in his gardens,

which are very spacious and beautiful, reaching down to the water's edge. Next adjoining to these were the pleasure-grounds of the lieutenant-governor, in which I saw three Indians at work, apparently sinking under the fatigue of a task to which their strength was inadequate; while a Spanish superintendent, who watched all their motions, punished the slightest remission of labour with the most inhuman stripes.

I enquired of don Manuel if this was their usual custom. He answered, yes: and when I expressed my surprise and abhorrence, by observing, that even the negroes on the British plantations passed a life far, very far, less wretched; he coolly replied, "Very true, sir: and so do my domestic slaves, who am but a merchant. But what is the reason? The African we are obliged to purchase; and if through ill usage he dies, there is so much money lost. Now the native Indian is the property of the state; and no one suffers by his loss but his majesty, who has it in his power to replace it immediately, without feeling the least inconvenience." Bad policy, thought I; but, from prudential motives, said no more upon the subject till our return to the house, when by repeated questions I gained such information from the communicative Manuel of the Spaniards' inhumanity towards their unfortunate captives as

made my blood run coldly through my veins, and my heart revolt from the idea of owning such tyrannic beings for my fellow-creatures.

When the Spaniards first landed on this injured country the innocent inhabitants received them as gods from a distant region. Then was the time for them to have established their reign on the immortal basis of justice and of mercy, and to have secured a certain empire over the minds as well as bodies of their new subjects. Lenity and kindness, it has ever been allowed, are far more efficacious in gaining the affections and governing the passions of an untutored savage than rigor and severity unjustly adopted, injudiciously applied.

In strong uncultivated minds there is no medium affection between ardent love and the most deadly hate. Actuated by the former, he will share with you every thing he possesses; follow you, serve you, die for you: but once excite the latter, and never, never to the end of time can it be eradicated from his breast, but descends from father to son to the latest generation, and strengthens instead of decaying. Would it not have been wiser as well as more politic in the Spaniards to have wrapped in downy folds the galling chain of slavery, and learnt to consider these unhappy victims, not as mere beasts of burden, formed

but to labour and to perish, but as men, bearing like themselves the stamp and image of a beneficent Creator ; born with an equal right to all his bounties, and whose ancestors enjoyed unmolested for ages the ground now wet with the tears of their oppressed and injured offspring ; and from which their inhuman tyrants derive the whole of that immense wealth, which has long been their only support and pride ?

There have, it is true, been many humane and salutary regulations made and edicts issued at the court of Spain for the protection and relief of the harassed Indians : but of what service are they, when so shamefully neglected, or so scandalously abused when put in execution ? The power which alone can remedy the evil is at too great a distance to perceive the extent of it ; and here, in the actual scene of action, every one who has the smallest share in the concerns of government is too much occupied by his own particular interest to attend to any measure that might, if adopted, deprive him for a time of the smallest advantage he derives from the post conferred upon him, however such a step might tend to alleviate the sufferings of a wretched people, oppressed and injured beyond the power of resistance, or even of complaint.

The only object here of those in power is to

make an immense and rapid fortune; at whose expence, and by what means, they care not. Every officer that is sent from the mother country hither finds an allotted number of natives attached to the situation provided for him: those he has liberty to employ how, when, and where it best pleases him, and as fast as they perish he demands a new supply; of whom there are yearly sent many thousands from the inland presidencies to the Spanish towns, there to be employed in the mines, state buildings, or the service of individuals, as government thinks most fitting.

Such a wanton impolitic sacrifice of lives, joined to the dreadful ravages made by that fatal disease the small-pox, which is peculiarly destructive among the Indians, must naturally tend to diminish their numbers, if not, at length, to their total extermination. Symptoms of this have been already felt, and schemes are daily projecting to ward off the approaching evil. This is useless: It is too late now to be prudent; and Spain at large must be content to suffer for the turpitude of those in whom the interests of this southern world were vested.

Great numbers of negroes are yearly imported for domestic servitude, but notwithstanding this the loss of the Indians begins to be sensibly felt; and was it not for the consciousness the court of

Madrid cannot but feel of the state of imbecility to which so many years of luxurious indolence have reduced its military power in this country, I should entertain the most serious apprehensions for the liberty of those tribes who in the interior of the provinces have yet preserved their independence uninjured, unsubdued. Some of them, it is true, pay an annual tribute to the Spaniards for liberty to trade to their settlements; but there are others still more remote, who heroically persist in holding not the smallest intercourse whatever with the invaders and enslavers of their native land: and this implacable hereditary hatred is augmented rather than diminished by the aggravating reports of those Indians who, unable to bear the severity with which they are treated, contrive means of escape from their servitude in the Spanish towns; and fly for protection to their happier brethren; who, by a long and firm resistance, have rendered themselves extremely formidable to their European task-makers, whom they now keep in a constant state of alarm. The arms which once awed them into silence time has rendered too familiar to be feared; and the Spanish rulers perceive too late the fatal error of their predecessors, who barbarously rent asunder the bonds of faith and friendship with the natives, trusting only to a despotic tyranny, which in progress of

time must inevitably work its own destruction. Such ever be the effects of unfeeling avarice and thirst of power ! Had the kings of Spain when first this country became theirs by right of conquest—for by no other can they claim it—duly appreciated the blessing, and, mindful of the *future* interests of both nations, adopted such measures only as were most likely to produce not only lasting but increasing benefits, alike to their successors and their subjects, how widely different would have been the conduct of the mercenary invaders !

Omnipotence never created one human being to exercise tyranny over another. We come alike free into the world from the hands of the great Creator, and nothing but our vices should make us subservient to the rod of power. If we obey a superior, it should be from principle only, and not from compulsory motives. A generous soul disdains such forced obedience ; nor can the man who boasts the common feelings of humanity exact it. If a man serves me voluntarily, I am served well ; but if I compel him to obey me, the service is not well performed—it is but half done, with grudging and ill-will. Were I a prince, I would sooner command an army of ten thousand volunteers, than boast the services of as many millions compelled into action.

It is the unhappy natives drawn from the pre-

sidencies that have erected all the public buildings; and like the thousands whom Peter the Great tore from their native villages, and condemned to work and perish in the bogs of St. Petersburg, so these have laboured, and become unpitied victims, under the directions of the Spaniards.

My friend, I am sick at heart when I consider the depravity of these pretended christians, and the *injustice* of Heaven in bestowing on such wretches the power of oppressing so many thousand inoffensive beings. But let not finite wisdom measure infinite. “The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate, puzzled in mazes, and perplexed with errors; our understanding reaches them in vain.”

I may be wrong in estimating the guilt or innocence of the unhappy Indians. In ages long since past, crimes may have been committed which now at this far distant period have drawn down the vengeance of an offended Deity; and the inhuman Spaniards rule not but as the ministers of retributive justice. It is a dark subject: I had better leave it. Time will unravel all.

Adieu! Yours.

LETTER XVI.

Convent of St. Dominic, July, 1797.

WHY, my friend, did the primitive fathers institute religious societies? Is it consistent with the precepts of Christ to shut up so large a portion of the human species in habitations secluded from the world? Do not many of those men, think you, possess talents that might enable them to be very useful and ornamental members of society, instead of passing away their lives in a kind of slumbering existence like the little animal called a sloth? The monastic life, of all others, appears to me the least congenial to the mind of man:—no emulation, no fire, no wish to perpetuate their names to posterity, for that is denied them, and nothing substituted in its stead but a repetition of prayers and exercises in which the heart joins not, and praises to their God for blessings they know not, or knowing, never can enjoy. No man, unless he has truly tried the world and grown weary of it from misfortune and neglect, should be permitted to enter a religious house and waste away his life in a state of indolent forgetfulness. Is it natural to suppose that any man should forego the

chief end for which he was created, and seek for happiness in a society from which the female world is utterly excluded? Were a devotee who had not experienced such a way of life to tell me that he knew he should be perfectly happy in it, I would first boldly assert the contrary, and then quietly demonstrate to him the absurdity of such a notion. Man was formed to mix in and enjoy the blessings of active society, and not to bury the talents with which Heaven has gifted him in the solitude and gloom of a cloister. I am led into these reflections by a discourse I have had this morning with one of the fathers who came into the garden, whither I had gone to assist brother Jerome in placing some choice plants round the margin of the reservoir, the situation in which they thrive best, owing to their natural propensity to stagnant water. His discourse turned at first on the beauty and variety of the flowers; he then passed to observations on England, and the happiness he supposed I now enjoyed in being so far distant from a nation of heretics, with whom I could never hope to obtain eternal salvation. For a moment I could not reply to his observations: father Jerome looked at me, and gave me to understand by his manner that it was necessary I should seem pleased with my situation. I took the hint, and recovering myself said, I certainly did consider myself as under the highest

obligations to the community, and should feel happy in the extreme if permitted to remain among them till our adverse nations should again be friends.

‘Then you would leave our society,’ said he with some degree of quickness, ‘and return to those infidels were we at peace?’ ‘That, your reverence,’ replied I, ‘will depend on circumstances: since it has pleased Providence to conduct me to these distant regions, I would willingly see as much of them as I possibly can before I decide in what part of the world to fix my resting-place. I have heard much of this wonderful country, and doubt not but I should admire it as much, if not more than any traveller that has preceded me, could I but be permitted to visit some of the distant provinces;—not that I should ever expect to find a spot more suited to my inclinations than Buenos Ayres.’

‘True, true,’ the father said; he had heard from brother Jerome that I had been for some years past a traveller from choice, not necessity. But was I not tired of roving about? Should I not be more at my ease, and more comfortable, if fixed to one spot, than to be daily exposing myself to disease and hardships, for such all must expect who led a wandering and unsettled life? My motive for rambling, I assured him, arose from curiosity alone; I found roving from place to place without

any settled plan had been essential to my happiness, by bringing fresh objects continually to my view; and by such means diverting thought from that which, if left to itself, would sooner or later destroy the whole system of reason.

‘It is enough, my son,’ said the father, ‘I will not now ask thee what thy troubles have been; for if such as thy discourse alludes to, and I conceive it right, at some future time perhaps thou wilt be able to talk more freely on the subject.’ As he said this he suddenly changed the subject, and took up a flower, and discoursed on its formation with a precision and correctness I little expected to meet with in a friar of Paraguay. We spent nearly two hours in conversing on various subjects; but he never once hinted any thing relative to the war or my detention. Father Jerome was all the while employed near us, and seemed to feel a pleasure in hearing his superior talk so long and so familiarly with me. When the latter had left us, two more of the fraternity came up and entered into conversation; but their discourse was confined to the pleasure they enjoyed in that holy society, and how happy they were in the continual exercise of devotion.

I assented to what they said without appearing to doubt the truth of it; but I could not help smiling to myself at the mistaken zeal of the reverend labourers. They had never any of them, excepting Jerome, conversed with me so long before, since

little more than the customary salutations of the morning, and at the hours of prayer, had passed between us: for though they all, as I have said before, regarded me as a very good catholic, yet being an Englishman was sufficient reason for their keeping me at a kind of civil distance. I was therefore somewhat surprised at this sudden alteration in their behaviour: but the mystery was soon unravelled on my return to the house. One of the lay brothers who has charge of the expenditures of the convent, and is in fact the treasurer, came to inform me that the letter of credit left by captain H—— had been duly honoured, and that, after paying the fathers for every expence they had been at both before and since my removal hither, he had a surplus in his hands of seven hundred and thirty piastres. He then presented the account of what had been done for me; and a letter from our friend B—— at New York, directed to be delivered to me if living, and if not, to be returned by the next American vessel that should touch at Buenos Ayres. This epistle was truly laconic, but very significant and friendly; perfectly consonant to the character of the writer, a truly honest man, who it was evident had my interest very much at heart. On examining the brother's account, I found I had no reason to be in any shape displeased at the charges; on the contrary, I was

persuaded I had not been charged enough. I therefore immediately requested him to accept three hundred piastres for the use of the convent, and twenty for himself: observing, at the same time, that I still considered myself as under the highest obligations to every one in the community, and should take every opportunity while I remained there of testifying my gratitude. The pious purveyor went from me in high glee: I had made him perfectly happy. Soon after I met brother Jerome repairing again to his usual avocation, gardening, in which he is from inclination a very great proficient. I accompanied him as usual thither, and by the smile on his countenance was certain he had something pleasant to impart. He is a good soul, and fond of anecdote. When we had reached the end of an avenue which commands a view of the country to the south, he says, ‘Look at that pavilion yonder, and try what you can see.’ I did as he bade me: it was a little low building belonging to the grove at St. Theresa, which is a sort of public walk where the inhabitants of Buenos Ayres go during the processions; which are as frequent in this place as in all catholic countries in Europe, and even more so. This grove reaches almost the whole length of the town, and nearly encircles the principal buildings. It is a very pleasant place, and much frequented, except

when the pampero blows ; and then it is impossible to remain in it on account of the vast quantities of sand which the wind in its violence hurls over the passenger. I looked very earnestly towards the spot, but could not distinguish any particular object for near a minute ; when at last I saw two religious, as I supposed them to be, come out of the alcove. ‘ Do you not see them now ? ’ cried he. ‘ Yes, ’ said I, ‘ I see them as you say ; but what, my friend, is there new in a scapulary and cowl ? ’ ‘ A great deal, ’ returned he ; ‘ sometimes more than you are aware of. The one you see taller and more lusty is not what he seems to be ; he is a countryman of yours, and no monk : the other is a lady, daughter of a privileged Jew immensely rich in this town. She has contrived to effect her escape from a convent at the back of the fort, and they are now waiting for a friend of mine to take them safe to St. Gabriel, from whence they will sail in a few days for England in an American vessel now in the harbour. It was this business which detained me so long while you were at don Manuel’s. I love your nation, and would do any thing to serve them :—you see I would.’ ‘ But are they not, ’ said I, ‘ in a perilous situation ;—do they not run a risk of discovery ? ’ ‘ Not in the dress of that order, ’ he replied. ‘ Do you not observe it is that of the barefooted Carmelites ? they are privileged to beg,

and in the grove are occasionally stationed for that purpose. Many will turn their heads away when they see a religious of that order coming towards them. See, the lady accosts at this moment the secretary of the major-general: he turns his head and walks on:—there, now they pass down the walk and address two ladies; they give something. My pupil seems to be perfect at her lesson: the women are, in general, more charitable than the men.'

When the counterfeit monks had received the donation they returned towards the pavilion, and as they were about to enter it, two seamen came up and accosted them. They turned immediately, and followed the sailors towards the shore: brother Jerome stood fixed to the spot, pursuing with his eyes the objects of his care. A few minutes brought them to the water's edge, where a boat was in waiting, into which they got and were rowed off pretty briskly. A few people were on the ramparts of the fort directly over them, but no one seemed to notice the transaction. The father stood intently gazing until they had doubled a kind of cape, round which boats of every kind are obliged to pass before they can gain the Plata. When the fugitives had cleared this point, he turned, and thanked God they were now in safety; 'for,' says he, 'I am sure they will not now meet with any interruption; all the inhabitants will be

snug at their siesta when the boat reaches St. Gabriel, and then they may laugh securely at old don Jacob, who, by the bye, is a sort of equivocal character, and a very great miser. He has two other daughters at the same convent, but they are younger and not so pretty, so they will do very well for the purposes of a holy life; for, between you and me, there is not much devotion in any of our women, unless it be the old devotees, and even they are not so strict as those in Europe, where women, after they have passed the age of admiration, are seldom any thing better than religious dragons, for so I remember them when a boy in France. I had an aunt that was one, and I most cordially hated her for the ill-natured vigilance she exercised over my orphan sister, who was three years older than myself, and very pretty.—But hush, here is father Hernandez coming, I will tell you more when we are alone to-morrow.' The father approached: he had a book in his hand on which he seemed very intent, but on seeing me he closed it, and began an acknowledgment for my liberality, as he termed it, to the convent. But I instantly assured him, that so far from any thing I had done meriting their thanks, I was, and ever must remain, indebted to them on the score of gratitude far more than I could express. We then changed the subject to the

projected improvement in the harbour of Buenos Ayres, which has been long planned; but he frankly confessed he did not think ever would be accomplished, it being a work of very considerable labour and expence. For such is the indolence and carelessness of the Spanish government in this part of the world, which seems active only in the exercise of tyranny and the gratification of avarice, as to be totally neglectful of the real interest of the mother-country. The vesper bell broke up this interesting conversation: and when our evening devotions were over I hastened to commit to paper the occurrences of the day. Adieu!

LETTER XVII.

Convent of St. Dominic, July, 1797.

I AM now, my dear friend, allowed the privilege of dressing in the Spanish habit, and paying visits, not only to don Manuel's, but to three or four other families to whom he has introduced me. Among the grandest, is a gentleman nearly related to the major-general. He is an officer of considerable merit, and was one of those preserved by British humanity at the siege of Gibraltar; where he was wounded in the side by a splinter which broke three of his ribs and his right arm just above the elbow, and likewise very considerably injured his face; but he recovered, and, at the peace, was sent hither to take the command of a regiment, and make his fortune.

He lives in great splendour, and twice invited me to his house within these last ten days; each time there was a concert and a ball, for they are as fond of dancing here as in any part of Europe. Their treats are extravagantly sumptuous, and their politeness to strangers exceeds any thing I ever met with. The ladies, in particular, vie with

each other in obliging their guests. It is not at Buenos Ayres as in Old Spain, where none are admitted to an assembly but those of equal rank : here, merchants and their families are invited to the governor's public entertainments ; and though the inhabitants are not so numerous as might be expected in a town so situated at Buenos Ayres, which is in fact the staple for all the produce of the distant provinces, yet there was at the last ball given in honour of the governor's birth-day a very numerous and brilliant assembly. The dons were dressed in the usual Spanish taste, but with a greater variety of colours, and the ladies' dresses differed very widely from those in Old Spain ; their petticoats were of taffeta, ornamented at the bottom with gold lace, or fringe, richly tasseled. The slippers of some were composed entirely of gold embroidery, and their stockings interwoven with the same metal in so fanciful a manner as to display the shape of the leg to the most luxuriant advantage ; and those that had pretty ones, by the shortness of their petticoats, seemed by no means disposed to conceal their beauties from their admiring partners. A kind of jacket made of velvet fitted tight to the shape, and laced or buttoned in front, with long points hanging down quite round the petticoat, and trimmed at the ends with pearl tassels. On the shoulders of

this jacket was fastened a cloak made of gauze, or some such light material, which hung as a loose train on the ground, and was occasionally fastened to the side by a clasp of jewels. The general head-dress was either a handkerchief of gold gauze, braided in with diamonds, or else chains of gold and pearls twisted in and out with their shining black hair, which all the ladies have in great profusion; and their bosoms were covered with solitaires, composed of every different kind of jewels, pearls, and gold, but no feathers or flowers.

I danced a saraband with donna Josefina Theresia Iboriola, a young lady of great beauty and accomplishments; she is a visitor with her father and mother at the commandant's. They are residents at Cordovo, where Josefina was born.

Donna Louisa equalled in splendour the richest lady present. She is the most lively and entertaining female I ever conversed with; and is, with her husband don Manuel, admired by all their acquaintance.

The paltry distinctions of rank are here laid aside; and from the freedom of conversation I am inclined to think that French liberty and equality have stolen into New Spain. If so, and the contagion should spread, I believe some very material alterations will take place before long.

The religious form a very considerable portion of

all public assemblies; and, if I am to judge from the numbers I every-where meet in the streets and at the houses where I visit, I should be apt to conclude that two-thirds of the male Europeans were ecclesiastics; for you encounter them in every direction, unless at the hours of prayer. They mix promiscuously in all societies, and appear to be the confidants of every one. A priest, young or old, may enter a house at what time he pleases; go into whatever apartment he sees fit, and stay as long as he thinks proper; and no questions are asked. They pass and repass perfectly at their ease: and to those imaginary devout men, the fathers, husbands, and brothers, are as complaisant as an obsequious French *petit-maitre*; and, if I may venture to conjecture, these holy gentry have not much reason to regret the state of celibacy to which their religion condemns them. The ladies are certainly not what we may call handsome, but there is a sort of playful voluptuousness about them that cannot fail to please even one more nice than myself. I speak of the superior class only; for below it there are not, as with us, any females deserving attention. They appear indolent and filthy in the extreme; and of a breed so heterogeneous, as would puzzle even a Lavater satisfactorily to define their race.

I would fain give you a description of Buenos Ayres ; but, upon my honour, besides the people, there is nothing in it worth describing : it is really surprising that a city like this, which is the capital of such a vast extent of country, and the see of a bishop, should have so little in it worthy the attention of a traveller.

Its site, indeed, is considerable enough, if it were but better occupied. The suburbs, which are principally inhabited by mestizes and negroes, are, in appearance, somewhat similar to that part of London which lies about Shoreditch and Whitechapel—I mean the *lowest* part of it—but a hundred times more miserable and filthy. The middle of the city is better, and some of the principal streets have a show of opulence and taste that is very agreeable ; most of the houses that have been built within these last fifty years are of stone, but none of them exceed two stories in height, the greater number are but one. The *calle del Santa Trinidad*, or street of the Holy Trinity, and the *calle del San Benito*, or street of St. Benedict, are by far the handsomest of the whole. The former, which faces the great door of the cathedral, and runs almost the whole length of the town, is very regularly built, and occupied only by the better sort of the inhabitants. Almost every house has a garden both before and behind ; and all those that can afford it have

balconies, with sun-shades and lattice-work, adorned with the most beautiful shrubs and flowers that the earth produces. Here the family sit best part of the day, and night too when they are not visiting, and take their coffee or chocolate, and play on their guitars and mandolines: most of the ladies have fine voices, so that the man who strolls about the town in the evening may enjoy the pleasure of a concert gratis as he passes along.

The cathedral, which is built in a kind of Grecian architecture, is a noble building, and deserves a better metropolis: it has a cupola of very excellent workmanship; and a portico to the western door the design and execution of which would do honour to the most celebrated artist; it resembles very strongly that of our St. Martin's-in-the-fields, which is so universally admired. The cathedral was, I understand, the work of the Jesuits before their expulsion. The interior of this edifice is, if any thing, too richly ornamented with carving and gilding, which gives it rather a taudry appearance; but the inside of the dome is painted in a very tolerable manner, in compartments, representing the acts of the apostles—a subject very appropriate to the conversion of the Indians. The choir is likewise adorned with paintings from the same subject; and there was a very fine altarpiece, but it is now taken down to make

room for a more valuable one, sent from Old Spain, but which is not yet ready to be put up.

The bishop, governor, and major-general, have each a separate stall, very superbly decorated with purple velvet, embroidered and fringed with gold: over that of the governor are the king's arms in gold and coloured velvet, very ingeniously contrived. But the custom here of covering almost the whole inside of the churches with flowers and branches—which hang from one saint's day to another, when the dead ones are taken down and fresh put up—though in itself it is pretty enough, yet entirely destroys the beauty of the architecture, while the effect of the flowers themselves is lost in the glare of the gilding. It is well gold is so plenty on this continent, or these extravagant ornaments without taste or judgment, *por amore de Dios*, would come very expensive.

The church of St. Francis and that of the convent of Mercy are likewise very beautiful buildings; with cupolas and high steeples, much in the same style as the cathedral, and just as profusely decorated, but without any paintings except the altarpiece. The church and convent of St. Francis stand in the street of that name, which runs obliquely from the water to the grand square in the middle of the city, where the soldiers are sometimes exercised as on a parade: on one side

of this square stands the town-hall, a very large and handsome building, erected on a plan of the Jesuits', who certainly may be called the fathers of architecture in this part of the world.

There are a great many other convents and nunneries dispersed over the city; some of them very large, and of a noble appearance, but all very well inhabited; for nuns here are as plentiful as monks, though they have not the same liberty of going into public. All these edifices, with the houses of the governor and major-general—both very commodious—the receiver-general's office, and a public hospital, are built of stone, beautifully white, which is found in a small plain in the vicinity of the town. The barracks for the soldiers are of brick, as are some few of the houses, and have but a mean appearance when contrasted with the whiteness of the public buildings, the fairness of which is preserved in a great measure by the frequent visits of the pampero, which wind is an excellent bleacher. The fort, which commands the island of St. Gabriel, over-against Buenos Ayres, is large, strong, and provided with a great many apparently very good brass cannon; but it is awkwardly situated, and, with a little manœuvring, if there was but a sufficient depth of water, an enemy's ships might very easily annoy the best part of the town without being much incommoded

by the fire from the fort. But they have little danger to apprehend from an attack by water, the Plata is too well provided with natural barriers, in her sands and shoals, to admit of a marine invasion; unless, indeed, the French were to come here with the flat-bottomed boats they have been these three hundred years preparing for a descent upon England, and then I fear neither the fort, the governor, nor his half-clothed ragged regiments of long-haired Indians, and whiskered Spaniards—who are without exception the dirtiest slovenliest set of soldiers I ever set my eyes upon—would be able to accomplish much in defence of the town: taken altogether, in some points of view, it affords an agreeable prospect enough, from the gardens and trees with which it abounds, contrasted with the whiteness of the houses, which, in their colour, height, and form, greatly resemble those in the British colonies in North America. But the effect of every thing in this place is, in a great measure, destroyed by the extreme dirtiness of the inhabitants; who, from their natural indolence, and lazy habits, are beastly to an excess in every particular. Heavens! what a contrast do I not frequently draw between the everlasting cleanliness of the North American, and the superabundant filthiness of the South! The former, every Friday and Saturday, makes ye hop, skip,

and jump, like an opera dancer, to escape the transparent sprinkling of a notable mop-twirler, or to screen your clothes and eyes from the unfriendly benedictions of the general whitewashing, which annually, and in a smaller degree weekly, takes place in most of the capital towns. And this some of the shrubs I sent you from Philadelphia can testify, for three of them were, by one of these daughters of cleanliness, plentifully baptised with her olympian dew, which cost me two days' labour to wash off from the leaves only, but from the bark it was impossible to remove it. I remember it was done while I was gone to seek the captain of the vessel that was to convey them to England. When I returned, and saw what had been done, I forgot I was in Pennsylvania, and began to anathematise most devoutly. Mrs. — ran out to enquire what was the matter; with her grey stuff gown and whitewashing cap most delicately dappled. I told my grievance, and demanded redress. 'Lord bless me,' said she, 'is that all! why would you have had us leave that side of the room undone?' 'Undone, madam!' I exclaimed in all the rage of injured genius; 'yes, I would have had the whole house, nay the whole city, left unwhitewashed, rather than the shrubs should have been sprinkled in this diabolical manner.' 'I do not doubt you in the least,' said she; 'I

never knew an Englishman yet that was fond of cleanliness.' 'Zounds, madam!' cried I, 'can this be deemed cleanliness, which deranges the whole economy of the house, turns topsy turvy things that never should be stirred, and sets at defiance every rule of peace, order, and regularity, besides destroying every article that comes within its reach?' 'Pretty talking, truly!' retorted the lady: 'Pray how are the holes and corners to be cleaned, if every thing is not removed into the middle of the room? Why, good God! you English are as dirty as the Esquimaux!' This allusion silenced me immediately: it was a climax, there was no withstanding it. I therefore quietly ordered a pail of water to be brought me, and began sousing my poor plants as plentifully as the good lady did her house; which operation I was left in perfect security to perform, since nothing can be more acceptable to a North American female than slopping the pavement with water, provided the walls are not splashed in the execution.

Now were I to represent this mode of cleaning to the ladies of Buenos Ayres, I doubt whether I should not be sent to a place of confinement as a lunatic. Scrubbing and scouring are not in the South American dictionary, and I really think were never even heard of. The rooms of the wealthy are swept with a kind of broom, made

from a peculiar sort of grass or flax which grows in the swamps where the wild sugar cane is found. This is collected into a large tuft, not unlike a mop, and with this the slaves sweep, or rather wipe, the rooms, which in summer are covered with a beautiful matting wove by the Indians, and in winter with an European carpet. White-washing, scrubbing, and sousing, would be far more grateful here than in more northern climes, yet they are never even thought of. The whole life of a woman above the common class is one continued scene of indolent monotony; and she would think herself degraded to the lowest state of servitude were she, for a moment, to consider by what means any part of the house might be made more commodiously clean than the other. The domestics follow the example of their superiors as sedulously here as in Europe; and none of them will do an item of work more than their allotted portion, let what will be the consequence: nothing seems more irksome to them than to be compelled to execute any thing out of the common way. As no master is served here from principle or affection, coercive measures are the only springs which set their machines in motion;—for, literally speaking, they are nothing but machines, and that as if formed by some bungling mechanic; for surely there never was such a lazy, dirty, stink-

ing set of mortals ever collected together in any other civilised city.

Godliness is here in vast profusion—I mean in outward show; but how it exists without its concomitant cleanliness I am, really, at a loss to conjecture. I believe I must leave this knotty point to the determination of some more able casuist than

Your sincere friend.

LETTER XVIII.

Convent of St. Dominic, July, 1797.

THE more I contemplate the filth and laziness of these people, the more I regret that the miserly Henry, when applied to by Columbus, was not inspired by the demon of avarice, if no more laudable motive could have actuated him, to have fitted out the noble adventurer, and by that means to have secured this country, this rich delightful country, to the crown of Britain. The Spaniards possess blessings they never did, nor ever will, know how to appreciate; for, slaves to gold, they neglect every other advantage. Had the English possessed this southern world, thousands and tens of thousands, nay millions, would have blest the hour when they became their conquerors.

The Jesuits, though now abolished, have shewn, in the immense superstructure they have raised in the interior of this and the adjoining provinces, what wise legislators they could make if gifted with the rod of power, by the several large commonwealths (if I may use the word) which they have established: and when I consider the fragile foundation on which they erected an edifice that

amazes and confounds the world, I know not which to admire most, their zeal for religion, or their superior political wisdom and thorough knowledge of the human heart. The more I reflect upon it the more I imagine that the fathers who first attempted the conversion of the Indians must have been inspired: few could have persevered under such dreadful hardships as they suffered if they had not experienced a divine impulse: they knew the secret workings of the passions; they possessed penetration beyond the depth of common men, and saw that cruelty and deceit were not the means to win the hearts of rude untutored beings, living in a state of nature, and sensible of no laws but those which she imposes.

But the hope of bringing over these poor people to a knowledge of the true and only God was not the only motive that actuated these deep and cunning politicians; they had a greater and more enlarged sphere of action in view. They daily witnessed the imprudence of exercising coercive measures over the poor conquered people, who had made such noble and heroic stands to preserve their native blessing, liberty, and repress their barbarous invaders: the fathers were convinced that men who had acted uniformly with such determined valour would be much sooner won by mild and gentle treatment than by acts of violence

and oppression : they, therefore, about the middle of the sixteenth century, petitioned his catholic majesty for leave to enter the interior of Paraguay and Tucuman, and endeavour by means of persuasion *only* to initiate in the principles of the christian religion the hordes of Indians who had fled from the persecutions of the Spaniards ; and by thus planting the gospel in these remote regions, bring over to the service of the state thousands that were then wandering far distant from any Spanish settlement. .

Their petitions were granted ; and a vast number of missionaries, selected from the society of Jesus, were sent out at the king's expence to put in practice the theory they had adopted ; and it was settled between his majesty and the mission, that the state should be at the charge of transporting them to the scene of action, where they were to open their spiritual campaign, in which the governors of the provinces, by order of the court, were not to interfere in any shape relative to the establishment, nor was any Spaniard whatever to enter their districts without leave obtained.

They were to be provided with necessaries of every kind for the arduous undertaking ; and to be supplied from time to time with articles of clothing, furniture, and every other thing which the exigency of their situation might require.

The missionaries, on their part, agreed to pay to the crown annually a sort of capitation tax, of a piastre per head for every individual they might bring over to the faith of Christ ; and, in proportion as their proselytes increased, to send a certain number to the royal works or army whenever the state should think proper to make the demand, provided the converted Indians were sufficiently numerous to admit of drafts being made for that purpose, which was to be done, if I conceive the matter right, in much the same manner as the militia is drawn for with us ; but with this difference, that the Indians are drafted for *life* ; and the services required of them are severe in the extreme when compared to the employ of our militia, who are never called into action but on extraordinary occasions, and disbanded at the end of the war to return, if they think proper, to their native towns and families : but the poor Indians once sent from their peaceful settlements never return to them more ; they are condemned for the rest of their lives to toil and misery, either to work in the mines or to form a kind of auxiliary troop to fight against their unsubdued brethren, who even now make frequent inroads on the Spanish settlements. Others are doomed to labour incessantly at the public works, and many are consigned to the different offices of

state, and pass like heirlooms from one master to another with the post to which they are attached. The present major-general, who lives adjacent to the fort and has the command in all military matters in this part of the world, has several hundreds of these wretched people at his disposal ; and I wish I could add that his treatment of them is such as redounds to his credit as a humane man and a judicious officer ; but truth compels me to say, that, on the contrary, the severity which is exercised over them is such as must shock the understanding and pain the heart of every person endowed with merely the common feelings of justice and humanity.

No wonder then that to serve a Spaniard is deemed by the natives the most dreadful of all calamities ; every Indian shrinks from the sound of a Spaniard's voice, and among the unreduced his religion is held in the utmost abhorrence.

The dispersion, or rather expulsion, of the crafty Jesuits was become an act of state necessity, since they had established in the very centre of the southern provinces an immense theocracy, which even threatened to overturn, at some future period, the power of the crown, if the various accounts I have received may be relied on ; for, at the time of their expulsion, they could command, as spiritual guides, several hundred thousand families,

and among them no less an army of well-disciplined troops than from eighty to a hundred thousand men, all properly trained, clothed, and accoutred, and ready to follow wherever their pastors should think fit to lead them.

How far this estimate may be true I know not ; I give it you on the report of father Hernandez ; and I have heard the same confirmed by don Manuel, who is of opinion that the *present* race of ecclesiastics have not at all mended the condition of the Indians, who are in fact worse off and more oppressed than before. He thinks, and says, that were the English to make a spirited attack on Buenos Ayres in conjunction with the Portuguese on the side of the Brazils, there is not a doubt of the Indians joining them ; the face of things being so materially changed since the dismissal of the Jesuits, under whom they had been detached from a state of barbarism, instructed in the knowledge of our blessed christian faith, and taught the use of arms, agriculturè, and commerce ; nay, even some of the fine arts are known among them ; I myself have seen several specimens of drawings done by the Indians, which, from their correctness and beauty, I should readily have taken for the work of an Italian artist. I had sketched two or three views from the convent garden, and thought them tolerably well done ; but I found them very in-

different when compared with those examples of savage genius, which plainly evinces that great care must have been taken to instruct them, and proves that those very people we have been taught to look upon as little better than the brute creation possess not only a clear comprehension of perceptible objects, however different from any thing they have been accustomed to, but elegant and refined intellects, and capacities competent to execute whatever an enlightened European may boast as an exclusive accomplishment. The Jesuits judged and acted right; mildness and persuasion have succeeded in drawing forth from obscurity those gems of reason which, like the diamond, remained hid in darkness till the ingenuity of man found the means of disclosing their beauties. I hope it is not sinful to wish this oppressed and deeply injured people might make one more grand effort; and, by the aid of the still unconquered nations, assert their rights, and drive these barbarous tyrants from their lands. They are now brought to a knowledge of the true God, and human sacrifices are no longer known among them. The rights of nations, and the relative duties of society, they are now informed of; nor do they neglect the practice. Then will not divine vengeance be at length appeased by the deaths of so many thousands, as, since the conquest have

paid, through the upraised arm of power, the debts due to offended Heaven?

I am certain, my friend, this great revolution might be accomplished, could the British arms but gleam upon the plains of Paraguay: believe me, this is no idle chimera or phantasm of the brain, but the result of critical enquiry and mature reflection. Had the Spaniards pursued their conquest with mildness and lenity, no honest or good man would have envied them the possession of this rich and fertile country; but every one would have rejoiced to see so many human beings drawn from their savage life and barbarous customs to partake in Christian occupations and rational enjoyments, and know that they were formed for nobler purposes than to be waging eternal war, and, in their frantic triumphs, to sacrifice and eat each other. Such would have been the happy consequences of a humane policy on the part of the Spaniards; but the direct contrary method has been pursued by those who term themselves the most zealous for the cross of Christ. Deceived, deluded, arrogating mortals! the sighs of the suffering Indians will yet be heard at the throne of Mercy, and their tears, ere long, be washed away in the blood of the Spaniards.

Don Manuel assures me I must not draw conclusions from the Indians I have seen at work

here of what the natives are collectively; for the appearance of these is disgusting in the extreme; but these, he tells me, are not real Indians, but a kind of mongrel breed between an African and a native. God of heaven, how I detest any thing that tends to mar thy grand designs! Man, when created first, was perfect, and without a blemish; and, as a special mark of the Almighty's favour, formed after his own celestial image: for, as the Scripture says—"In the likeness of God created he man." But I know what a certain wag of our acquaintance would say if he saw these people: "Why yes, the Scripture does say so, and it may be very true; but then it is so many years since the stamp was made, that it is now too much worn out to make any fixed impression." Trifling as this remark may seem, it is really a very natural one; for, while surveying this degenerate race, we might very readily image that Omnipotence had no share in their formation: but from whence can this deformity of particular people arise? Is it to be deduced from natural, physical, or artificial causes? or do the crimes of man occasion this wide deviation from the original laws of nature, which, in themselves, are all perfection? To solve this question requires an abler physiologist than myself: but I cannot help thinking, with our friend doctor Dingley, that the wickedness of man is the princi-

pal cause ; and if so, I must regard the marriages of vicious or deformed men and women as absolutely outrages against nature, and, as such, ought not to be permitted. Why not suffer those only to inhabit the cloister ? the condemning them to celibacy would be no loss to the community, but rather an advantage ; we should not then meet in the circles of society deformed, ugly, sickly, unhappy beings, utterly incapable of enjoying life with any degree of satisfaction. Whether their debility arises from natural or acquired defects, it would be far better, in my opinion, for them to pass their lives secluded from the busy world ; for to be received in society with an eye of pity only must to a quick and susceptible mind give the most poignant uneasiness. In the peaceful shades of the cloister the glance of scorn cannot reach them, nor the sounds of affected feeling or cruel derision invade their ears. The deformed in mind too, even before those whose infirmity of body unfits them for society, should be condemned to solitude and prayer ; since the innocent then would not be contaminated by their vices, and they might themselves learn, from religion and reflection, to amend their lives. This, you will say, is idle theory, and never can be realised : it may be so, but that does not do away the justice of it. I cannot bear to see so many fine young men and

women immured within the walls of a convent that would, in every sense of the words, be useful and ornamental members of society. The clergy would not then deserve the odium which is daily thrown on them, the women would have less temptation, and secret vice would not have so many votaries.—But I forget I am in the dominions of his catholic majesty ; where reveries like these would perhaps subject me to the censures of the church, should they be known. Adieu!

LETTER XIX.

Convent of St. Dominic, August, 1797.

ABOUT an hour after I had closed my last observations respecting the Indians I received a note from don Manuel, requesting my company to spend the day, as he expected a party from the country, with whom he thought I should be very well amused. I am now at liberty to go out and in as often as I please, provided brother Jerome is informed what family I intend to visit. He is my friend as well as keeper; therefore I have nothing more to do than say to him I am going so and so, and shall return at such an hour, which I punctually observe. This is all; and I wander for hours about the town and its vicinity, sometimes drop into one house and sometimes into another; and they being scattered widely about, the trees and shrubs with which they are surrounded afford me the most ample gratification—for more refreshing or more odoriferous scents never regaled the sense of mortal. And this blessing of Heaven on the outsides of the houses counteracts, in some measure, the disagreeable smells I often encounter within.

In my way to don Manuel's I took a circuit round, in order to visit a brother, of the order of Mercy, with whom I have contracted an acquaintance; and, as I can now converse with tolerable fluency in Spanish, most of those I consort with regard me as one disposed to spend the remainder of my life among them. "All's one for that," as Falstaff says: I am not bound to justify their presentiments.

When I reached the convent I was informed by the porter that father Nicolas was gone to administer extreme unction to senhor don Gabriel Ventura. I enquired where the senhor lived, and was surprised, on being told, to find it was in a little house in the suburb of San Benito, at which I had often stopped to converse with its owner, a feeble old man, whom I thought very poor; and, under that idea, had often taken to him a bottle of wine, which is here, in general, dear; and he always appeared to receive it with great pleasure and thankfulness.

To my utter amazement, I now learnt that he was one of the richest men in Buenos Ayres; but had never been married, consequently had no legitimate children to inherit his possessions. I could scarcely believe this account, not thinking it possible that any man possessing such considerable wealth should by choice live in a state

of apparent pejury. But I found it was all true on my arrival at don Manuel's, who declared that to his certain knowledge don Gabriel was worth above two millions of piastres; all, however, gained by his father, under the Assiento contract, he having been appointed by government to purchase from the English and Dutch all the negroes brought by them to Buenos Ayres; and though he amassed immense sums while that contract lasted, yet he never had spirit to spend a single piastre. The whole of his wealth was hoarded for the son, now dying, whom he next to idolised, and fondly hoped to see outshine in splendor even the grandees themselves: and, that his accomplishments might equal his riches, he sent him to Old Spain for education; where he remained at Salamanca near nine years, when his father sent for him home, to complete a marriage between him and a young lady, the only daughter of a very rich merchant at St. Jago, with whom he was to have a princely fortune.

Every thing was prepared for the nuptials, and both fathers anxiously anticipated the moment that should make their children happy in each other; when, on the eve of the day appointed for the celebration of the marriage, the intended bride was seized with the small-pox, and died in agonies the third day after. This shock affected her fa-

ther in so sensible a manner that he survived her little more than a month, leaving the whole of his immense property to the college at Cordovo. Don Domingo Ventura, on this melancholy event, once more sent his son to Old Spain : but on his passage thither the vessel was taken by an English privateer, and he was carried into Plymouth. There he remained for some time, and fell in love with an English lady ; but she being engaged to another, he could not obtain her. On this fair-one's account he lingered in England a long while after the war was concluded : but her husband being appointed to a place at Bengal, she went thither with him ; and our disappointed Spaniard returned to his father, with a fixed determination never to marry. This resolution of his, it was believed, broke the old man's heart in less than two years after his son's arrival. Gabriel inherited the whole of his fortune ; but never entered into any company from the time of his father's death : and for these last fifteen years he has wholly resided at the little dwelling where I used to visit him, in a manner wholly abstracted from the world. His wealth must be immense ; for it has been in the hands of a person at Cadiz ever since his father's death, with orders for him to make the most of it—while the melancholy owner remained here, in a state of apparent starvation. His

health has been declining for many months, and the convent of Mercy, it is conjectured, will enjoy the greater part of his riches ; for he has no relations to give them to, his father having been an obscure adventurer, whom no one knew.

Don Manuel had scarcely finished this account when a message was delivered to him, desiring that, if I was at his house, he would immediately bring me to don Gabriel Ventura's. Very much surprised, we hastened thither ; and found the old gentleman in the agonies of death. He turned his eyes towards me, and motioned for me to approach. I did so, and knelt by the bed-side. He then asked, with great difficulty, if I knew a family of the name of L——, in the county of Sussex ? I told him, no ; I had not the least acquaintance with any one in that quarter :—but I had a relation who lived near the place he mentioned, and in all probability knew the family. At this his eye assumed a temporary lustre, and, taking my hand, he asked me if that relation of mine would see that a parcel was safely delivered to the person for whom it was directed ; or, if she were dead, to her children, if any survived, and if not, to her nearest of kin ? I solemnly assured him, that if it once reached England it should be punctually conveyed to the party he mentioned. He then put into my hands a small parcel, which I hope you will receive with

this letter : and let me beg of you to see the poor man's request complied with as expeditiously as you can, having pledged my honour for the due performance of it. Don Manuel undertakes to get both that and my letters—which I have regularly taken to his house as soon as finished, lest any accident might happen to me—speedily forwarded to England.

But you may like to know how my visit terminated. When I had secured the packet, Ventura seemed more composed, and we joined in the prayers that were offered up for his repose. He received extreme unction, and we left him in a kind of slumber. Father Nicolas remained, and the next morning I heard he was no more. His will was opened, and in it he bequeathed, as was expected, a very considerable sum to the convent of Mercy, for masses to be said for the repose of his soul. Two domestics who had formerly lived with his father were handsomely provided for; and to my astonishment I received a ring of great value, as a recompence for the trouble I may be at in the execution of my, or rather your, commission.

In this man's fate we see another unhappy demonstration of the futility of all human designs, and the caprice of what we call fortune. When I reflect on this and many similar circumstances, I

am almost tempted to arraign the dispensations of Heaven, when it bestows on those incapable of enjoyment an overflowing of every earthly blessing, while the virtuous and accomplished are denied even the common comforts of existence. Surely there appears a very blameable partiality in the distribution of Divine favours; or else we must admit the Eastern doctrine, and allow the interference of inferior agents, endowed with powers sufficient to influence the fate of mortals, and bestow or withhold the treasures of this world, as best pleases their capricious fancies: else why do we so often see a man of genius, honour, and religion, surrounded with afflictions and disappointments, without a friend to aid or comfort him; and, on the other hand, a fellow that is both knave and fool reveling in every blessing this world affords?

My friend, if there is *not* a race of beings inferior to the Deity, yet possessing the means of controlling the fortunes of man, then is the Omnipotent either wholly regardless of the creatures he has formed or cruelly unjust in his treatment of them: and neither of these positions can I reconcile to my ideas of the almighty Creator. But I must leave this subject: it is a dangerous one; and, if indulged, may make a sceptic of me.

Perhaps you would like to know how I spend

my time. Thus it is : On ordinary days I rise when the matin-bell summons me to prayers. Devotion—or the show of it—ended, I attend brother Jerome, and one or other of his compeers, into the garden ; for, to speak freely, I shun the senior fathers as much as possible. I cannot have patience to listen to or argue on theological subjects, when I know neither party can benefit by the discussion. I always, therefore, if I can, keep out of their way ; and from matins to breakfast amuse myself in assisting to transplant herbs and shrubs, watering the flowers, gathering fruit, or any other little office, where I may be busy without doing mischief. Breakfast over, I retire to my apartment and read Spanish authors, of which the convent library can boast some pretty good ones, besides the religious. This takes me up two or three hours, according to the goodness of the subject ; and when tired of this employment I take a little Indian basket, and visit the environs of the town, where I botanize till the mid-day prayers, when I attend and join very fervently in their devotions. Soon after we dine. When that ceremony is dispatched I continue about an hour with the novices, listen to their arguments, and sometimes contend with them ; but that is only according to the humour I am in. When each retires to his room I either write to you, resume

my reading, or arrange the plants I have gathered, and study the mode observed by the Indians in the use of them, to compare it with that adopted by our physicians. I have collected several medicinal plants, which I think are not yet known in Europe, few botanists having visited South America. I regret much the circumscribed limits of my rambles; for I am not permitted to go beyond a certain district, which does not extend above a mile and half from the centre of the town. However, I am promised by father Hernandez—who acts as our superior while the real one is away—that I shall soon have greater indulgence.

After the hours of sleep, termed the siesta, which begins about two and ends at five—during which time a most profound silence reigns everywhere around—I dress myself, and pay a visit to some family or other with whom I have made acquaintance; where I generally spend three or four hours very pleasantly, in music, dancing, or conversation.

The eldest son of don Manuel—a fine boy, whom I mentioned to you in a former letter—improves hourly. He can already hold a tolerable discourse in English; and by instructing him I contrive to preserve my native tongue, which

otherwise, from want of practice, I should be in danger of losing.

I have begun to take several views about the town and its vicinity : but have not yet had it in my power to finish one, as no drawing or plan of any place, either public or private, is permitted to be made but by a native Spaniard ; and here they are all too lazy to trouble themselves about any thing of the kind. But, notwithstanding their indolence in other matters, they contrive to be pretty vigilant spies ; and, like true dogs in the manger, industriously hinder others from enjoying the advantages they are themselves insensible to. How I detest such needless, selfish, narrow-minded policy !

I spend most evenings very agreeably ; and but for a thought that now and then obtrudes itself on my remembrance, I might, perhaps, be happy, as far as man can hope for happiness this side the grave : but cruel reflection, like a pursuing fiend, still presenting to my view the mirror of past times, dispels at once the flattering delusion ; and to avoid the misery of mind that haunts me I hurry into company, and strive to elude its grasp by restless and incessant action.

I have been trying several experiments to extirpate the ants, which swarm here as bad as the

locusts in Egypt, and destroy the young plants with the most unrelenting fury; as do the monkeys, of which there is an uncommon number here, and some of an extraordinary shape and bigness. They find out, cunningly enough, where any new plants of European growth have been set, and watch with the utmost vigilance until they are about two inches above the ground; when these artful creatures contrive to make their way into the gardens, and there nibble and destroy every dainty article they can find, turning up the soil with their paws, as if determined that not even the roots should escape their depredations. Nor are the parrots of Paraguay less intent upon destruction than the quadruped; only with this difference, the former work by day, the latter by night. It is not a little amusing to observe the contrivances of the gardeners to circumvent these mischievous animals: one among many, intended for the monkey, is truly farcical in its effects. They weave a kind of wicker trough, or rather pipe, about three feet long and two in circumference, in which is placed a small light box, wherein young green twigs of the vine or other plants are set. This box is laid towards the end of the trough, furthest from the aperture; the monkey is of course obliged to make what we call a long arm to reach the bait: the box being pressed down by his exertions, a

spring with a weight attached to it falls, and encloses his paw, which generally has been inserted so far as to take in the leg nearly to the shoulder. The moment he finds himself ensnared he struggles to get loose: but his efforts only serve to fasten him more securely in the trap; for with the which way he will the weight, by turning on a pivot, screws the limb still faster within. When he finds all his endeavours useless he makes a grand push to set off with the whole apparatus, grinning and gnashing his teeth in a most grotesque manner: but when he reaches the place by which he entered the garden a new difficulty occurs; the whole length of the wicker is most commonly opposed to the aperture, and he must either sit quietly down and knaw the trough to pieces—which, from its being made of strong osiers, would take up a considerable time—or else he must resign all hopes of escape, and calmly wait the approach of the gardener, when a very diverting scene ensues. At first the monkey makes use of the most supplicating gestures to mollify the anger of his assailant, whom he finds prepared with a cudgel to chastise his knavery. When supplication will not avail he throws himself upon his back, and begins to chatter, grin, spit, and fight; and is so extremely dextrous in turning himself to avoid the blows, that scarcely one in ten touches

him ; but he makes as much noise as though he felt the full weight of the whole. One is not a little amused to see the farce ; however, it always ends like a tragedy, fatal to the robber, who is killed and given to the negroes or Indians, when they make a feast with his carcass, which I am assured they prefer to beef, or even venison.

The depredating parrots are likewise caught in traps, but the gardeners are careful not to injure their plumage. As soon as taken, their necks are twisted, and the feathers curiously preserved. These the Indians have a method of preparing in a manner equally singular and beautiful, by blending the colours agreeably to the strictest rules of art. Of these, intermixed with the feathers of the birds taken on the banks of the Paraguay*, they make cloaks, ornaments for the head, and picture-frames ; which last are truly ingenious, and have a most striking and agreeable effect. A plain frame of wood is first made, the size of the picture, the edges turned with a sharp curve ; over this is spread the picture, whether on canvas, paper, or other materials : that done, an-

* The name of this province is derived from the quantity of beautiful birds and flowers with which it abounds : the word *paraguay* signifying, in the language of the natives, *variety of colours*.

other frame is added, made entirely of feathers, and those such as bear an analogy to the subject, and by their different tints reflect a shade the best calculated to display the merits of the painter to advantage. How this is contrived I am as yet ignorant ; but certain I am that it produces an effect the splendour and beauty of which none but those that behold it can form a competent idea.

In the church of the Franciscans I am informed they have a picture of the Last Supper, painted by an Indian residing at one of the presidencies on the Uraquay, a very capital performance ; the frame of which is composed entirely of feathers of a bright gold colour, and so artfully contrived as to appear to the nicest observer some of the most correct carving and gilding ; nor can the difference be discovered until it is touched by the hand. This picture was a present to the Franciscan fathers from the Jesuits, not many years before their expulsion.

This is to me another proof of the great policy and depth of thought of those ecclesiastical monarchs ; for I cannot consider them in any other light. Their plans were laid with amazing judgment, and attended with unexampled success ; and as Moses led the Israelites for forty years through the wilderness of Canaan on to conquest and the

utter abolition of surrounding nations, so would the Jesuits, as soon as they had found the youths of the tribe they governed were thoroughly initiated in the discipline of war, and those of maturer years as well grounded in the theory of governing and preserving those arts they had so carefully been taught. The holy fathers would, like the law-giver of old, have conducted them to triumph over their proud oppressors; and the dissolute invaders of their native plains. An ecclesiastical heptarchy would then have been established, and a pope elected to superintend the whole. I hazard this conjecture from concurring circumstances which I daily hear of, notwithstanding every tongue is enjoined silence as to those particulars; but things will out at times, in spite of prohibitions.

My old friend, brother Jerome, is very apt to forget himself, and, from something I caught hold of to-day, I am certain all is not right in the presidency whither our superior is gone, who, if I am rightly informed, is to remain in that district, and exercise his spiritual functions among them, in order to see if mildness and humanity will not have a much happier effect upon the disorderly members than coercive measures, which have been exercised, I believe, lately to very little purpose. Father Pablo's Christian equanimity of temper

and mild benevolence will, I am certain, restore all to tranquillity, if tyranny does not counteract his designs, and usurping power do away the good his pious exhortations cannot fail of producing.

I can now conceive the reason why I was denied the privilege of attending him, in the character of a novice, to his mission. In the refusal there was policy : had I gone I might have discovered the nakedness of the land, or rather the imprudent conduct of the rulers, who seek by prohibitory laws to repress even the luxuriant gifts of nature.

Is such a system, my friend, congenial to the laws of either God or man? Does it not betray a weakness, which in time must destroy itself? Where Heaven has showered its bounties, and nature has spread her most inviting gifts, why should the commands of usurping power render nugatory the one and destroy the other? It would be very painful to me, possessing a Briton's idea of liberty and property, to have the first circumscribed and the second liable to be seized on by the legislative power, or what I enjoyed not to be permitted to make the most of, which I am informed is now the case. During the reign of the Jesuits, government did not interfere in either spiritual or temporal affairs. The converted Indians, in their

different towns, were encouraged to exercise trade and commerce without the interference of the civil power; and were permitted to sell whatever they chose to dispose of, without being burthened with duties on any one article. They paid the annual piastres exacted of them on their first establishment, and sent from their communities the numbers which the state demanded; and this was all. Their property, whether it consisted in land, cattle, or articles of barter, was exempt from the rapacity of tax-gatherers; and they yielded no account to any one but their spiritual governors, who laboured as well as the meanest Indian for the general good. In every town they had a public store-house, in which was deposited the produce of every individual's exertions; and from this grand source was drawn the means of support for all. This was daily portioned out by their pastor, agreeably to the wants of every one, who was always sure of enough, but none to waste. The clergy saw the necessity of domestic regulation, and enforced it, till at length the people were also convinced of its utility; and while each in his turn laboured for himself, he also provided for the community at large. The aged, the children, and the sick, were sure of being taken care of: all their wants were supplied from the grand repository, and the surplus was freely re-

signed to the church. It was such wise and provident regulations as these that elevated Sparta, Rome, and Athens, from a mere handful of aspiring men, to republics that governed the world. But now, if my information is founded on truth—and I have no reason to doubt it—this wise system of things is entirely overturned. The Indians have, it is true, ecclesiastics as usual, to superintend them and regulate their affairs; but those ecclesiastics are now themselves subordinate to the civil power, and not, as heretofore, guided by their own laws exclusively. They must now pay a heavy duty for every article they make use of in the presidency, and all they dispose of is taxed in a similar manner. The clergy are answerable for the strict payment of the duties; and if injustice is exercised, it is of no use to complain. Their parish priests are appointed by the state, and are amenable to it for their conduct. Every step they take is watched, and the utmost vigilance observed by the civil magistrate. The military commandant is no longer a cacique, but a Spaniard; so is their corrigidore, alcalde, alquazils, &c. All is now in the power of the state; and though the ancient forms are apparently kept up, yet it is in appearance only. Formerly no Spaniard was permitted to come among them; and if, through business or accident, any one or more did arrive

at the presidency, they were obliged by law to limit their stay to three days ; at the expiration of which, if they did not depart peaceably, they were by force compelled.

Now young people are sent from all parts of the province to visit the presidencies, and likewise to study at Cordovo, under professors of other orders, who are, I understand, instructed to implant in the minds of their pupils an abhorrence of the jesuitical tenets, in hopes that in a few years all ideas of their different republics will be done away. How this system will succeed I will not pretend to say ; but, if I may judge from the manner of the young Spanish students who accompanied our superior to Cordovo, very little good will result from it to either party. These young men seemed to me to have imbibed a strong tincture of modern French philosophy, and many expressions which escaped them plainly indicated very liberal sentiments on the art of governing. I very much doubt if the rising generation of Spaniards will pay any more respect to a crowned head than their volatile neighbours have done. Let but those principles be disseminated over this new world, and farewell to the monarchy in the old one. The resources now daily drawn by the mother country from this once stopped, or even suspended, and Old Spain

must speedily become the prey of any power that chooses to invade her. It is the riches of these injured nations which alone supports the pride of his Catholic majesty, and without which Spain would long since have become a province of France, or else have been parcelled out, like that devoted country Poland, among different nations of Europe. Our admirals, under Elizabeth, put the death-stroke to their maritime greatness, and our succeeding victory over their arrogant designs at Gibraltar completed it. Indeed, it would be stamping the dispensations of Heaven with injustice were they ever again to be a powerful nation. "Blood will have blood," as Shakspeare expresses it. Their horrid *auto de fés*, and daily sacrifice of thousands in the mines, call aloud at the throne of Heaven for retributive justice. The former evil, it is true, ceased with the reign of the Jesuits; but the latter still exists, and that in a much wider extent than ever. There is not a visit I make in the town but I am told of the immense quantities of silver drawn from the mines, and preparing for exportation to the mother country as soon as there may be a peace. When I hear this I cannot help devoutly wishing it may fall into the hands of my countrymen, and inspire them with the thoughts of conquest here. But if the navigation of La Plata may be urged as an argument

against such an expedition, why not direct their arms against the fruitful plains of Chile? which I am informed is another *Tempe*—mild, salubrious, rich, and fertile, abounding in all the blessings of nature, in the most comprehensive sense: a place which holds out the most inviting picture to any nation possessing souls indued with the spirit of enterprize, industry to improve, and humanity to govern; for the one without the other is like a king without a country. I am to see a gentleman this evening, who has recently passed the Cordillera, and who comes here for the express purpose of treating with an English factor for some British manufactures, which he means to speculate on at Conception; but his designs are not known to any one here but don Manuel.

From this gentleman I hope to learn some authentic particulars respecting Chile, a province I have a very ardent desire to visit; but I fear I shall not be allowed that satisfaction. At times I am almost tempted to take the cowl, in order to have an opportunity of seeing the presidencies; for many fathers are still sending off to supply the place of the *ci-devant* disciples of Jesus. I have made great intercession on every side, through the medium of my friend Jerome, to obtain this—in my eyes—desirable privilege; how I shall succeed as yet I know not, but I believe the good-

natured brother would be very happy if I could have my wishes gratified, and I am certain still more so if I would turn monk. Blessed St. Dominic, what a pious reverend father should I not make! Pr'ythee, my dear friend, indulge thy fancy for a minute, and imagine me in the scapulary, cowl, and tonsure, enjoining penance to some lovely young Spanish female, who, with mischief in her eye and meekness on her tongue, believes all to be gospel that comes from her father confessor. Ah, *mon Dieu!* what happy fellows those ghostly confidants must be!

Adieu! Yours, in the true spirit of envy.

LETTER XX.

Convent of St. Dominic, Aug. 1797.

I HAVE this morning received another remittance from my old friend at New York, and have not hesitated to make another offering to the fathers, which was very graciously accepted. I am in hopes, through the proper application of my piastres, that I shall be shortly able to obtain a more enlarged sphere of action. There is a whisper among the novices that one of the fathers is appointed to the care of a mission on the banks of the Uruguay. They don't know which ; but should it be father Hernandez, I think I may stand some chance of accompanying him. He seems, by his manner, to have taken a sort of liking to me ; and any kind of travelling, so it be travelling, would be more agreeable to me than beating, like a mill-horse, the same eternal round which at present I am compelled to submit to.

The trees round the houses, which I frequently ramble among, forcibly recal to my remembrance the groves at C——, where you and I used to enjoy every pleasure our happy country affords to those possessed of independence : and could I but

meet with as much cleanliness in this part of the world as I was accustomed to find there, I should spend many hours very agreeably ; but, alas ! I must not think of it. Here pride and laziness have banished neatness : all within doors is disgustingly filthy ; and without, were it not for the sweets which fill the air from the grateful breezes blowing constantly from the Plata, the place would be really insupportable. It is these breezes which keep the city cool and temperate ; for, being surrounded on all sides by plains of immense extent, the winds have nothing else to employ themselves upon.

I had rambled this morning to the utmost limits of the bounds prescribed me, which happens on one side to be the banks of the little river that runs up to the town. I was standing on its margin, and reflecting on the similarity of my then situation and when I was at Westminster-school, when many a time I have stood at the end of Palace-yard longing to break bounds and scamper off with some one or other of the town boys, who had been telling me where they were going and how agreeably they were to be entertained. I sighed at the remembrance, and could not help wishing those happy days might once more return. I stood in a musing posture, regardless of every thing near me, when I was roused from my reveries by the loud clatter of women's voices, and, turning quickly

round, perceived four negro women and a girl washing linen. Their mode of proceeding seemed to me very strange, and I stood silent, to watch their motions. One of them spread the clothes on the green sward by the river's side; another took up an earthen vessel of water, and soused them; while the other two knelt down, and with a piece of soap smeared them well over: then, with both hands spread flat, they rubbed the articles backwards and forwards on the grass. When this had been done some time, the women again soused the linen well with water, turning it this way and that, and sprawling it about in a very uncouth manner, as I thought; but never rubbing it between their hands, as the English washerwomen do. When the articles were found to be sufficiently clean, the water-bearer took them to the river, rinsed them up and down two or three times, and then hung them up on poles set cross-ways on others fixed in the ground. While one woman was thus employed the others were repeating the operation of smearing and sousing upon the rest of the clothes; so that, by working one under another, no time was lost. The women appeared to press the linen as much with their knees as their hands. In this manner they dispatched a large basket of clothes in a little time; and as the sun was very ardent on the spot where they per-

formed this curious washing ceremony, the whole of the truck was dry almost as soon as they had finished; and in the space of an hour and half they had taken every thing back to where they came from, I suppose, dry and as white as the purest snow.

Fond as the good housewives of New York are of deluging every thing with water, I am afraid they would say of this negro mode of washing that it was more haste than good speed, for nothing could possibly be well done that was hurried over in such an apparently slovenly manner: but, in my opinion, this observation would not hold good; for the clothes, though not rubbed with so much labour as the North Americans may bestow, yet did not appear a jot less clean or white. This was the first washing I had witnessed since my arrival; and I assure you I was not a little amused. What trifles, you will say, at times, interest me! They do so: but can you wonder at it, when you consider the local life I at present lead, and the circumscribed manners of the people I am among? I am not permitted to visit the landing-place of the boats coming from the harbour; that is out of bounds: and when I walk about the town the few individuals I meet are either Spaniards, moresque, or negroes; for very few Indians, if any, will be seen in the Spanish settlements, except

at the times of barter. I have not had the pleasure of seeing the gentleman from Conception ; for, instead of dining with don Manuel, he had been summoned to attend the major-general.

Donna Louisa gives a grand entertainment this evening, at which all the principal ladies in the city are to be present. It is her husband's birthday ; and, as he is a great favourite with all ranks of people, it will be very brilliantly attended. Father Hernandez accompanies me. He is, I am certain, a very worthy character ; and I shall, during our walk, venture to prefer my request of being permitted to travel with him to the presidency, and he will tell me at once whether or not it can be granted.

Oh ! but I had like to have forgot : I have a commission for you to execute for donna Louisa. She wishes you to procure her a complete set of Handel's oratorios, which she means to send as a present to the convent of St. Benedict at Cordovo ; one of the community having expressed a great desire to obtain them, in order that the Indians at the presidencies may be instructed to perform some of that immortal master's inimitable compositions. The Indians, I am assured, are wonderful proficient in church music : for the fathers, on their first establishment, took the utmost pains to have the children taught that captivating art ; nor have the pupils ill repaid the trouble that was taken

with them: though I am yet to learn if they are indulged in their usual attendance in the churches, which during the reign of the Jesuits was constant and unremitting. Nothing can please an Indian more than being employed in any office immediately about the church; for that they regard as the ultimatum of all their wishes: and those who, by their voices and skill in music were appointed choiristers or performers in the bands of musicians attached to the divine service thought themselves the particular favourites of Heaven, and their spiritual guides failed not to encourage such ideas. It is therefore a great point of emulation in them to study music in a very assiduous manner, and painting also, that they might, by the exertion of their abilities, contribute towards the decoration of the house of God, and by their offerings secure for themselves a seat in the mansions of eternal bliss; and it is by such fascinating measures as these that so many have been converted. What a pity it is the clergy of the reformed church are not as indefatigable in the pursuit of proselytes as the superstitious Romans! whose zeal—real or pretended—for religion very few of our divines are much inclined to imitate. Let me, though, except from this charge of spiritual indolence that notable class of labourers in the vineyard of Christ, the methodists, who, God speed them! work as hard

In the cause of the Lord as many of their disciples do in that of the devil. I cannot, however, sometimes help thinking, that the industry of the Whitfieldites is in general no better bestowed than that of the agriculturist in Scotland ; verifying an old vulgar proverb originally from Spain, and very much in request here, i. e. “ Great cry and little wool ! quoth the devil when he sheared his hogs.” Mercy upon me ! what must the blessed saints and holy martyrs think, when they look down from their celestial abodes and see religion made a trade of—Avarice the master, Fraud and Hypocrisy foremen in the shop, and Ignorance the only purchaser ? At times I am really half inclined to fear, that if I leave this region of devotion at all in my senses I shall quit it an infidel, or at best with no better faith than a quaker’s. Adieu ! Yours.

LETTER XXI.

Convent of St. Dominic, Aug. 1797.

I HAVE succeeded, my friend, in my application to father Hernandez, who, luckily for me, is appointed to visit the presidency of Rioja Minor, on the banks of the great river Uruguay; our superior finding it necessary to have a father placed there whose urbanity of manners may conciliate the jarring interests which at present disturb the community. This is the true reason, as brother Jerome informs me; but the report in our house is, that the present rector of the parish is become too infirm to attend any longer to the laborious duties of his situation.

The young missionaries that accompanied our superior are sent many leagues further up the country: some to St. Lucia, others to St. Cruz, and the remainder as far as St. Juan Antiste, among the tribes or nation called Chiquitos; from whence they are to be still further dispersed, an entire change being about to take place in the missions. We are to leave this city as soon as the annual rains have ceased, which here descend with uncommon violence, attended with some of the

most terrific thunder and lightning I ever witnessed. During vespers last evening a tremendous storm came on, and the chapel was illuminated with double the number of candles used at prayers ; but we had little reason for doing so, for in one moment the whole place seemed one sheet of liquid fire, which played with apparent wantonness round the image of the Virgin, which had been set up, with a vast deal of ceremony, about two hours before, that the fathers might supplicate her, should occasion require her services ; which, as they pre-imagined, actually was the case. They therefore, as the storm increased, fell down upon their knees at her feet, and with earnest supplications implored her and saint Dominic to take their house and themselves under their protection. But, though they prayed and sung most devoutly and with all their might, the mother of God and the canonised Dominic remained deaf to all their entreaties : and what aggravated the matter was, that a tree which grew close to the east end of the chapel, and had been in a tottering condition for some time, fell down at the moment when the fathers' devotion was at its height, and, woeful to relate, dashed its branches through the chapel window, and sacrilegiously threw down the blessed Virgin herself, with all her glittering paraphernalia ; and even the image of St. Dominic, a

venerable old figure, had part of his nose and one of his hands knocked off. At this dreadful catastrophe the whole community arose as with one consent, and fairly took to their heels across the court-yard, leaving the holy lady prostrate before the shrine of St. Dominic. I ran with the rest; but I happened to be one of those usually in all foot races consigned to the devil—I mean the hindmost. The pampero blew like a Jamaica tornado, and whistled through the long vaulted galleries with a horrid hollow violence. One clap of thunder succeeded another before we had time to say God preserve us! and sounded, as it ran along the concave of heaven, as though all the artillery of the skies was opened to annihilate us; while from the celestial watering-pot the rain descended in overwhelming torrents, and quickly deluged every street and garden. The bells of all the churches in the city were set a-ringing, in order, as they said, to allay the sound of the thunder. God knows how far this had any effect; but the heavenly noises appeared to me completely to drown the terrestrial ones, and retain, as they ought, their pre-eminence. This scene, taken altogether, was quite *nouvelle* to me; but, notwithstanding its terrors, I could not for the soul of me repress a smile when I turned my eyes around and saw the fathers, some upon their knees, some

upon their faces, and others throwing the holy water about with as much profusion as the ladies of New York do the whitewash; their hands trembling, their eyes staring, and their features distorted into as many grotesque forms as there were individuals. The fall of the Virgin was regarded as ominous; and in their terror they expressed their apprehensions that it foreboded the downfall of their house. Possessed with this alarming idea, they supplicated every saint in the calendar, except St. Dominic, to ward off the approaching evil: he, poor soul! was thought to have but little influence in heaven, or he would have taken care to prevent such a dreadful disaster and disgrace. I joined in their prayers as devoutly as my risible faculties would permit; for, maugre all my endeavours, the more I strove to conceal my merriment, the more uncontrollable it appeared. I was therefore fain to hide my face on the ground, and let the effects of laughter pass for those of fear.

Oh! thought I, as I lay in this manner, what would their reverences say if they knew that in me, instead of a pious Catholic, they had nursed an abominable heretic? The cause of the Virgin's downfall would be immediately accounted for, and I should be sent pell-mell to perdition. However, luckily for me, all my actions were ascribed to devotion, and poor St. Dominic was anathematised

in my stead. I could not help pitying the unfortunate block, which will, no doubt, undergo a severe castigation; for that, I understand, is frequently his portion, when he does not attend so complacently as he ought to his supplicant. But if their prayers are granted his venerable figure is ornamented with flowers and beads; nay sometimes, on extraordinary occasions, they oblige him with new clothes: but this accident under his very nose will, I fear, keep him in disgrace and dirty garments for a long time to come.

From whence, my friend, does this superstitious bigotry proceed? Is it from custom only, or ignorant obstinacy, like the Israelites of old; or is man naturally prone to idolatry? I would wish to have this question satisfactorily answered, but don't know how to go about it. If I ask a Catholic, he will tell me a long rigmarol of the necessity of erecting images, and the efficacy of praying to them; since those they represent are in the presence of the Redeemer, and ever ready to attend to any petition that may be preferred to his representative, over whom each saint is supposed—considerate enough—to be eternally watching; for celestial spirits are allowed to be present not only in heaven, but a thousand other places, near every ugly block their complaisant votaries may term their holy image.

This religious absurdity brings to my mind a

form in our law, which says, "To be tried before our lord the now king, before the king himself at Westminster in the county of," &c. By which preamble our gracious sovereign is supposed to be present day after day in the court of King's-bench, there personally to hear and decide causes, when at the same time every body knows he never was there in his life for any such purpose, nor ever will be : this is what I call lying by licence. But were I to start this simile to one of these pious fathers he would most devoutly cross himself, turn up the whites of his eyes, and implore the holy Virgin to protect him from such a miserable infidel, who certainly never could work his way out of purgatory after death, unless millions of masses were said or sung for the redemption of his soul. Now this is all stuff; and yet, my friend, I do not altogether deny the existence of a purgatory, nor the reasonableness of imploring the saints : but then it must be to those only whom I reverence as such, not a sinful individual like myself, canonised only for his wealth or power, but those that have suffered for the cross of Christ, and remained steadfast in their faith even unto death. There may be some reason in offering up our prayers to them, and that without the mockery of a carved and painted image, made perhaps by a clumsy

carpenter, my next-door neighbour, and cursed by him a hundred times during the operation, for being so devilish hard to cut.

In the first rude dark ages of Christianity, when visible objects were necessary to work upon the senses of men, in order more clearly to demonstrate the truth of the doctrines inculcated by the preachers, images may have been of service to the cause of religion : but now, when mankind are more enlightened, and the whole civilised world has learnt to distinguish for themselves between real and imaginary beings and sensible and insensible substances, what need is there of this idle, and I may add impious, idolatry? I have in many instances before now preferred the ceremonies of the Greek church to those of the Roman ; pictures being, in my opinion, much more intelligible representatives of either men or things than a senseless inexpressive piece of wood carved into something, and barely something, like the human form. But it is ridiculous to attempt to convince those who are grounded in their absurd prejudices of the absurdity of them ; it is some such event as that of the Virgin's downfall which I believe must work the reformation.

The young novices—who I very well know are no real devotees—were, I could plainly perceive,

as much tickled with the ludicrousness of the adventure as myself; and had it not thundered so tremendously would have sought an opportunity of intimating to me that they thought it a good practical joke, and enjoyed the fathers' perplexity; for, by every glance they cast upon me when we reached the refectory in safety, I was convinced they had had as much trouble as myself to refrain from laughing aloud at the distress and dismay of the elders. This circumstance has given me fresh reason to believe that superstition and bigotry are about to quit these regions, as they have already done the European continent; and I do not know of any corner of the globe they can take shelter in when driven from hence. - The Portuguese, it is true, still retain their ancient bigotry; but I am of opinion, that when the prince regent ascends the throne the reign of monks and Jesuits, with their relics and idolatrous trumpery, will go nigh to be transplanted to the bottom of the Tagus: for, if I may prognosticate as to the probable event of things, extra-devotion must fly the realm, or Lusitania will no longer remain subject to the house of Braganza. Strange mutations in church and state have taken place since the French revolution, and still stranger will follow before the republican mania ceases to operate. The liberty

which the ecclesiastics enjoy here enables them to mix in all companies, and, as this is a maritime town, they have opportunities of learning intelligence sooner than those in the more remote parts of the continent. When out on visits they indulge in excesses even more than the laity, and when they return to the convent they are not always upon their guard. But what they have learned out is sometimes, in an unguarded moment, related within: the novices get hold of it, and make their own remarks, which, I assure you, are not very confined, for they indulge pretty freely in conversation upon subjects which, a few years ago, they hardly dared think upon, and the mention of which would have procured them very severe corporeal punishment: but such punctilios are now but little regarded. Piety even seems to hide her head, and shrink abashed at some of their sallies; and the freedom which the women enjoy here does not a little encourage the growth of infidelity. I have talked several times with don Manuel upon this particular, and he declares that the state winks at the dissolute lives of the clergy, that they may, by their example, give a new turn to the modes of worship formerly observed by the Jesuits, and, by the levity of their conduct, lessen the reverence with which the

Indians were wont to regard their religious governors; whose interest among the natives the court has long been jealous of, and wished to undermine. How far this may be good policy I will not pretend to say, but it certainly has a very destructive and dangerous appearance.

LETTER XXII.

Convent of St. Dominic, Sept. 1797.

EVERY thing is now prepared for our departure: father Hernandez honours me with his confidence, and purposes to make me his secretary on the journey, which will be a very long one. We are to go by water in three balsas, a kind of boat used for the river navigation: two are to convey us and our attendants, and the third our provisions and other necessaries.

I shall now have the satisfaction of seeing the more remote banks of the Paraguay, or Plata, and the Uruguay; which latter empties itself into the former many leagues beyond Buenos Ayres. My friends, don Manuel and donna Louisa, regret much my resolution of leaving them, and harbour many apprehensions that I shall never return. They have exerted all the influence they have over me to dissuade me from my purpose; but my resolution once fixed, I assured them no arguments could shake it: besides, I considered the permission of going as a very great compliment paid me by the father, whose good opinion I could not, by any means, think of abusing.

The bishop and governor have both been informed of my design, and have very obligingly offered their services, if in any shape I should require them. By the bye, I cannot help thinking they are glad to get me out of the town; though for what reason, except my being an Englishman, I really cannot imagine, nor do I much trouble my head to discover.

Our travelling company will consist of father H. as father provincial, attended by a young brother in the character of father companion, two novices, and myself. Some Indians from the presidency are to take us into their balsas a short distance from the city. This part of the journey we go by land: it is only about five or six leagues; for we do not enter upon the water at the mouth of the harbour, because of the difficulty the balsas find in navigating the Plata, especially near Buenos Ayres, which has no shelter from the winds, and the little creek which runs through the town is not by any means calculated to receive the Indian boats.

Provisions for our voyage are already laid in; that is to say, bread made of maize, the native corn of this country, which is very wholesome, but by no means so palatable as our European wheat, which is grown here in small quantities, only just enough to make cakes or pastry for the grandees and clergy. This maize, variously pre-

pared, forms the principal part of the diet of the Indians and negroes. The animal food that we may want will be procured as we proceed along by the Indians, who are, it seems, very expert at all kinds of hunting. Brother Jerome has furnished me with linen and clothes fit for the journey, the most plain and simple that can be imagined: my whole dress consists, besides my shirt, of a pair of black or grey worsted stockings, a black waistcoat, and breeches quite plain, and over them a grey robe, not unlike a domino, fastened at the neck with a button and loop, and round the waist with a leathern belt and buckle; the sleeves are wide and long, so that I am obliged to turn them up half way from the wrist. A large black hat, of capacious dimensions, completes this elegant attire; which were I to wear in the streets of London would procure me as many attendants as a catawbaw Indian, or the Turkish ambassador: but it is the costume of those that accompany the missions; of course I can have no reasonable objection to it. I know not how I shall be able to remit my letters to you after I leave this town: but I shall, nevertheless, continue to write; and if you do not receive any letters from me conclude I am at too remote a distance to forward them to Europe. I have written to New York, and don Manuel has undertaken to manage my affairs in

that quarter. I have made another offering to the convent: and brother Jerome I have privately remunerated for the many friendly services he has rendered me. He pressed very earnestly to accompany us; but the society, I believe, consider his services in too valuable a light to be readily dispensed with. God bless you! Commend me to all those whom you know I hold in dear remembrance.

Ever yours.

LETTER XXIII.

Presidency of Rioja Minor, Nov. 1797.

MANY weeks have elapsed since I last took up my pen to address you. Thank Heaven, I am in good health and spirits, and not at all ill pleased with my situation, though in the midst of woods and wilds; for although I am lodged in what they call a town I can scarcely see a house near me, the streets are so intersected with trees.

We left Buenos Ayres on the fifth of September, in the major-general's private coach: father Hernandez, the father companion, the two young novices, and myself. The Indians of our company were waiting for us at the harbour of Rio de la Conchas, about six leagues above Buenos Ayres, to reach which we had to pass over a part of the plains of Las Pampas: on the way I saw the Indians and negroes killing the black cattle for their hides, which form the principal part of the exports from the harbours on the Plata. Their method is singular, and very dextrous; but to me it seems a savage occupation. The cattle here run wild over a plain many hundred miles in extent; and when the natives are employed to pro-

cure a large quantity of hides they go out in parties, each furnished with a kind of sling or dart, armed at one end with an iron, shaped like a crescent and extremely sharp: this weapon they throw at the beasts as they fly, and seldom if ever miss their aim of ham-stringing them. As soon as the poor animal feels himself wounded he staggers, drops, and lies helpless on the ground at the mercy of his assailant. The hunter, seeing him fall, does not stop to kill him immediately, but goes on wounding more in the same manner; and this he continues doing until he is either tired of the pursuit or has maimed the number he wants: he then leaves off, and, when he has taken some refreshment, returns and finally dispatches them. Formerly several hundreds were killed in this manner at every hunting, and no part of them preserved but their tongues, hides, and fat; the rest of the carcass used to be left on the spot to be devoured by the tigers and birds of prey, who are always hovering near the smell of blood: but now, father Hernandez informs me, they are become more careful of the cattle, which are found not to multiply so fast as formerly, so that part of the meat is now preserved in the Indian manner, and sold to the vessels that touch at Buenos Ayres. This newly-introduced article of commerce is found to be very advantageous to the

country people; and is therefore encouraged by the governor, who, take him for all in all, is a tolerably good kind of a master, and would appear a better if he had not so many jackanapeses in office under him. I do not wonder at the herbage on these immense plains growing so excessively thick and high, since it is so often for many miles drenched with blood; not to mention the overflowing of the river, which happens immediately after the heavy rains, and leaves a rich slime behind, not unlike that described by travellers as occasioned by the inundation of the Nile. What rich pastures would not these fertile acres make in the hands of an English farmer! and corn could be raised, were the plains enclosed, with half the labour requisite in our country. The soil is so over-rich, it would not need manure of any kind: Nature here appears to take the toil into her own hands, and to require but very little trouble on the part of the agriculturist; and in the hands of Nature I doubt all will remain while Spanish oppression continues to counteract the blessings of Heaven. The few houses we passed on our journey were all of them surrounded with trees, set close to each other in rather a regular manner; but none that I could see were more than one story high. When we reached the harbour of Las Conchas we found the balsas ranged in order

close to the shore, on which stood two houses inhabited by Creoles, who are placed there by the bishop with a small annual stipend: indeed his holy eminence is in all respects a very humane good man, and takes care to provide for all his domestics as soon as they attain an age that incapacitates them for work. In one of these houses, which are appropriated entirely to the entertainment of travellers, we found a very agreeable refreshment of fruit, cakes, honey, and Canary wine. In the other house was provided beef, Indian bread, and chica: this last is a kind of fermented drink not unlike our porter; it is made from pounded maize, dried over the fire, and then put into earthen vessels filled with water, where it is left a certain time to ferment, and when it ceases to work it is fit to drink, which the Indians do to an excess whenever they can procure it. When our repast was over, prayers were said by father Hernandez, and with his benediction the servants of the major-general returned to Buenos Ayres, while we entered the balsas. In the first were the two fathers, attended by ten Indians and two negroes; in the next were the two novices and myself, with the like number of attendants; and in the third balsa were four Indians, and as many negroes, with our provisions and baggage. We soon quitted the harbour de la Conchas, and entered upon the Plata, which we navigated in rather a zigzag direction,

by reason of the many shoals with which this river abounds, and the multiplicity of islands that are strewn in all directions, which make a very pleasing appearance: but the travelling this way is extremely tedious, as the balsas are obliged to keep constantly near shore, or rather to pass from island to island, being by their formation incapable of resisting any violence of weather. They do not use sails, but row along in a very slow and quiet manner: four constantly ply the oar, and are relieved every two hours. The room—if I may so call it—in which we were accommodated, was about nine feet long, covered with skins of tigers. On this is spread a mattress the whole breadth of the balsa, which is enclosed about four feet high with a kind of railing made of bamboo, round which is hung a sort of coarse cloth manufactured by the Indians. The top is covered with manicoe or palm leaves so neatly fitted, that not the least drop of wet can penetrate: this room is left open in the front wide enough to admit two persons at a time, though in a stooping position; and when within you must either sit or lie along, for you cannot stand upright. The apartment is furnished with every convenience for the voyage, and we can repose very much at our ease in this American treckschuyt conveyance. We rowed full forty leagues up La Plata, crossing from island to island until we reached the opposite shore in

order to gain the river Uruguay, which empties itself into the Plata about two hundred leagues from the sea. But at its mouth an island obstructed our entrance, leaving only a very narrow channel for the boats to pass through: our rowers were therefore obliged to coast nearly the whole length of the island before they could get into the current, which alone leads every vessel into the Uruguay. This river differs widely from the Plata in every respect, but chiefly in being infested with rocks instead of sands—for infested it certainly is. I had been in hopes, that as soon as we had quitted the Plata we should proceed without stopping at night, as hitherto we had constantly done; for no balsa will venture far from shore, by reason of their being obliged to cast anchor as soon as it is dark, under cover either of the river bank or one of the islands, to avoid the danger of striking on one of the rocks and getting wrecked; for those accidents are very frequent to the river navigators of Paraguay. Our company not being over-
numerous—I mean of Europeans—we could not make our voyage very diverting, unless when the balsas anchored for the night; when the first thing the Indians did was to offer up their prayers to the Virgin, in which we, the superiors, very devoutly joined. This important business dispatched, they immediately prepared to get their

suppers, at which they are very expert. They quickly kindle a fire, and the provisions, if not ready cooked, are put upon stakes of wood after the manner of a spit, but sharp at both ends: one point they stick into the earth close to the fire, and when they think the lowest part of the meat is sufficiently done they turn ends with the spit; and as they are not in the habit of dressing turbot by a stop-watch, like our English epicures, the roast is soon ended, and as soon eaten with surprising goût, without either bread, salt, or vegetable. When their meal is dispatched—and they are not long about it, as no chica is allowed to be drunk—they spread a good quantity of skins on the ground, and, without any covering besides the trees, betake themselves to rest; not in the least troubling themselves about any precautions to guard against the wild beasts and reptiles, which they say the fire will suffice to drive away. However, their security had like to have cost them dear in one instance. We had, as usual, put into a small creek to take our dinner, and father Hernandez proposed staying about two or three hours to examine the remains of a presidency which about eight months since was destroyed by a tribe of wild Indians, who, like the Arabs, are eternally wandering about, and, like them too, are all expert horsemen. We had all quitted the bal-

sas, and were variously employed. Some of the Indians were gathering wood for firing, three were fishing—the Uruguay abounds with excellent fish of almost every kind—and others were gone to try their luck in the woods. Father Hernandez, his companion, the novices, and myself, were strolling round the church—which had been left by the destroyers uninjured, as had also the burying-ground—when we were alarmed by three of our Indians running out of the wood and shrieking most horridly. We immediately made towards them; but you may imagine our terror when we perceived they were pursued by a female tiger of enormous size, and a young cub as ferocious as herself. She had been wounded in her breast and one of her fore legs, which, while it retarded her pace, augmented her fury. The father companion, with great presence of mind, ran to the fire, and snatched a flaming brand; the two novices and myself followed his example; and we placed ourselves directly between the Indians and their pursuers.

The blaze arrested their pace for a moment, and luckily gave time for two of the negroes to discharge their fowling-pieces: one of the shots took effect in the body of the mother, and the other killed the cub. The tigress was now more enraged than ever, and instantly reared on her

hind legs to seize the father companion, who was nearest, when the flying Indians, who had rallied and returned to the spot, thrust two spears into the breast of the angry animal, who immediately fell, and, dreadfully howling, expired.

For my own part, I hardly knew what I did: the suddenness of the attack, and fright lest the Indians should not escape, had an effect upon me I never experienced before. However, I presently recovered myself, and ran up to assist father Hernandez, who, in coming towards us, had unfortunately stepped upon a viper which had turned round his leg, and he was too much terrified to attempt to disengage himself. I caught the reptile by the throat, and, untwining it, held its head down with my foot, and crushed it to pieces; then called the father companion to assist me in bearing father Hernandez to the fire, where we examined the wound and applied some of the juice of the mapalchaco—an herb peculiar to the province of Tucuman, used as an antidote for animal poisons—with which travellers are always provided in case of accidents. When our confusion had a little subsided we looked round, to see if we had all our company complete; and found that one Indian was missing. This threw us into fresh alarms; and, anxious to be certain of his fate, I requested the two novices to stay by father Hernandez, while myself and the father

companion, with two negroes, entered the wood. We endeavoured to retrace the steps of the men whose *rencontre* had occasioned us so much alarm. They had informed us which way they had taken, which was through a thicket of underwood about half a mile from the scene of action, when just at the moment they had taken a level at a deer the tigress made her appearance. They turned and discharged their pieces, which, being aimed in an oblique direction had not the desired effect, as the beast, though wounded, did not fall. They immediately took to their heels, without once recollecting their companion, who had pushed on before them, in pursuit of a wild boar. This was but a sorry account to enable us to trace the poor fellow, whom we at every step expected to find either torn to pieces or mortally wounded by the rattle-snake; for our fears conjured up a thousand dangers, which were greatly increased when, after two hours' fruitless search, we were obliged to return towards the shore without having made the smallest discovery that could assist us in ascertaining his fate. We were therefore proceeding very disconsolately back to our party, when, as we turned a corner of the burying-ground wall, who should we behold but the lost sheep, laden with the carcasses of a wild boar and a young fawn. The former he seemed to think a little too heavy for him, and was

muttering to himself respecting it, at the same time very devoutly anathematising his companions who he thought had deserted him.

We hollaed for joy that we had found him; when he threw down his burden, and, staring, asked us, very sulkily, what we meant by finding him. We now perceived that he was ignorant of our adventure with the tiger, which we informed him of. He stood silent for a moment, and then exclaimed—‘ I only wish I had been there; she should hardly have made such an uproar: I would have shewn you how to have managed her.’ ‘ Oh Christ! then,’ said I, ‘ I wish you had been there. I should have been very happy to see such wonderful manœuvres.’ We hastened to father Hernandez with our new-found companion and the provender he had procured us, which our other people made haste to prepare for the spits. Father Hernandez was very ill, owing to the double fright he had experienced; and his indisposition alarmed us very much, as we had near twenty leagues to travel before we could obtain any assistance, when we should reach the presidency of St. Andrea, which has been recently established, in the room of that destroyed by the wild Indians: however, we conveyed him to the balsa, where I proposed to the father companion to bleed him. He consented; and I performed the operation with

an English lancet, as my case of instruments had not been taken from me either at Monte Video or Buenos Ayres. Our little company were all very unhappy at the illness of the good father: however, in three days he was pretty well recovered; but the leg still continued much inflamed, and displayed as many colours as the back of the reptile that injured him, which was of a beautiful dark blue, tinged with light green, yellow, and brown; the belly was perfectly white and smooth, and the creature altogether was about three feet long.

I fomented the leg every three or four hours with a decoction of herbs. The poison was perfectly drawn by the application of the mapalchaco, but I could not with all my care restore the limb to its proper colour: this alarmed the father, and for his sake I was anxious to reach the presidency as soon as possible; but this was not to be; for the next morning a sudden and violent storm came on, we were obliged to lash the balsas securely to the shore, and were glad to remain under their friendly covering for near twelve hours. The storm raged with as much violence as that I witnessed at Buenos Ayres; and when it in some respects subsided, the wind still continued too high to admit of our leaving the creek, which was happily sheltered from mischief on the land side by some very high hills, or rather mountains, to the north. We

continued, therefore, at anchor three days longer, and our people every morning ventured again into the woods, nor ever returned without good store of provisions; and, God knows, we had need of plenty, for the Indians are most tremendous eaters.

The fathers and we novices had some fish caught and dressed for ourselves; but, though the fish are in themselves delicious, I could not relish them, for want of butter and vinegar, neither of which could I procure, though I had plenty of orange and lemon juice, but that was not what I wanted. I therefore chummed with the Indians, and, as the air from the river seemed to give every one a very keen appetite, I ate most surprisingly of every thing they set before me. Hunger, you will say, needs no sauce; and I never saw the proverb more truly verified than during this journey; but, hungry as I was, I could not eat my meat without salt and biscuit: my companions, though, were not so delicate.

The third day after the storm I went ashore in the morning to gather some herbs for the father, when I took a slight sketch of the church of the ruined presidency dedicated to San Isidro.

The ruins had been pretty well cleared away, as had likewise the underwood, which in the neighbourhood was very plentiful; so that a large space

before the church was entirely free from tree or shrub. The cross in front was elevated on a round base of earth covered with grass, and had a very agreeable appearance, from the extreme whiteness and roundness of the stone. This erection of the cross is, in my opinion, one of the best appendages to the Roman faith; and I wish there was one attached to every Protestant church. The trees to the right of the building had evidently been much thinned as far as the base of the adjacent hills, but the country all round seemed one entire forest. All along the banks of the Uruguay, indeed, there is no want of the thick dark waving woods I so much regretted on my first arrival at Buenos Ayres, or rather at Monte Video; but, except the hills to the back of the presidency, I could not discover any that deserved that name to the right of the river. The woods, as far as I penetrated them in search of the herb, appeared to abound with every kind of tree or shrub that I had foreseen on this great continent, with the addition of many others to which I was a perfect stranger; but they are so thick set with underwood as to be almost impervious either to man or beast: a great many of the latter, though, do contrive, by some means or other, to take up their habitations there, which I had a convincing proof of; but they seemed by their insolence to consider themselves

as the sole lawful proprietors of those immense forests, and every traveller as an invader of their rights. I no longer wondered at the extraordinary size of the animals which I had heard frequent mention of at Buenos Ayres, for they range the woods at pleasure, and prey upon each other as their hunger prompts; for here, as among men, the weakest ever becomes the prey of the strongest.

We left this place, which in remembrance of our adventure I termed Tiger Creek. On the morning of the ninth day after our arrival father Hernandez was better, and no danger was to be apprehended from the hurt in his leg. Our people had taken care to lay in a good stock of provisions, which they stowed in a very careful manner, that they might not, they said, have any occasion to battle with the tigers again for a dinner. The skin of the one we killed they spread over the top of the balsa, where between the sun and the wind it soon got dry.

We had not rowed along above an hour and a half when we were agreeably surprised with the sight of two balsas laden with various articles which some Indians on board were taking to the presidency of St. Cruz, situated among the Guaranis, a nation not as yet very well known; but there are several towns established among them which they told us bade fair to be very considerable, as

the converted Indians were daily increasing. These men, nineteen in number, appeared to be all very active, intelligent, and good-natured; and, if the countenance may be considered as the index of the heart, I should pronounce them all better Christians than any of the Spaniards I have mixed with at Buenos Ayres. Father Hernandez asked them several questions in the Indian language—which of course I did not understand - and the answers they made seemed to give him great satisfaction: four of them spoke very good Spanish. They offered us, in the most friendly manner, part of every thing they had, and seemed hurt at our refusing to accept it; but the good father assured them we had plenty of every article sufficient to supply us till we reached St. Andrea, which we hoped to do in four days, if we were not visited by any more squalls. They were satisfied with this: and father Hernandez gave the cacique a case of needles, and some relic, but I forget what: however he received it very gratefully, and in return presented the father with a beautiful basket made of reeds of various colours, woven in a very ingenious manner; and with this interchange both parties were highly pleased. The Indians kept us company two days, halted as we halted, and prayed as we prayed to a picture of the Virgin, which was every night placed on a kind of altar, raised by

gathering a few long stones and laying them one above the other, under the shade of the fairest tree they could pick out : the picture was elevated on the stones, and the evening song to the Virgin began, in which we all joined ; two or three short prayers followed ; and father Hernandez closed the ceremony with his benediction. The picture remained on shore till we re-embarked, when it was replaced with great ceremony in the principal balsa. On the morning of the third day we parted from our friendly companions. Our company turned into a branch of the river which was to convey us to the place of our destination, and the Indians continued onwards up the main stream. Father Hernandez spoke highly in praise of the rector of St. Cruz, whom he had known ever since they were children together. He was born, he said, at Buenos Ayres, and, though possessed of a plentiful estate, had relinquished all the comforts and pleasures his riches could have procured him to become a priest, and had carried to the presidency a considerable sum of money, which he was hourly employing in acts of kindness among the Indians ; and by the gentleness of his manners and universal philanthropy he has gained over more souls to the faith of Christ in a few months than many others have done in the like number of years. Not the smallest complaint has

ever reached the bishop since this good man was appointed rector, and the town is daily increasing not only in religious converts but every useful art, for he has at his own expence fetched from Buenos Ayres many enterprising artisans, to whom he has given the most liberal encouragement; and, as he found the Indians very apt to learn, he spared no expence to have them instructed.

‘I wish,’ said father Hernandez, with an affecting shake of his head as he concluded this account, ‘I wish there were more such truly pious Christians to study as well the temporal welfare of their flock as the spiritual. There would not then so often be occasion for references to the bishop, since every good man may always govern his community in peace and regularity, but a bad one cannot, for arbitrary power was never yet productive of any thing but evil.’ He paused, and seemed to reflect for a time on some very material subject; when, suddenly starting, he asked, with some degree of quickness, in what manner our clergy in England conducted themselves? I had forgot to tell you, that from the day of our leaving the creek I remained in the first balsa with him and the father companion, that I might be handy to render him any little service he might stand in need of; he having formed an idea, from the ready manner in which I bled him, that I possessed a competent

knowledge of medicine and surgery. I was rather surprised at his question; and, indeed, knew not exactly what to answer, since I was ignorant in what manner the Romish clergy were organised in my native country. I therefore merely observed, that the laws of England restricted the clergy very much; but, so far as they were allowed to act freely, I did believe very few laid themselves open to censure: for in respect to local temporal concerns they never openly interfered, as these matters were left either to the inspection of the magistrates, or the care of individuals themselves. The father companion observed, that in that case they must live much happier lives than the religious in South America, since worldly affairs must engross and perplex great part of the latter's time, especially when the rector is burthened with a very large community; for though he can answer for the propriety of his own conduct, it is next to impossible to secure the exact observance of existing laws in those employed under him, who but too often exhibit very doubtful examples to the poor Indians, who are taught to seek in them for every virtue, as the exact patterns of the God whose representatives they are. 'But,' said I, 'father, there are many among the missionaries who really deserve the high opinion the poor Indians form of them.' 'True, my son,' replied father Hernandez,

‘ there are ; and were they all like the primitive fathers who first planted the blessed gospel in this great country, what a harvest might not the servants of our holy Redeemer now have had to reap ! But, alas ! I fear too many tares are sown among the wheat, and the evil one has but too much reason to rejoice in his success.’ He then proceeded to give me the history of the presidency to which we were going, and which, eight years ago, was one of the most flourishing and happy throughout the province ; but the worthy rector dying full of years, and the blessings of every surrounding being, another was appointed to succeed him from among the brothers of St. Augustine. He had lived long at Buenos Ayres, and was esteemed a very good kind of a man. For some time after his arrival at Rioja Minor—the name of the presidency—he justified the good opinion which had been formed of him ; but, on a sudden, he became lax in his duty, and regardless of those intrusted to his care : he forgot his clerical character, and associated with none but those appointed to command the military. His whole time was occupied in studying their tactics, and the care of souls was left entirely to the inferior clergy, and those were incompetent to the duty required. They could not administer extreme unction to the sick, nor baptize infants : they

could not celebrate high mass, nor, in fact, discharge any of the more material offices incumbent on the rector to perform. The fiscal seeing the father negligent in the performance of his duty, slackened in his own; and the tenientes, or lieutenants under the commandant, from the force of bad example became careless in theirs also; so that in a few months all was confusion and disorder: the caciques alone remained steadfast in their conduct. These worthy Indians, finding at last that the presidency was on the very brink of ruin, sent off some of their faithful people with an account of their situation to Buenos Ayres. The bishop immediately ordered our superior from St. Dominic's thither, to find out the cause of their complaints, and remedy the evil. This good man was first to see the young people he took with him safe to Cordovo, where the young missionaries are to stay till father Pablo return: but, unhappily for him, he found on his arrival that the evil had taken too deep a root, and nothing less than the removal of every one in office could restore peace. He has therefore sent these thoughtless men to Cordovo, from whence they will be conveyed to Buenos Ayres; for they must not be chastised for their folly on the spot, since that might lower the character of the clergy in the estimation of the Indians—a circumstance they are pertinaciously

careful to prevent. The next step taken by our superior was to send to his convent for a father to take upon him the care of the presidency; and father Hernandez being appointed, he only waited the superior's coming to set off to Cordovo. 'If,' said that holy man, 'I am fortunate enough to restore peace, and bring things back to their former happy state, I shall not have lived in vain; but God and the blessed saints alone can tell how I shall succeed.' He then proceeded to tell me, that having observed in me an earnest desire to see more of the country than I could ever hope for, unless in times of peace as a merchant, he thought he could not oblige me more than by taking me with him on his journey; and as he knew he should at times stand very much in need of a friend in whom he could confide, and I was there without any material ties to control me, or any hopes or expectations of any kind but those of every honest man, he was of opinion that in me he should find a gentleman whose advice and judgment he could with security rely on. He said he should have no objection to my returning to Buenos Ayres after I had made some stay with him; but he requested I would pledge my honour that what he had then related, and likewise all that might happen in the presidency during my residence there, which I must of course be privy

to, should never be made known by me to any individual in *that* country ; it being a maxim in the church to keep its secrets within its own bosom, and those that lay open any intrusted to their charge expose themselves to the severest censures of it. ‘ But, I think,’ added the father, ‘ you are not now to learn what is due to the servants of God and our holy religion.’ When he ceased speaking, surprise at the confidence he had reposed in me prevented my immediate reply ; but, apologising for my tardiness, I assured him in the most solemn manner, that every thing he had said should faithfully remain a secret in my own bosom from the knowledge of any one on this continent ; and so far from wishing to return to Buenos Ayres, I could assure him that till I was at liberty to return to my own country, I should deem myself extremely happy in being permitted to remain with him ; and if by any means I could render myself of service, so as partly to return his friendship, it would give me the greatest possible pleasure. He thanked me in a most affectionate manner, and soon after this conversation we lay down to repose. The wind blew fresh, and I wrapped my head up in a long mantle of blue cotton ; it being customary here, when going to sleep, to cover the head and face entirely over, in order to prevent the flies or other insects from

awaking you. I had scarcely composed myself to sleep, when the balsa struck with great violence against a sunken rock, which our Indians had not discovered. We all started up in a moment, and sprung forward ; but, luckily, she was soon got off without any very material damage. We then stood away for a small island about a mile distant ; the river we were on being much narrower, and more interspersed with islands, than the Uruguay. The other two balsas had escaped the danger, and plied their oars freely. They anchored before us, and were on shore ready to assist in drawing ours to land. As soon as we were safe on terra firma, we paid, as usual, our devotions to the Virgin ; and, without even staying to eat, the Indians set about examining the bottom of the vessel : two of them, and one negro, plunging into the water, and diving underneath it. They presently arose, and said the hurt was very trifling ; the rock having only slightly grazed the bottom of one of the canoes. Apropos, I should tell you here how the balsas are constructed. There are two canoes to each, longer or shorter according to the number of persons the balsa is to convey. These canoes are formed out of hollowed trees, which are felled on purpose, generally of some light timber ; and the Indians are very dextrous in hollowing them to a great nicety. When the

inside is prepared, the ends are closed with a weaving of bamboo and slips of manicoe leaves, which are woven so extremely close, that neither water nor air can penetrate. This weaving runs out in a sharp point, two feet, and sometimes more, beyond each end; for stem and stern, as the sailors say, are both alike in appearance; so they may be navigated either way, like the funnies on the river Thames. The two canoes are lashed tight to each other by means of ropes made from the bark of trees, which I am informed is much stronger and tougher than hemp; and indeed I am inclined to believe it, for were the ropes not composed of very strong materials it would be impossible for the balsas to resist the fury of the winds, which seem to blow here, when they do begin, as if determined to carry all before them: however, thank God, we did not encounter any of their violence after leaving Tyger creek. When the canoes are thus connected, the room which I have described in a former part of my letter is laid upon half the length of them, for there is no after-end that you can properly term so: the rowers set on benches forward, and with the luggage serve to keep the vessel in trim. I hardly know what to compare them to nearer than a double war-canoë described by captain Cook as used by the Friendly Islanders.

When we were all satisfied respecting the damage, and every thing was put to rights, our people prepared to eat ; and I assure you this is an affair of no small importance, for not a little will suffice twenty or thirty people determined to eat their bellies full : no one upon these journeys must reckon upon setting limits to the appetites of the Indians. Hungry they get, and eat they must ; therefore if the balsa does not afford a sufficient quantity, they immediately have recourse to the woods, which reach all along the banks of the river and abound with all sorts of animals, to supply the deficiency ; and the newly-killed meat is put scarcely cold to the fire, from whence it is taken up again before it is half done, or even warmed through, and devoured with an eagerness almost cannibalical. They really, more than once, made me sick to see them. Our men, therefore, had no sooner dispatched all we had taken in at Tyger creek than they sallied forth to get more : for my own part, I thought there had been enough laid in for a West-India voyage ; but the event proved that my eye was not so capacious as the Indians' bellies—to reverse an old vulgar English allusion. All was gone presently, except the biscuit we had brought with us from Buenos Ayres, which these sharp-witted gentry did not care to meddle with. The island we were on was

small, and could not afford us the necessary supply ; we therefore once more embarked, and were rowing for the opposite shore, when we descried upon it a large troop of wild Indians. They came close to the water, and one of them, in tolerable Spanish, asked if we wanted any provisions. Our people immediately answered yes : the greater part of the strangers upon hearing this retired from the shore into the woods, from whence they soon returned with a roebuck and half a wild boar, a bag of maize, and five dried fish. These latter appeared to the fathers to be a very great novelty. We drew in to the shore ; and the Indians in the baggage balsa presently struck a bargain for the whole, by exchanging an old saw unfit for use, two old chisels, and a looking-glass, for the meat, maize, and fishes. I stood amazed to see how contented the poor men seemed to be with this miserable payment. I had in my hand a large Spitalfields silk handkerchief, chequered blue and red ; this attracted the notice of several among the strangers, but of none more so than their chief, who appeared by his gestures to consider it as the most desirable article he had ever beheld : he clasped his hands together, and lifted them upwards, then motioned to me that he supposed it to be a cloak ; pointed to his head, and then to the wood. While these antics were performing, the

only one among them that spoke Spanish was engaged with our men at a distance ; I could not, therefore, get to speak to him. But when I had sufficiently diverted myself with this new posture-master, I made signs that I would give him the handkerchief ; and father Hernandez, who had been as much amused with him as myself, ordered the balsa to be drawn close in to shore. The chief timidly advanced towards us, when I put the object of his desire upon one of the oars, and handed it to him. He caught hold of it with a kind of rapture, kissed it several times, waved it over his head, and skipped about like one frantic. At last he spread it square upon his shoulders, tying two of the corners in the front of his neck ; and when he had done that, he walked in great state through a long rank of his people, who looked at him with the utmost respect and admiration. This part of the farce diverted us more than the former, as it was evident he was imitating the walk of some Spanish grandee ; and the gait, whosever it was, appeared to be admirably mimicked. This cacique was about forty years of age, tall, and his limbs finely proportioned, with a very lively animated countenance. He had the skin of some beast we were unacquainted with round his middle, made in much the same form as the Highland kelts ; round his head were twisted

several sorts of parti-coloured wool, but no feathers; and this was the whole of his dress. He had lost two of the fingers of his left hand; he carried no weapons of any kind, nor did those that were with him appear to have any. Father Hernandez spoke to him in the language of the Guaranis; but he either did not, or would not, understand him. I had brought with me a small piece of crimson velvet, which I meant for a present to any one whom I considered as deserving it. This was tied in another handkerchief of a similar pattern to the first, but coloured blue and yellow; and I had a great mind to bestow the latter upon a very interesting young Indian who stood aloof from the rest, and did not speak to any one. His dress was the same as that worn by the chief; with this difference, he had only two bands of wool upon his head, one blue, the other green. The rest of the Indians had nothing on their heads, nor any article of dress, besides the skin of some beast or another tied round their middles, and reaching half way down their thighs. I beckoned to the young man to come near, and he obeyed with evident marks of respect and diffidence; when close to the water's edge he stopt, and gazed with an expression on his countenance of the greatest astonishment, looking first at the fathers, and then at me. I imagined that his wonder arose from the difference

he observed in the colour of our skins. Both the Spaniards were nearly olive; and my complexion, naturally very fair, is whiter now than when I left you: so much has my illness altered it. He looked stedfastly at me for near a minute; then clasping his hands, lifted them above his head, and stooping forward with his face towards the sun, bowed three times very reverently: then raising himself up, he pointed with his right hand, first at the sun, and then at me. This manœuvre he repeated several times, but we could not make out what he meant. I therefore fetched the handkerchief; and, fastening it to the oar, handed it to him, having first tied a small horn comb in one corner of it. The moment he received it, he lifted it three times above his head, then kissed it with great reverence, and taking out the comb kissed that likewise, and tried to place it on his chin; but not finding it adhere, he gazed at it with great amazement and curiosity. I shewed him another; and taking off my hat passed it several times through my hair, that he might learn the use of his acquisition. He immediately comprehended me; and pulling his own hair, of which he had a very large quantity, before him, began to run the comb through his disordered locks, which appeared to want the hair-dresser more than any I had ever seen. He then took the handkerchief, and spreading it on his

knees examined every square ; when, turning it, he observed the stripes were blue on one side and yellow on the other. This circumstance seemed to please him much ; as by his antics he gave us to understand he imagined he had two handkerchiefs instead of one. Presently the chief returned ; when the young man humbly advanced towards him, laid both the articles at his feet, telling him, as we supposed, who had given them to him, and asking permission—as we interpreted his motions—to keep them. A long discourse passed between him and the chief, when the comb was folded in the handkerchief, and that placed between two palm leaves with great care and niceness. The youth then clasped them to his bosom, kissed the hand of the chief, and ran up with them into the woods with uncommon swiftness ; from which I conjectured, gallantly enough, that he had some lady there to whom he was anxious to display his treasures. By this time, the man who first hailed us from the shore again addressed us, to know if we would stay while they procured us some more provisions, which they would do in less than an hour : to this father Hernandez agreed, as he wanted to make some enquiries. This was made known to the chief, who immediately dispatched several of his people towards that part of the wood whither the young Indian had gone. The father

then asked what tribe or nation they belonged to. The interpreter answered the Charuas, who inhabit a large tract of land between the Uruguay and the Parana. It was part of this nation that composed the presidency which had been desolated at Tyger creek, and those that remained of the converted Indians had been collected together by father Josef Almanza and father Augustin Romana, and taken away to another presidency, but where it was situated he could not say. The father desired to know how they came to be attacked. He said he did not know; but he believed it was a Spaniard, who had escaped from some sort of punishment among his countrymen, that led the Indians on to demolish the settlement. This circumstance in some measure accounted for the church and church-yard being left uninjured, the reason of which had before very much puzzled us all; the fathers not being able to conceive why the holy edifice had been spared, it being contrary to the general practice of the Indians to respect any thing relative to the Christian worship, whenever they imagine themselves offended. Several other questions were asked respecting the converts, and whether their company had not a desire to embrace the faith of Christ. To this last the Indian answered, sternly, no—with an expression of the greatest contempt; adding, that now they were at liberty to live and

act as they pleased, but if they became Christians they could not; the maponos—meaning the missionaries—would not let them, and they thought themselves much happier as they were. He was asked how he had acquired the Spanish language. By going, he said, frequently to Santa Fé, and sometimes to Buenos Ayres, with skins and other articles to barter, where he had been obliged in several of his journeys to stay till the waters were gone back; for the river, as I believe I informed you in a former letter, in winter overflows the country for many leagues each way, there being no mountain to obstruct its progress for several hundred miles, nor any hill, but a very few beautiful green ones to the north of the Uruguay, of which I have given a partial view in my sketch of the church at Tyger creek. The chief, then, by means of the interpreter, asked father Hernandez some questions respecting the presidency to which we were going. He knew it, he said; it was that of Rioja Minor, by the lake Iberi, to which place we had not above ten leagues further to go, and the settlement was in the country of the Yaros. This was the first time I had been informed of the exact spot of our destination; and much as I had desired this voyage, I must own I was happy to find we were near our journey's end; for although it was spring, and the sun by no means trouble-

some, yet I wished much to be at the desired haven. While this kind of conversation was carrying on we saw the young Indian who had ran away returning with five others, laden with several kinds of animal food, apparently just killed; two very fine birds, of a large size, very nearly resembling in shape and colour our pheasants; and another bag of maize. Our purveyors soon completed the purchase of all this provision for one bottle of brandy. This I thought driving a Jew bargain with a vengeance. I should have considered two bottles of liquor but a poor recompence for merely fetching the articles, much more having them also; but be that as it may, both parties appeared very well content. Still I was not satisfied, and I requested the father's permission to give the chief and his son—for such I now found the young man to be—a large drinking-glass each; for I had observed them regard one, while in my hand, with longing eyes of admiration. My wish was complied with; and to the interpreter I gave a small pocket looking-glass, which made him perfectly happy.

Father Hernandez then ordered the balsa to proceed, it being near evening, and our present situation not at all an eligible one for passing the night. We were accordingly pushed from the shore; and our people, as they proceeded, sung

the evening hymn to the Virgin. The strange Indians were very attentive, and listened as they accompanied us along the bank of the river. They could walk much faster than the balsa was rowed, but they slackened their pace to keep us company. The looks of these good-natured people very much interested me : and I no longer wonder at the influence the Jesuits have had over their converts, if all the other nations are like the Charuas ; for nothing binds man to man more securely than the bonds of pure religion, and, *vice versa*, nothing makes men more inveterate enemies to each other than a difference in religious tenets ; which convinces me that an Indian once converted can never be a bad man, since he never embraces the Christian faith but from a thorough conviction of its justice ; and once grounded in its principles, I am certain he could not become an apostate, since in every action he is governed only by conscientious motives.

This apparently happy people travelled with us near two leagues, when their further progress was stopped by a large creek ; we were, therefore, obliged to leave them. The chief and his son at parting joined their hands, and lifted them above their heads : they then bent themselves three times towards the sun, when, again lifting their hands, they turned up the creek, and, followed by their

people, entered a thick wood. When they were gone, the father companion observed, what a pity it was that such ingenious well-disposed creatures as these seemed to be were still ignorant of the true faith, and lamented that there were not some evangelical workmen sent among them. 'I doubt not but there have been,' said father Hernandez; 'but their time is not yet come—"Many are called at the first, and others at the twelfth, hour of the day, yet the last may be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen."' He was silent, and the father companion did not venture another remark.

The river we now were on was neither broad nor deep; in proportion to the Uruguay: it is called the Iber, from the lake Iberi, with which it communicates, and is on each side thick set with trees of various sorts; but the cocoa and manicoe do not abound here as in the islands of the Plata; those which I saw on the banks of the river were small, and without fruit. There were several European trees, which seemed to thrive exceedingly well; such as the oak, ash, lime, and in many places birch. Whether these are natural to the climate, or introduced by the Spaniards, I am yet to learn: but now we are settled in a presidency it is my intention to collect every information on this head, as well as on many others, respecting

the natives and their present modes of life; for many thousands remain still in a state of nature. I feel myself more and more anxious to wander among them, for the sole purpose of ascertaining whether the Jesuits were or were not to blame in the measures they adopted. I dare not venture an enquiry of the fathers; they are too scrupulously reserved upon that subject, and my situation obliges me to be cautious. Having continued our course about two leagues further, we anchored for the night; and prayers were no sooner ended than the cooks began their office. In a very short time we had the birds purchased of our late companions placed before the fathers and myself, and though dressed in such a hasty manner I assure you we made a very hearty supper; and having piously blessed the providers, we betook ourselves to rest.

Early the next morning we pursued our way, and before noon entered on the lake Iberi. Here a new scene presented itself. This beautiful lake is above a hundred miles long, and forty broad. It is situated in a vast plain, between the rivers La Plata, Parana, and Uruguay. It has two mouths: one running south-west, in a meandering direction, falls into the Plata, just below the town of St. Lucia; the other eastward, and disembogues itself in the Uruguay. Through this last we en-

tered the lake, which is picturesque in the extreme. It has several islands on it, which abound with deer and vast quantities of wild fowl, with some few hares, whose flesh, I am told, is delicious; but I hope soon to have an opportunity of judging for myself. The water of the lake is fresh, and remarkably sweet; and on its banks, I find, are established several considerable presidencies, which are the most flourishing of any in the province: this is owing to the extreme fertility of the land, occasioned by the overflowing of the lake, which happens twice a year, and sometimes oftener, according as the Plata is more or less agitated by the pampero during the equinoxes.

We continued sailing about three leagues to the south-west, when we were agreeably surprised by the sound of martial music, which drew nearer as we advanced; when our balsa taking a sharp turn round a point of land thick set with trees of the most enlivening verdure, we were presented with a scene the most pleasing and romantic that can well be imagined. The presidency opened to our sight, and presented at once a view truly grand and picturesque. The shore was lined with people, the bells were ringing, and the military band, assisted by a troop of choiristers, welcomed our arrival. We immediately landed, and were received with tears of joy by our venerable superior,

father Pablo, who had remained here for the sole purpose of personally resigning the power to father Hernandez. We then proceeded to the church, where we had holy water presented to us by the good pastor. The major-general of the little army trained in this neighbourhood came with the *corrigidore*, the *fiscal*, and his *fenientes*, to pay their compliments of congratulation : indeed the whole community appeared, from their numbers, to be collected together for the same reason. The prayers of the church were sung in a most enchanting manner by the young Indians, who still retain the same mode of performing divine service as that established by the Jesuits. They were all very neatly dressed in white surplices, and the church with its ornaments was neat in the extreme. It is a large but not lofty building, of beautiful white stone, with a centre and two aisles, rather tastefully fitted up. The right hand aisle is appropriated for the men, and the left for the women. The chancel is occupied by the boys—ranged in order—and their preceptors, of whom they seem to stand in the greatest awe. In the body of the church are disposed the girls and their teachers. Both sexes were clad in very neat dresses : that of the men, made of thin black cloth, consists of a short doublet and large breeches ; their legs naked, and on their

feet a very pretty kind of sandal, made by themselves, of the skin of some beast in winter, and in summer of a peculiar sort of long grass, which grows all over the province of Paraguay by the water side, and is extremely tough and lasting.

The habit of the women consists only of a large grey cotton garment, something like a shift, with short sleeves, and reaching a little below the knees, which is banded in round the waist with a girdle of coloured wool or cotton. They wear half-boots or sandals, like the men; and the married women have upon their heads a cap made tight in front, but open behind, to let their hair hang down; and many of them wore crosses suspended from their necks, by strings of common black beads, which the fathers carry with them to the settlements.

The young women wear no cap, but let their hair, which is remarkably long and thick, flow loose over their shoulders: it is parted on the top of the head, and some few plait it; but if brought forward it would make an excellent veil. They are straight and well shaped, with lively animated features; and no more like the poor Indians I saw at Buenos Ayres than, as Hamlet says, "Hypocrition to a satyr:" so effectually does slavery, sorrow, and ill usage, destroy the finer fabric of man. These here look healthy, cheerful, and perfectly

content : those at Buenos Ayres miserable squalid objects ; many of them maimed, from the hardships they endure, and all apparently praying for the hour that shall close their lives and miseries for ever. Here they are neatly clothed, plentifully fed, and comfortably lodged ; nor is there such a thing as a cripple to be seen among them : there they have scarcely a rag to wrap round them, or a hovel to shelter them from the fury of the elements ; they partake of nothing but the meanest of victuals ; and if they are sick no one thinks it worth his while to trouble his head about them, but they are left to survive or perish, as Omnipotence shall please to appoint. What a contrast, my friend, is here ! Could we be surprised if the flames of rebellion should, ere long, burst forth and overwhelm the treacherous unsuspecting Spaniards ? The Indians who go annually to pay the tribute or barter with the Europeans, cannot avoid seeing the sufferings of their devoted brethren. I could say much upon this subject, and I could prophesy events in times not far distant ; but in my present situation silence best becomes me. All appears quiet now ; but I fear, nay I am certain, it is but a deceitful calm that precedes a dreadful storm, which will, when least expected, break in fatal thunder upon the heads of the proud oppressors. Human patience,

in every state of life, may be stretched to its utmost limits, and yet forbear to turn ; but let that limit once be passed, and woe to the tyrant who has tried how far he might injure with impunity !

When the ceremonies of the church were over we were conducted to the monastery—dedicated to St. Dominic—which is close to the church : it is a very neat edifice, two stories high, built of grey brick, which has a very pleasing appearance. There are at present only nine brothers, including our company ; and when our superior leaves us he will take three of them away with him. The convent garden is very spacious, and well laid out, being kept in the nicest order. In the centre is a very pretty fountain with three branches, which are constantly throwing water into three different channels, one leading to the bath, another to the reservoir, and the third to the convent kitchen. Baths are more common here than at Buenos Ayres, owing to the heat being more fervent here than there by several degrees.

In the church they have a most superb font of white Italian marble, adorned with most capital bas relief, representing the baptism of the multitude by St. John. This font was a present to the fathers of St. Dominic by cardinal York, whose name is held in the highest veneration throughout this province. This amiable and truly

worthy prelate sent some years ago two missionaries hither, and with them this valuable present. There are likewise in the church two pictures, painted in Italy; the one representing the conversion of a Jew, the other St. Paul preaching to the Corinthians. There have been copies made of each by some of the Indians, which are extremely well executed, all things considered. There are also two originals by native artists, one displaying purgatory, the other hell: of these I cannot say any thing in praise, there is too much bigotry and superstition evident in the designs; and were I to describe them minutely I doubt I should raise a smile even upon your demure face, and set our old friend K—— grinning most disrespectfully, for I am certain it would recal to his remembrance a large picture we saw once in L—— square, which exhibited old Knight, the famous South-Sea swindler, sailing in a ship's jolly-boat towards the infernal regions, with his pockets stuffed full of money-bags, and his hands crammed with bonds and debentures; the old fellow dressed in a suit of scarlet and gold and a full-bottomed perriwig, attended by a thousand dancing devils, with little dung-forks in their hands, ready to shove the boat along if it did not go so fast as they would have it; while the mouth of a great serpent, gaping wide, represented hell

spewing forth flames of fire, and hundreds of little mischievous imps stood ready to receive and welcome him. I have often recollected this piece since my coming hither, and as often a laugh has burst forth, in spite of all my endeavours to the contrary.

They burn more candles in the church here than any I have ever been in, either in the old world or the new; which, as they are all tallow, must, I think, occasion a very disagreeable smell and warmth also, when the building is crowded, in summer; and it is for this reason, I suppose, the windows are so contrived as to be laid entirely open, in order to admit a free current of air. There are several altars in the church besides the great one in the chancel, which is decorated every day with flowers by the children, who are some of the neatest and most docile little creatures I ever beheld. Both sexes are dressed alike, in a garment made like a shift, of white cotton, fastened round the waist with a belt of tyger skin, which in this province is more beautiful than any brought from the East-Indies, the ground being nearly of a bright yellow colour, the spots of a jet black, which has a very striking effect. A great many children are employed about the church, for which service they are selected by turns; and none

can seem more happy than they do in this occupation.

A week has now elapsed since our arrival. The superior quits us to-morrow to return to Cordovo, from whence it is supposed he will journey through the province of Tucuman to the city of Concepcion, in Chili. What this long journey is undertaken for I cannot learn. I now feel the want of brother Jerome, whose friendly communications used sometimes to divert me exceedingly. Father Hernandez is very unwell: he has not yet recovered the shock he received at Tyger creek; but he is cheerful, and anxious to make every one around him so. This morning, in company with the superior, and attended by the novices and myself, he went round the presidency; the corregidor, fiscal, and others, escorting us. This town is pretty large, and very regularly built. The streets, which are in the Roman style, exactly parallel, are divided by plantations of trees, thick set, oranges, lemons, citrons, myrtles of every various sort, and scores of other odoriferous shrubs, which as you pass regale the senses most delightfully, and seem to give one a foretaste of those blissful regions where our religion tells us we shall rest for ever. Little currents of the purest water run with gentle rippings underneath the trees, over a smooth bed of small round pebbles.

The houses are mostly built of clay, one story high, and covered with tiles; but the dwellings of the commandant, corregidor, fiscal, and others of note, are higher, made of brick, and fitted up with every convenience. The public storehouse is in the centre of the town; it is one story high, very long and wide, divided into several apartments, so contrived as to receive every different article for use or barter. Formerly this storehouse was under the sole regulation of the rector, and by him only was the produce portioned out to the different families; but now the Spanish commandant claims a share in the distribution. How far this may be productive of good I will not take upon me to say; but I will just give you a slight sketch of the Jesuits' manner of regulating these matters when they possessed an uncontrolled authority.

All the product of the year, such as corn, maize, fruits, wool, and cotton; all articles for barter, and in fact every thing the district afforded, was brought to these magazines, where proper officers were appointed to receive them, who took account of every particular, which was registered, together with the names of the persons who delivered them, and the day. No individual was allowed to keep any thing in his own house save the necessary quantity of corn, which on the first

of every month was delivered to each family in proportion, according to the number of which it consisted; and in the same manner they received all other kinds of provision. Every day a certain number of cattle were slaughtered for the inhabitants, which, when killed, were taken to the store-house, where the officers attended to deliver the stated quantity to the master or mistress of each family; and if at any time they had occasion for more than the general allowance it was immediately given them, but nothing was suffered to be wasted. In like manner they were supplied with clothes; for all the cotton they spun and wove, or any other article which they manufactured—and they always were, and are still, very industrious—was as soon as finished taken to the public stock, and at certain periods of the year every family received its proper quantity of apparel; and as the articles were all without distinction of one fashion and colour, there could not possibly be any partiality observed in the distribution of them. The officers and chiefs were only distinguishable from the rest by a chain round the neck, a white wand, a feather, fan, or some such simple peculiarity. There were, and still are, two hospitals for the sick—one for the men, the other for the women; where as soon as any one is taken ill he is immediately conveyed, as

none remain ill in their own houses. Each hospital has a lay-brother to attend it, who is well skilled in surgery and physic, and has several assistants under him. They have likewise a large room well stored with drugs, both native and European. In fact, nothing is wanting to supply the wants of either the healthy or the sick ; and, that no one might be neglected, several of the oldest and most experienced Indians were appointed to superintend the whole, and see that justice was administered in every department and the sick properly attended. How such wise regulations as these should ever be subject to change I must own rather surprises me ; but changed they certainly are. Instead of the officers and superintendants being selected by the rector only, they are now made subordinate to the military, who are appointed by the governor of the province ; and instead of being commanded by Indian chiefs, they are subjected to a Spanish commandant and fiscal, to whom even the rector is answerable for the conduct of his flock. Many other alterations have been made, which I fancy have gone near to overturn the wise regulations established by the Jesuits, who, in my opinion, understood the true art of governing better than any other body of men in the universe. I shall soon know more of the changes which have taken place : at present

I am rather hobbling in the dark, and therefore may very well expect to stumble upon error. I can as yet only draw conclusions from what I am told—and people are sometimes given to lying—or from what I see; and appearances are often deceitful. Time is the only true authority, and to that I trust for better information; but in the mean while no endeavours on my part shall be wanting to accelerate the acquisition of it. Holy St. Francis, what an irksome, dull, unprofitable state would life be if man were not stimulated to action by curiosity!

Adieu, my friend! and depend upon it if any one is benefited by my researches it will be yourself, for no other mortal shares the confidence of

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

Rioja Minor, November, 1797.

FATHER PABLO has left us ; and although he had been here no longer the whole town regretted his departure, and at the moment when he entered the balsa every eye was wet with tears. His affability and condescension have won the heart of every individual. The bishop did right indeed to send such a worthy man hither : for if any man could compose differences and reconcile jarring interests it was this benevolent father ; for the spirit of the God of peace evidently resides in his bosom. His selecting father Hernández to supply his place plainly evinces the necessity of placing here a man of humanity and conciliatory manners. I cannot as yet learn when the former rector left this place : for none that we found here, except the commandant, corregidore, and fiscal, speak the Spanish language ; and all of us have been particularly desired to make ourselves acquainted with the Indian tongue as quickly as possible. Our present superior already understands it. He has been at this presidency before, and speaks it fluently. He is extremely

anxious to have all those about him as well versed in it as himself: I am inclined to obey him in all things, and have already acquired several words. One of the sacristans, a man of considerable abilities, though an Indian, is ordered to attend me every morning, to give me instructions in the language, and in several matters relative to the church service. I have been enjoined by father Hernandez to pay particular attention to his instructions, since he is a very worthy man, and has held his office near twenty years: but I am not to take any notice to him of any thing relative to the war, or to let any one know that I am an Englishman and a prisoner; it being the wish of the superior to have me considered as a gentleman who voluntarily chose to come and reside here. The novices who came with us have been also enjoined silence on the subject, and never in conversation to drop the smallest hint respecting my country; they, therefore, affect to treat me as a native Spaniard. I fall in with all their humours; and were it not for writing to you, I should, I think, almost forget I am an Englishman, especially in these peaceful abodes. There is, it seems, another presidency not many leagues distant on the same side of the lake. At this presidency father Hernandez means to visit a venerable friend of his, who has been lately appointed rector, after having

spent his youth among the Chequetos Indians, near to the spot where the Plata takes its rise, above eight hundred miles from hence.

All is not right, I fear, in this community, as the greatest vigilance appears to be observed by the military. It was one of the sentinels at the out-posts that discovered the approach of the balsas, as they hove round the head-land, which conceals in one point of view the presidency. He gave notice of our being at hand, and that occasioned the drums and trumpets which we heard at our approach. These sentinels are stationed at such convenient distances, that notice of any event can be sent a very considerable way by the beating of drums, or firing signals; and by these means, if any of the towns are attacked by the roving Indians—which has been not unfrequently the case—the signals are instantly made, and the troops belonging to the next presidency hasten to the immediate succour of their friends. By this I understand there are regular alarm posts, entirely round the lake. I am of opinion some attack or other has been made lately; for never did I see such strict watch enforced, even at the frontier towns in Germany, as is observed here. Whether it arises from fear of an open and avowed enemy, or recent domestic treachery, or the effects of former discipline, I know not; but certain I am there

is something to be feared ; and were it not so very far from the coast, and in a country where there are but few mines of gold or silver, and no gems like those of Golconda, I should be tempted to conclude they expected a visit from some of my countrymen : but, unless they chose to come here and turn farmers and graziers, and cultivate this rich and fertile soil, I doubt they would hardly make it worth their while to come so far : but to those who possessed local ideas only this would be a mine of wealth. Adieu !

LETTER XXV.

Rioja Minor, December, 1797.

How restless, my dear friend, is the mind of man! ever on the wing in pursuit of new objects to gratify curiosity or dissipate spleen; and as soon as the novelty ceases we regard it with insipidity, and, perhaps, disgust. At first we consider new and pleasing objects with a kind of rapture, and think we cannot possibly ever get tired of them: but by a repetition of viewing and reviewing they become familiar to the organs of sight, and we begin by little and little to regard them with indifference; and we say to ourselves, I saw this yesterday, it is the same to-day. We then wish to fly in pursuit of something more new, and which we foolishly imagine will prove more interesting; but, alas! find ourselves deceived. Every thing that I have proved yet tires on repetition, except an intelligent well-informed person: in the conversation of such a one you are sure to have something new, something to interest the heart, from whence all dull monotony is banished. I have often in England, and indeed other places, gazed with a sort of enthusiastic transport on a

beautiful woman, and thought her the most perfect workmanship of God till I have conversed with her, when, to my utter mortification, I have discovered my supposed divinity a mere mortal, without even common sense or energies. I have instantly become tired of such an uninteresting companion, and have hastened to seek for one less handsome, but perhaps more stocked with the gifts of sense and understanding. I have been led into these reflections by a discovery of my own weakness. You may remember I told you at Buenos Ayres, in one of my letters, that I had an earnest wish to ramble over Paraguay: I obtained my wish, and was brought hither; and for some days after I had left the city I regarded the balsa as the most pleasant room I had ever been in. The rivers as I passed, and woods by which they were skirted, I viewed as the most wonderful works of the great Creator. When I entered upon the lake new beauties opened to my view, and a new field of admiration presented itself which way soever I turned my eyes. I gazed, wondered, and admired; and then thought I should never cease to contemplate its varied beauties. These scenes are now become familiar to me; and at times I cannot help wishing myself on the Bay of Biscay, though it should chance to be in one of its most turbulent moods: yet when this wish escapes me I in-

stantly think, why cannot I be at peace? why not enjoy the calm serenity of the scenes around me, or mix with pleasure in the placid contentment of the convent? After musing for a moment, I take shame to myself, and check the wandering spirit that so often rises in rebellion against me: then again the words of Polydore occur to me, where he says—

“ I would be busy in the world, and learn;
Not, like a coarse and useless dunghill weed,
Fix'd to one spot, and rot just as I grow.”

Then I fly off again like a tangent, and actually wish for the wings of a bird, that I might rove unmolested over earth, seas, and clouds, go where I chose, and stop where I thought proper, wholly free from the anxieties and cares which infest and embitter the lot of mortals. But away with these phantasies! you shall hear how my hours are employed. We rise with the dawn, when the whole parish attends mass; none are permitted to be absent, unless from sickness, or some other material cause. Mass over, each one betakes himself to his employ—the children to school, the men and women to work—till eight o'clock, when they breakfast: when this repast is finished, which is not long about, the bell rings to call the children to the church to say their catechism and chaunt

the service. The boys lead in the chancel: the girls, standing in the body of the church, make the responses in a very pleasing and pious manner. Prayers over, they again go to school, where the boys are taught every useful branch that suits their genius; the girls to read, write, sew, spin, weave, and every other female employment. The teachers are, without enlarging on their merits, some of the most well-informed and most intelligent persons I have ever met with: but, not content with the abilities of the teachers, some of the most experienced and sensible of the parishioners superintend by turns the schools, and inspect the improvements of the children; so that the teachers cannot be remiss in their duty without subjecting themselves to the censures of their superiors, who are always the chiefs and heads of families. At mid-day they dine, and are allowed an hour for recreation; when they again go to school, where they continue till near sunset, when the bell again rings for prayers, at which, as in the morning, the whole parish assembles, where they recount their beads, hear the evening prayers, sing the hymns appointed, receive their rector's benediction, and repair to their houses, where they take their suppers of bread, fruit, and chica. This repast is soon ended, when every family betake themselves to bed: and thus passes each revolving day.

Our community dine at twelve: an hour after dinner is spent in conversation over our fruit, and a small portion of Cuyo wine, which has been sent as a present to the fathers. The hour expired, each betakes himself to his different occupation:—some of the brothers visit the sick, others attend those that are employed in the offices of the church, such as cleaning, ornamenting it, and so forth. The novices and myself study the language, or read to the superior, whose health, I am sorry to observe, is not as it should be. The loss of this good man will be severely felt whenever it shall please Omnipotence to take him hence, for he is already regarded by the Indians as their father.

There are fourteen Spaniards attached to the military and the stores; but there is very little communication between them and the fathers. Don Solicarpo do Zulucta is the commandant: he is a man of stern and forbidding manners: he does not appear to like his situation; it is too local for one that has been used to the gay intercourse of a city. There are four Spanish ladies here, or rather creoles; one of them is wife to the commandant, the other three are her relations. I have seen them but twice, at church. They are none of them pretty. They spoke to our superior with an air of what I thought forced condescension;

and they asked a multitude of questions, but they were not polite enough to attend to the answers. Their eyes were directed to the spot where stood the novices and myself. The commandant's lady is named donna Teresa Tarcel. She is pregnant, and near her time; for which, it seems, great preparations are making. But that period, so much dreaded by the ladies in England, is not here considered in any other light than a mere trifling indisposition; at least it is so by the Indian women, who are seldom confined more than two or three days, and some not at all. Whether it is so gentle with the creole ladies I will not take upon me to say. The beds used upon these occasions are placed on bedsteads as high as those commonly used in France; and, like them, they have no feather-beds. The lower mattresses are composed of pimento leaves, stitched in fine cotton: the upper ones are made of fine wool, or the down of geese, laid between pimento leaves, and covered with silk or velvet, most commonly the latter; but this depends on the riches of the owner. The sheets are generally of very fine cotton, neatly trimmed with lace; the blankets of the finest Spanish wool, very thin; the coverlid of silk or velvet, fringed with gold; the curtains, in summer, are made of Turkey or East-India gauze, elegantly painted: these curtains are kept close drawn, and fastened down

with small hooks to the lowest mattress, except a small place on one side, just wide enough to admit the attendant, who, when within, carefully closes the aperture, in order to prevent the intrusion of swarms of flies, which here are numberless, and which generally infest the room where the sick are, in preference to any other part of the house. By this artifice these troublesome intruders are compelled to keep a respectful distance, though much to their regret; for on my conscience there are not in existence such indefatigable foes as these tedious insects. If they are one moment, as we suppose, effectually routed, dispersed, and actually driven away, yet in a few minutes they will contrive to rally all their forces, and, with more spiteful malignancy than ever, return to the charge. The whole house is in alarm: mops, made of feathers, dipped in lemon juice and lime-water, are flourished about in all directions, and as many as this libation souses become victims, but the far greater number take shelter under the wings of their neighbours; and when this is found to be the case nothing but a most cursed smoke, made from burning wet leaves and half-dried grass, will rid the house of these infernal tormentors. The leaves and grass, being wetted with lemon juice, are set on fire in a large earthen dish with sides about six inches high, and placed in the

middle of the room. This is kept burning, or rather mouldering, till the enemy is dislodged, and this is the only thing that can procure a short respite from their cursed stings: and short indeed is the respite; for no sooner is one swarm destroyed and the smoke evaporated than new squadrons arrive, armed cap-à-pie; and before the stench of the smoke is well out of the house in they come, and at it they go tooth and nail. There is no standing this; and I instantly hasten to my room, where, being solitary, they seldom intrude. Adieu!

LETTER XXVI.

Rioja Minor, Jan. 1798.

EVERY hour that I spend with my Indian instructor teems with information yet more interesting than the former. This morning, during one of our rambles, he imparted several particulars that I was extremely desirous of obtaining, but principally relative to the herbs used in such cases of illness as mine on my first arrival at Monte Video, and which I think may be of essential service in England during most epidemic diseases. I am certain, from experience, that if properly applied it cannot fail of curing those who may unfortunately have caught the infection; for we have herbs in our country that will very nearly work the same effects as those reared in Tucuman, only the process must be different. But observe the following rules, and I will venture my life that not one in a hundred will die: Take of camomile, rosemary, wormwood, rue, and featherfew, of each a large handful; set them on the fire in a large pipkin, or bell-metal pot; cover them with two gallons of water, and let them boil till the strength

is entirely drawn out ; then take about half a peck of the best unslaked lime, put some of it in an earthen pan unglazed, pour the herb decoction hot upon it, and as the smoke ascends let the patient's head be held over it in such a position as to inhale the fumes at the mouth, nose, and ears ; and as the vapours die away fresh knobs of lime must be thrown in, and this to be continued as long as the party infected can bear it. In the mean time let some pure strong lime-water be made, of which take a quarter of a pint—more or less, proportioned to the habit of body of the patient : mix with it three table spoonfuls of the herb decoction hot, and give it to the sick person as soon as he or she is placed in a warm bed. Let the body, and particularly the head, be carefully kept warm, so as to prevent any check to the perspiration that will ensue upon this operation ; but at the same time preserve a free circulation of air through the apartment, that all effluvia arising from the infected person may pass instantaneously off : in case of thirst, give the patient plentifully to drink of strong green tea warm, but without milk or sugar ; and in *no* stage of the disorder either bleed or blister, for such a measure might be immediately fatal.

This dose and fumigation must be repeated as often as the patient can support it, till an amend-

ment takes place; and in prisons, or other places where a great many may be confined together, it will be necessary to have the room fumigated likewise. This remedy must be applied as soon as possible after the attack of the disorder, which is presently known by a sickness and headach, and which seldom spares any European on his arrival on these shores. It is with some dreadfully violent in its effects, frequently terminating, if not in death, at least in total insanity; and many of its symptoms partake of the nature of the yellow fever, a species of which was very prevalent in England, I remember, in the year 1779 or thereabout.

Yesterday morning some of our trading Indians brought to father Hernandez several very beautiful skins of different wild animals preserved and dressed in a peculiar delicate manner, and a variety of curious birds stuffed and scented with great art, and had a very pleasing effect. They likewise, to my no small astonishment, produced a quantity of gold exceedingly fine and pure, partly in ingots and partly in dust. This latter article of gold, I understand, is collected among the mountains and upland springs on the banks of the Uruguay; and the Indians, with great ingenuity, contrive to send it to Buenos Ayres, and exchange it in a contraband way with the American mer-

chants and other foreigners. This traffic, however, is kept a profound secret by the trusty few who are employed in collecting the metal, and by whom it has hitherto been monopolised. Father Hernandez and many others of the clergy wink at this procedure, but we have great reason to believe that the government at Buenos Ayres suspects this treasure to have been discovered by the presidencies, and meditates a still further infringement of the Indians' liberties, to force a disclosure of the source from whence this newly-found wealth is derived, than which nothing is more dreaded by the natives in whose possession it lies. The supposed *internal* poverty of their land has hitherto been their only protection—and a feeble one it is, Heaven knows—against the rapacious cruelty of Spanish governors, inquisitors, and tax-men. The known discovery of any spot of ground containing either gold or silver would immediately and inevitably ensure the destruction and death of its innocent possessors.

Most fervently do I pray that my just and generous countrymen may in time become the masters of this high-favoured region, and be the lenient governors of this ingenious unoffending people, who would make, I am now convinced, the best subjects in the world to such a gracious liberal-

minded sovereign as now reigns in our happy isle ;
where conquest and humanity go hand in hand,
and where so many millions enjoy privileges and
blessings they scarcely know how to appreciate.
Not so

Your sincere friend.

LETTER XXVII.

Rioja Minor, Jan. 1798.

I HAVE this morning been on the lake, which abounds with a vast variety of fine fish, which the Indians take in various ways:—some with a line, as with us; others by a spring. The latter is a curious way: they fasten a hook with a bait to it to a long branch of willow, which grows in great profusion on the banks of the lake: the branch to which the hook is attached is bent, by means of a cord, to the edge of the water; this cord is fastened to the willow close to the bank, and by means of two sticks placed crossways on the back of the tree; the moment the fish takes the bait the cord gives way, and the hook rises with the fish attached to it. This method is observed to catch trout, which are here in great abundance, and of the finest size and flavour I ever tasted. Sometimes they drew the seine, but this is a new introduction: previous to this the Indians used to place themselves in their canoes and watch the passing fish, at which they would dexterously aim a dart, and in less than a minute they would see the fish rise to the surface of the water with the arrow in it, which they seized,

and drew the fish into the canoe. I saw three large fish, resembling in colour and taste our salmon, caught in this way, which is indeed very amusing. The eye of every Indian appears to me to possess the properties of the hawk, or they could not, I think, dart the arrow so unerringly into the fish as they do. It is very pleasant to be on the lake before light in the morning, but after that it becomes much too hot. I seized the opportunity of being alone with the Indian—for there was but one in the boat with me—to take a hasty sketch of the town from the lake. The point from which I took it was not so well adapted for the purpose as I could have wished; but I made the best of what presented itself, and will, if possible, send it you. Father Hernandez is very unwell. He has done me the honour to consult me on his case. I frankly told him I had never studied medicine, and all the knowledge I possessed had been gathered in my rambles through different countries, and the necessity I had been frequently under of administering to my own wants in places where medical advice could not be obtained; and by diligent observations on the effects of my own applications I had gathered a slight knowledge of drugs and simples, sufficient to direct me in prescribing for myself, and by that means I had often preserved my health; but I doubted my abilities in

prescribing to others. These observations, he said, still more convinced him that I understood diseases; and therefore strenuously requested I would prescribe for him. I acquiesced in his wishes; and going to the hospital, where all the drugs are kept, I made up, as far as my judgment could direct, what I thought would be of real service to him. He took it, reposing the greatest confidence in my skill. It has had, thank God, very salutary effects: he is better, but still very unwell. I have advised him to go across the lake to the town of Itu, situated on the banks of the Parana, where there is, I am informed, a very valuable spring, which is of great efficacy in weak and debilitated habits: he has complied with my advice, and told me it is his intention to go thither immediately. I am to accompany him. The father companion will take charge of the flock during the superior's absence. He is not much liked by the generality: they regard him as a man of austere manners, wholly devoid of that benevolence and mildness of character which mark father Hernandez. This good man, I am much afraid, will not survive long: his soul seems already detached from earth. There is something about him which I find not in any other except our aged superior at Buenos Ayres, to whom, I find, father Hernandez is related, being his nephew by the mother's side. Neither of these

good men embraced the monastic life from choice : necessity, dire necessity, backed by parents' stern commands, consigned them both, at an early age, to retirement and obscurity. Father Hernandez in youth loved, and was beloved by, an amiable and lovely woman ; but he had an elder brother, and to his aggrandisement became a victim. This cruel determination decided his fate : the lady was married to his more fortunate brother, and himself doomed to a life of celibacy and sorrow ; for though five-and-forty years have elapsed since that fatal period, he has never ceased to regret her loss ; and it is this bitter recollection, I am certain, which aggravates his bodily sufferings : for although he is, I think, as sincere a Christian as this world can boast, yet the agitation of his mind at times disorders the whole nervous system. You, who know what I have suffered from a similar affliction, can well imagine how sincerely I participate in all his sorrows, and how anxious I must be to administer comfort and consolation to him. He has been too much indisposed since his arrival to take any active steps towards the regulation of several abuses which he hinted to me on our voyage, but as soon as he gets better a thorough alteration is to take place in every department. There seems to be a kind of jealousy between the clergy and the military—who are not now dependant on the

rector, as formerly they were: for there are here but two estates instead of three, and, if I am not mistaken, in a few years one will entirely overthrow the other; for when once suspicion gets footing in the body politic of a government, that government stands on a tottering foundation. Father Hernandez sees this approaching evil, and, I am well persuaded, dreads it also. Peace and goodwill to all the world is the motto of this righteous man, and I am certain nothing would go nearer to hasten his end than the knowledge of these inoffensive people being subject to the military yoke. The means by which this extraordinary change is to be effected are not as yet very apparent; but I fear it is the intention of the Spanish politicians, who now take a principal part in the administration of affairs in this province, to oblige the clergy by little and little totally to overthrow the admirable structure founded by the Jesuits, upon a base which should seem calculated to defy the undermining arts of even a Mazarine or a Goertz: but no establishment, I am now convinced, can exist beyond its appointed period. The clergy have had their reign of uncontrolled dominion in this as in all other countries: whose will now succeed Heaven only knows; but I could prophecy, 'with a near aim to the main chance of things as yet not come to light'—but let that rest. The Spaniards

may think to hold these injured people in the most slavish bondage, but in vain; there are no links of gratitude or confidence to bind the union. Former wrongs added to present impositions will rise in battle array against them. Omnipotence will assist the oppressed in their efforts for emancipation, and the now mourning natives of these southern regions may in a few years more enjoy in happy liberty those acquirements and advantages they have so dearly purchased.

I am now effectually cut off from hearing any news of your part of the other hemisphere, and most probably shall for a long time remain so; for if I can obtain the happiness of travelling to distant places with father Hernandez I shall not form a wish to return to Buenos Ayres: and though I continue to write to you I cannot hope to receive a letter from you in return. The Indian cacique who has the care of the fishery has promised to take charge of any papers I may wish to have sent to don Manuel Robledo, whom he personally knows; having several times had dealings with him at Buenos Ayres, on his annual visits to that city for the purpose of barter.

This Indian is a very sensible ingenious man: there is scarcely any thing that you can describe to him but he immediately comprehends. I told him about a week ago that I wanted a box to be

made of cedar-wood, with a secret drawer to hold my letters: the manner of forming it I described to him as near as I could remember to that I had finished in London, and to help his imagination I slightly drew a sketch. He said but few words on the subject; but this morning, immediately after mass, he came to me, and presented one of the neatest and most ingenious articles of the kind I ever saw: it is so contrived, that unless you are acquainted with the secret spring it is impossible to get at any thing contained in one half of it; and examine it ever so nicely, you cannot perceive the deception. His ready conception and artful execution surprised me greatly; and with the greatest pleasure I presented him two pistoles, which made him nearly frantic with joy, for none here are allowed to possess any thing independent of the public stock: but as this trifle of mine was given to him without the knowledge of any one but ourselves, I advised him to keep it secret, and take the piastre I had agreed to give him to the general repository: and as every thing each individual does is known to the tenientes, this box of mine was looked upon as a mere article of convenience; but the secret part of it is known only to the maker and myself: I have secured his silence, and all is very well. I mean the private drawer to hold all my writings except mere letters of business, which I am permitted to write

to don Manuel. My friendly Indian has promised me when he goes next to Buenos Ayres to take my secret with him to that gentleman, whom he will instruct to open the box, take out what I may send, and forward any thing he would wish to have conveyed to me in the same manner back; while the open part of the box, when taken from hence, will contain nothing but what all the world may see: and don Manuel is to return the like. Thus far I am safe: all that I have wrote since my arrival here is already deposited within it; and this, when I close it, shall be put there likewise: therefore when it reaches you, you will see you have no occasion to be uneasy on my account. But how wild I am talking! God only knows whether you will ever receive this or any others that I have addressed to you: but if you should, do not neglect writing to me in return, and direct your letters to don Manuel's; for there is a possibility, though *but* a possibility, of their coming to my hand. Existing circumstances must govern your pen. Don M. has my instructions respecting all affairs at New York; so all there is safe. Adieu! Yours.

LETTER XXVIII.

Presidency of Nombre de Dios, Jan. 1798.

WE set out for Itu the morning before yesterday, and crossed the lake in a tartane, that is, a long boat with sails; the after part of it covered with an awning made of reeds and manicoe leaves, neatly banded down with osiers. There is a kind of out-rigger attached to the side, which in sudden squalls is so contrived as to lift up and enclose those that are under the awning in a very compact and comfortable manner. This is a much pleasanter mode of travelling than in the balsas; for you are not confined to either a sitting or a lying posture, neither is your eye pained to observe the hard labour of the poor fellows at the oars. There is most commonly a fine breeze on the lake, which cools the air, and sends on the vessel with great celerity. We left Rioja Minor at nine in the morning, and, as the wind was fair without variation, we reached the presidency of *Nombre de Dios* about six in the evening.

The beauties of the lake during our voyage were picturesque in the extreme. Small islands, covered with wood and stocked with deer, are dispersed in

every direction : on some of them are scattered little romantic huts inhabited by Indians, who reside there for the purpose of catching wild-fowl or gathering eggs, which are laid in every bush by the water birds : some of those are deliciously cooked in the Indian way, which is roasting, or rather baking, them, in a small oven made of hot stones.

Father Hernandez ordered the boat to be put in at one of these islands, on which were about ten Indians, who readily came to us, bringing with them broiled fish, baked eggs, some excellent cakes, and fresh honey ; also a large bottle of chica, and a smaller one of brandy. We gladly accepted their provision, and sat down upon the long grass to partake of it. This grass, which was in most places near two feet high, they assured us was but of a week's growth, owing to the fogs which overspread the islands by night, and the intense power of the sun by day ; and I must own such rapid vegetation very much surprised me. When about four or five feet high the Indians cut it down, and make cushions, beds, and carpets ; which they sell in the towns, and are as soft, if not softer, than our horse-hair mattresses, as they possess an elastic silky quality, and are not liable to close in hard lumps like the hair or wool, owing to the dextrous manner in which the Indians weave or rather plait them. Some people will have them

wove with leaves of the fig, manicoe, pimento, and other trees, intermixed with the grass; and these kind are very pretty to look at, as the form of the leaves is exactly preserved. I have ordered one of these curious beds to be made for me, and sent to our convent; but whether I shall be allowed the use of it or not I cannot say. Baskets are also made of this grass, in so neat and subtile a manner as to hold any kind of liquid: our chica was served up in one, and the brandy was in a bottle of the same. The manufacture of these simple articles convinces me that the Indians only want proper instructors and liberty to equal, if not surpass, any civilised nation in every work of art or ingenuity. Father Hernandez bought a beautiful basket and two bottles, to take as a present to the predicador mayor at Nombre de Dios. This presidency has not been established above five years; it is therefore in its infant state, and entirely modelled according to the new code. As soon as our arrival was announced, the predicador came out to receive us, dressed in his sacred vestments; attended by all the community, who welcomed our good superior with the most lively pleasure. We were immediately conducted to the church and most profusely sprinkled with holy water, and perfumed with some very costly incense out of a silver pot. This last part of the ceremony was a novelty

to us all ; but I assure you it seemed very grateful to my olfactory nerves, and my clothes still retain the fragrance. While a pretty Indian youth, dressed in his surplice, was holding my garments over the incense, I could not help imagining myself in Asia Minor ; but the music, and the voices singing *Te Deum*, presently dispelled the illusion.

The church of this presidency is small, but very regularly built ; as is the convent, where there are only five brothers at present : there have been more, but they are gone on missions among the Zamucos, who inhabit near the banks of the river Pilcomayo, a considerable distance from Nombre de Dios, on the opposite side of the Plata, where there are but very few establishments ; it being a nation of wild roving Indians, who have sworn everlasting hatred to the Spaniards : as a proof of which I was shewn a musical instrument something resembling the pipes of Pan, made out of the bones of one of the missionaries they sacrificed among them some years ago ; and it seems it is their usual custom to form such articles from the bones of all the Spaniards who are unfortunate enough to fall into their hands. From such accounts as these I should, I think, entertain but little relish for the hazardous undertaking of converting them : but such is the zeal with which many are inspired that there is no difficulty in getting candidates for this desirable

office; on the contrary, all the brothers are emulous to obtain the appointment, and the Gospel still continues to spread, though very slowly, among the Zamucos, who are nearly as wild and savage as the natives of the middle part of Amazonia, who are, by all report, a most ferocious set of beings, bearing in form alone the semblance of humanity.

Whatever glory may be attached to the calling of a missionary, I do not think I should be easily moved thereto, as my friend Dempster at Philadelphia used to say, when we were talking to him of any amusement.

The country round Nombre de Dios is much the same in point of lowland beauty as that on the other side of the lake; and between this place and Itu—which is about forty miles distant—is one entire plain, where thousands of horses run wild, and the Indians every way round are a nation of Arabs, eternally on horseback; and this convenience of riding instead of walking wherever they choose to go is one of the few benefits they have derived from the invasion of the Spaniards, for the actions of none in this quarter are controlled by any but their own caciques, unless it is such as live in the towns of the presidencies.

I am promised by the predicador mayor a full account of the customs and manners of six differ-

ent nations among whom he has resided within these last eighteen years: this account is to be prepared against our return to Rioja Minor, which is meant to be in about six weeks, if my venerable friend does not derive any essential benefit from the waters of Ariciffe. The predicador's name is Antonio Sisternas: he appears to be a man of humanity, but not much gifted with understanding: a plain simple soul, who will never, I am certain, be accused of either treachery or oppression; for he has not head-piece enough for the one, nor resolution enough for the other.

We shall go from hence to Itu in a kind of car something like those used in Russia, between a coach and a cart: this is drawn by four and sometimes six horses, for here these valuable animals may be had for the trouble of catching them, as they run in droves wild over the immense plains, covered with the richest verdure. When the Indians are in want of any they go in parties of eight or ten to the plain, each with a long rope in his hand, at one end of which is a running noose. When they have fixed on a place convenient to begin their operations, one half of the men drive a number of the horses towards the spot where the others are stationed with the ropes ready, when the moment the beasts come near each man endeavours to throw the noose over the neck of the

one nearest to him. If he effects this he immediately runs off, still holding the rope; by which means the noose is pulled tight, and goes near to strangle the poor prisoner, who after a few ineffectual struggles quietly submits to his enslaver: the moment the hunter perceives him stagger, from the tightness of the rope round his neck, he runs up and mounts him; then slackening the cord a little by degrees he makes the animal move round in a circle so extremely fast, that both horse and rider become in a short time completely sick and giddy. They stop when they think he is like to drop, and when recovered again begin the same round, until the beast is perfectly exhausted: they then lead him home, where in a few days he is thoroughly tamed, and becomes so very docile that a child of four years old might manage him. There are no saddles or bridles used here, nor are they even heard of: the Indians ride exactly like the English country bumpkins, bare-ridged, with an halter made of the long grass tightly wove, and the same kind of rope serves as harness for the cars used at the presidencies; indeed they answer every purpose of leather, the use of which is here but little known, except for exportation.

How many useful and important blessings which in the more civilised parts of the world are coveted even beyond their value are here thrown away, or

held in no estimation whatever! Great God! how little is thy munificence regarded in this highly-favoured country, and how poorly are thy bounties understood! The Indians seem all to reason with my favourite Goldsmith, when he says—

“ Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.”

Their wishes seem limited to the mere natural wants of the day that passes over them; for all beyond they care not, save for an opportunity of gratifying the inveterate enmity they bear towards their Spanish oppressors. Adieu! Yours,

LETTER XXIX.

February, 1793.

WE are now at the presidency of Saint Mary and Saint John, near which is the medicinal spring of Ariciffe, about a league and a half from the river Parana: it is a very considerable establishment, and under very wise regulations. As far as I have yet seen, it is conducted on the same plan as that of Rioja Minor, which partakes more of the old system than the new. We arrived on the eve of their annual festival: the bells were set a-ringing to announce us; several guns were fired; with other demonstrations of joy. We were, as before, immediately escorted to the church, and the same ceremonies observed; with this difference—our clothes were not perfumed in the Asiatic manner, as at Nombre de Dios, but, in lieu of it, the rector here was extravagantly profuse of highly-scented water: this is another new refinement. Mercy on us! thought I, what pious vagary shall I see next? I meant to have given you a description of the holy procession and so forth, but was obliged to attend father Hernandez to see the fall of Itu; but which I found to be little more than what

they call a rapid in North America. It is a natural cascade, and forms a very beautiful and interesting scene to those who have never beheld the bold majestic cataracts of the Niagara, or the romantic waterfalls of the north of Scotland.

This rapid, then, of Itu is nothing more than a chain of rocks, which extends across from side to side of the river Parana: the rocks rise in divisions, and look like embrasures; but instead of the mouths of cannon you are presented with large streams of water gushing down into a bed of hard gravel below, where we saw five Indians; three at the bottom of the fall, at a little distance from the foaming spray, pushing onwards a large boat laden with a variety of articles, which were tightly secured within; while two other men stood in the water above the rocks pulling two ropes, that were fastened to the prow of the boat: and at a little distance beyond were four more, who by their joint endeavours safely dragged the boat up the fall. When they had her carefully lodged in the upper stream they rested a while, and then, hoisting their sail, proceeded on their way. The fall at the place where this manœuvre was performed appeared to me to be about twelve feet perpendicular height; but the centre part, which somewhat resembles the horse-shoe of Niagara, must be considerably higher. The Parana is here very wide; but not so rapid at

present as it is sometimes, when swelled by rains : then I think the fall must be a very pleasing sight. A great many boats are at times hindered from passing till the violence of the current is over : there were five ascended on the side we were on during our short stay, which did not exceed three hours. Our car being covered with a very convenient awning, we enjoyed the scene altogether very much at our ease. This river, though deeper than either the Plata or the Uruguay, is much more secure, being free from the shoals of the one and the rocks of the other, except where the falls are formed ; and even there, to a person accustomed to navigate the stream, the passage is not dangerous. After we had sufficiently satisfied our curiosity we returned to the presidency, where the commandant had prepared an entertainment for our superior's reception. His name is don *Augustine de la Cana* : he is a creole by birth, born at Assumption : he appears to be a man of sense and merit, and would, I think, make a conspicuous figure in a more active and elevated station. He received us with great politeness, and was extremely anxious to make every thing agreeable to the good father ; pointing out several things as salutary remedies for his complaint, to be used during his stay at the baths, which he lamented were not so comfortable as they might be made.

were there more visitors: but the very few that come, and the short time they stay, hold out no inducement to any one to think of improving the situation. These waters, in taste and quality, are much the same as ours at Bristol-wells. The spring was first discovered about sixty years ago, by father Estevan Serbert, a Jesuit missionary, who caused it to be enclosed in a neat circular building of stone, tiled; and planted a very pleasant grove of trees round the spot.

The presidency was then in its infant state, and besides the father, who knew the virtues of the spring, few or none for many years made use of it; but it is now in more request. A pretty little Indian town has spread around it, with one very good house for the cacique, who entertains and lodges those who come here to try its efficacy. This man, who is of the tribe of Yaros, came to us one day dressed in his habit of ceremony, and cut so grotesque an appearance that I prevailed upon him to stay while I took a rough sketch of his figure. To be sure he is a deformed ugly mortal, and I am a miserable limner: but you must excuse all faults; it will serve to give you an idea what kind of animals I am among. His shirt, or body-garment as I may call it—for they wear no other—was of blue and white striped cotton, fastened round the waist by a belt of tiger skin; his cloak was indeed truly beautiful,

being composed entirely of feathers of the greatest variety of colours I ever beheld, and laid together so artfully as to resemble the most delicately painted satin: on his head, too, he had a kind of cap or crown made of the high tail-feathers of the peacock, pheasant, and some other bird I am unacquainted with, but whose snowy plumage is far richer than that of the celebrated ostrich. He had two bracelets on each arm, formed of round gold links about an inch in diameter, and the thickness of a crown-piece: buskins of woven grass, laced in front like half boots, completed his elegant attire; and in his hand he carried a dart, such as is commonly used by the Indians, about three feet long, with a sharp barb of iron at the smallest end. He is a very civil obliging creature, and almost worships father Hernandez, whose health, I am sorry to say, declines daily, and I much fear that neither the waters nor any other remedy can now restore him: the fright and hurt at Tiger creek were more than his advanced age and feeble constitution could support. I watch over him as though he were my father, and from my very soul wish I could devise any thing that would relieve him; but, as the destroying malady is more mental than corporeal, I doubt if any mortal power can save him. Though he does not imagine the waters will be of any service to him, yet he means

to continue here the time he at first proposed ; and he seems daily to repose fresh confidence in me. Should it please God to prolong his life, I hope by his means to visit most of the presidencies in this province, or else get permission to accompany one of the missions that is about to be dispatched to Chile, a country which is reported to be another Eden, and to see—which I must pass—the Cordillera. Of these celebrated mountains I am constantly hearing the most strange and, I think, fabulous accounts ; but I trust before I quit this continent, if death do not terminate my mortal career, in person to examine those stupendous works of nature, and likewise, if not too presuming, to descend into the bowels of the earth, and gratify, if possible, my curiosity, by exploring the far-famed mines of Potosi. Adieu ! Ever yours, whether above ground or below.

LETTER XXX.

St. Mary and St. John, Feb. 1798.

THE good father Hernandez has this morning been hastily recalled to his presidency of Rioja Minor: an Indian arrived about an hour since from the commandant, to request his immediate return: the reasons for which he is not informed of. This has alarmed and hurt him much. It is evident he feared some material change was about to take place before he came away; for had I not very strongly urged the necessity of his trying something to dispel the melancholy that hung over him he would not by any means have left his government. He is, however, in tolerable spirits; and, though somewhat uneasy, appears more cheerful than I have seen him for some time past.

Our car will be ready in two hours: father Hernandez is engaged at present with Antonio Sisternas; and I seize a few moments to write to you, lest any unforeseen event should occur to prevent my taking up the pen again so soon as I could wish. Some hints dropped by the Indian

with whom I have spoken seem to indicate as much: but, in the words of Macbeth—

“———— Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.”

On my return to Rioja Minor I expect to find there a letter, with a remittance from don Manuel; and soon, I trust, I shall be able to have my papers conveyed to Buenos Ayres: for though I can hardly hope to hear any thing respecting my friends in Old England, I cannot help wishing for some account of the European world. God bless you! Adieu!

LETTER XXXI.

Rioja Minor, March, 1798.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AMID the tumult and confusion which every-where reign around, I am once more allowed the liberty of spending a few hours alone, and shall seize that opportunity to address a few lines to you. In my last I informed you of our sudden recal from the baths of Ariciffe, which we left in less than two hours after I had closed it. The fathers of the presidency appeared, by their countenances and manner, to dread the return of my venerable friend to this place; but no words escaped them on the subject: a hasty leave was all that time would admit of; ceremony of every kind was dispensed with; and, by the direction of the Indian messenger, we reached the presidency of *Nombre de Dios* in far less time than I could have imagined possible. The community there were in the utmost consternation: we found them at some distance from the college, waiting our arrival. The tartane was in readiness, and every thing in it provided to hasten us on. Instead of

going to church, we entered the boat ; prayers were offered up on the shore for our safety, and we instantly set sail. Father Hernandez made not the smallest remark to me until we reached the island on the lake, at which we had stopped to dine on our way forwards ; when the same Indians came to the shore, and assisted us to land. When we had quitted the tartane, the father took me by the arm, and leading me apart from our company, paused, and looked in my face for some moments with an expression I never shall forget : he then seized my hand, and fervently pressing it, addressed me in Latin to nearly the following effect : “ My valued friend, the evil I have so long dreaded is now, I am certain, fast approaching. When we reach Rioja Minor I fear we shall find it not the seat of peace, but anarchy and rebellion. There are many unquiet spirits in the presidency, which our worthy superior thought he had, by his mildness and humanity, composed to rest, and whom he vainly thought I was calculated to keep quiet ; but I had not been there above a week before I saw he had been deceived, and that it would be impossible for my weak endeavours to re-establish that order and unanimity which subsisted uninterrupted until within these last three years. The brother who was superseded by the bishop was better adapted to lead an army into the field than

to take charge of the flock of Christ. He propagated tenets which all those not very firmly grounded in their faith readily embraced. These misguided people began in a little time to shew, in all their words and actions, that they regarded the innovations made by the crown as infringements of their charter ; for as such they consider the convention made between the state of Spain and the first founders of the presidencies : and, headed by their refractory pastor, they refused to comply with the orders received from the bishop of Buenos Ayres—the principal of which was, that the military sent thither should be considered as a part of the native community, and that the whole should be subject to the commandant and major-general. They were in this disordered state when father Pablo was sent to them. His arrival, the removal of the discontented brothers and their colleagues in office, produced a temporary calm, which has proved, as I feared, fallacious. Men with the temperaments of the Indians are not easily attached ; they may respect my years, but they will not, when bent on other measures, listen to my remonstrances. It requires a man of youth, energy, and vigour, to deal with such turbulent spirits. Father Michael, my companion, is far better calculated for this office than myself ; to him, therefore, I shall, as far as may be prudent, delegate the

authority placed in my hands. I wish I could resign it altogether ; but that I dare not : however," added the father, " in whatever state I may find affairs, I have one most earnest request to make to you—which is, that you will abide by me until it shall please the Almighty to call me hence ; an event which, I am sure, is not far distant. Be cool and collected in every situation into which you may possibly be thrown, and remember it is my advice and wish that you do not think of staying at our presidency after I am no more. I have already written to father Pablo on the subject : he has power and influence to serve you ; follow him to Chile. Paraguay will not afford you that amusement you may expect in its neighbouring province ; but if you have a wish to know more particulars respecting it, I have desired my venerable friend father Estevan, at St. Dominic's convent, to furnish you with all my observations made during the many years of my youth I spent as a missionary among various nations. The state of affairs, both generally and individually, has since been greatly altered : but the country is still the same, as are the manners of the natives ; and with respect to these two points my papers may afford you some useful information, and you will find in them many circumstances related, and a few instructions added, which may serve to direct your

conduct should it be your lot to continue under the Spanish government; but remember it is my earnest wish that you travel no further north. Time presses, or I would talk more with you upon this subject; for when we reach Rioja Minor I fear we shall have but little time for friendly communication. My papers are all at St. Dominic; doubt not but when you reach there they will be given to you for your perusal: you may retain them until you leave America; in that case return them to father Pablo, if living; if not, to the convent library." Father Hernandez was about to say something more, when the Indian messenger approached us, and said we must take advantage of the strong breeze which then blew, as it might probably *go lay* before we could reach the main land if we did not depart immediately. We had no reason to dispute what he said; therefore hastened to the boat, took a slight refreshment of biscuit and fruit, and after giving the island Indians a trifling present for having expedited the mattress I ordered on my journey forward—and which I found had been sent to the presidency five days before—we pushed from shore, and continued to run very briskly before the wind for above four hours, when the well-known point of land appeared in view: in about an hour more we doubled it, and could distinguish the royal flag flying on

the steeple of the church, and a smaller one at every signal-post. This was, indeed, a conviction that peace no longer reigned in the presidency; and as we approached nearer to the shore we perceived a large party of the military drawn up on the beach, the convent surrounded by a strong guard, and not one of the town Indians to be seen.

Father Hernandez sickened at the sight, and, throwing himself back on the seat of the boat, uttered a pious ejaculation in Latin, and burst into a passion of tears: he could not speak, but his looks betrayed the bitterness of Christian sorrow. The soldiers assisted us to land, and the *teniente mayor*, or first lieutenant, received us, instead of the commandant. Father Hernandez was obliged to be borne in the arms of the attendants to the monastery, where, as soon as he was placed in a chair, he fainted away. Two of the brothers we had left here, and three of the Indians belonging to the church, were all that came to our assistance. When my venerable friend was a little recovered he enquired for fathers Michael and Joseph, and was answered that they were in confinement, by order of the commandant; but if he wished to see them they should immediately be sent for. Having replied in the affirmative, one of the Indians quitted the apartment, and in about a quarter of an hour returned with the prisoners, guarded by a *teniente*

and twelve men. I was obliged to interrogate them, for father Hernandez was incapable; and the result of my questions was, that three days after we had left the presidency a large band of roving Indians was discovered hovering about the town: the military were immediately apprised of it, and prepared to drive them back, which they effected; but the next day, towards evening, they appeared again, though in fewer numbers; when fathers Michael and Joseph proposed to the commandant to go out and address them, as they both understood the language of the natives. To this Zulucta readily consented, and ordered them to endeavour to bring over to the presidency as many of the Indians as they possibly could. They accordingly went, and staid with the strangers the whole of that day and the next; when they returned at night, bringing with them seven caciques, who, they said, had a desire to be baptized, and then return to their tribes and persuade them all to embrace the Christian religion. In consequence of this declaration on the part of the fathers, these seven men were baptized, in the presence of the commandant, major-general, and others. A house was given them to inhabit, provisions sent from the stores for their subsistence, and every attention paid to render their situation agreeable. For about a week they seemed greatly amused with all they

saw and heard, especially the church ceremonies and music ; but on the ninth morning they expressed a wish to return to their people. Father Michael and several of the town Indians accompanied them on their way ; and when they parted, the chiefs expressed great thankfulness for the blessings they said they had received, and promised to visit them again soon. On the evening of the same day one of the stranger Indians came to the town, and desired to be shewn to the commandant, whom he wished to speak with in private. His request was at first refused, but on his urging it very strongly, saying he had something of the first importance to communicate, he was admitted ; when he informed don Policarpo that it was the intention of his fellows who still remained in the vicinity, headed by the seven caciques who had been baptized, to join a large body of the town Indians, who had every thing prepared for a general insurrection, fall upon the military as they went in annual procession for the dead, and destroy the whole, seize upon the stores, take the presidency entirely to themselves, and put to death every one that would not aid their measures.

To this scheme fathers Michael and Joseph had given their consent, it being the wish of the greater part of the townspeople to render themselves independent of the Spanish government, as they did

not like to have so many of their numbers drafted away, and sent they knew not whither ; neither did they choose to continue the payment of the annual tribute, as for a considerable time past they had more than supported themselves, and no longer wanted any assistance from the crown. This long detail the Indian confirmed by some kind of token, which Policarpo has thought proper to keep secret : but, in consequence of his information, the two fathers were immediately put under arrest, and a messenger dispatched to recal father Hernandez ; guards were placed by the commandant round the town, so that the whole was nearly surrounded with military ; several suspected persons were taken up and lodged in prison, and all that held any public situation were narrowly watched ; all business was suspended, and but few of the inhabitants would venture out of their houses.

Father Hernandez listened to the whole of this account with the greatest calmness ; and when it was concluded, turning to the fathers, he conjured them, by the death of their blessed Redeemer, to answer whether the accusation against them was, or was not, founded on facts. They seemed confounded and alarmed ; but before they could make any reply, the commandant was announced. He entered the hall with a stern and haughty air, and advanced with anger in his countenance towards

our good superior, who endeavoured to rise to receive him, but fell back again upon his chair. Zulucta, without noticing the good man's illness, placed himself upon a seat beside him, and burst into a string of invectives against the conduct of the suspected fathers, whom, he said, it was his intention to send immediately under a strong guard to Buenos Ayres, there to answer to the bishop for their proceedings, the profligacy of which he was but too well assured of. Father Hernandez endeavoured all he could to mollify the acrimony of the commandant, and to doubt the truth of the brothers being involved in the conspiracy; and represented the necessity there was of investigating the whole affair upon the spot, before the bishop and major-general at Buenos Ayres were troubled with it. But the more this good man said to extenuate matters, the more irritated the commandant became; and, in defiance of the solicitations and remonstrances of our superior, the two fathers were remanded back to their confinement, and orders given for the balsa to be prepared to convey them to Buenos Ayres. Neither were they permitted to say a word in their defence, but were reconducted to the town prison by the guard which accompanied them to the convent. The commandant then rose to leave the hall, and addressing father Hernandez in some-

what a gentler tone, said—‘ I attach no blame to you, father, in this affair, therefore consider yourself in the same light as on your arrival at the presidency ; but let the few religious that remain, and are attached to your station, remember that they are not, as in former times, to interfere in any thing that relates to civil or military affairs ; let them look to their duties in ecclesiastical matters only, or the military shall take the sacred functions into their own hands, till orders shall be received to the contrary.’ Having said this, he slightly bowed, and departed.

Our venerable friend and father sat for some moments in his chair, motionless and silent ; and, as I gazed upon him, I doubted whether the unfeeling Policarpo had not put the final stroke to all his miseries : at length, the deep-drawn sigh and tear of mental anguish announced him still a sufferer. I held him in my arms, and entreated him to take a cordial to raise his over-oppressed spirits. When his agitation had a little subsided, he complied with my request ; but its effects were only momentary : he was obliged to be conveyed to bed, when a fever came rapidly on, and, the weather being excessively hot, before three the next morning he was delirious. I never left him for a moment : he remained for three days insensible, though perfectly passive ; and I tried, with the assistance of one of

the brothers who acted as town physician, every remedy that my imagination could suggest to alleviate his disorder, but in vain: the skill of mortals was of no avail, for the angel of death was waiting to conduct his spotless soul to regions of eternal happiness. About nine in the morning of the fourth day he dropped into a slumber, from which he awaked apparently relieved. He knew me, and extending his feeble hands to clasp mine, tried to articulate some sentences, but nature was too much exhausted. I knelt beside him, but could only distinguish the words—‘ Buenos Ayres—go—and the holy Virgin—’ His voice failed him, and he made a sign to have the extreme unction administered. I gave him to understand that he had already received it: a faint smile beamed upon his countenance.—My friend, that smile was more than mortal; and never, never while I live, will it be forgot by me.—He then pressed my hand to his lips; and, with a feeble sigh, his righteous spirit took its flight for ever.

To describe to you what I felt at that painful moment would be impossible: that God who knows the secret feelings of every human heart, can witness how unfeigned my sorrow was.

The death of this excellent man was immediately notified to the commandant: the news, it seems, affected him; and, for once, I should hope his

heart smote him for the unfeeling manner in which he had treated the aged and pious Hernandez.

I followed the remains of my second father to the grave, to which it was consigned with all the respect his piety and virtues demanded. When the earth closed him from my sight for ever, I felt as though my heart was rent in twain, and thought the better half of me was buried: I wept like a child. And even now I at times start from my chair, and run to the apartment where I was used to sit and read to him; and there, in a kind of stupor, look around in hopes to see his placid smile, or hear the sound of his revered voice. Your feeling heart, my friend, can pardon mine this weakness.

Adieu!

LETTER XXXII.

Rioja Minor, March, 1798.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I MUST now, as well as I am able, give you a short account of the scenes I have been engaged in since the death of my lamented friend, who, I bless God, did not live to be a partaker in them. I think I wrote you, that father Michael and father Joseph were placed in confinement, until the balsa should be ready to convey them to Buenos Ayres. I was so much taken up with the illness and death of our good pastor, that I never even bestowed a thought upon these men until the morning after the funeral, when I sent to the commandant to request that I might be permitted to return with the prisoners to the convent of St. Dominic, if they were not already sent off; for not a single person had opened his lips to me on that or any other subject, save the death of the superior, whom every one lamented. The answer I received from don Policarpo was, 'That he should consider of my request; and in the mean time desired I would keep myself quiet with the

other two brothers in the monastery, round which I found the guard was still stationed. This answer of the commandant's somewhat surprised me; and about the middle of the day after that on which it was sent to me, I was sitting in the apartment formerly occupied by the venerable Hernandez, reflecting on my situation, and wondering for what new vicissitudes I was reserved, when I was roused from my reverie by the loud confused din of an approaching multitude. Presently a signal gun was fired, the drums beat to arms, and the piercing war-shout of the Indians burst upon my ears. I sprung in terror from my seat, and ran to the window, but it only commanded a view of the convent garden. I was therefore hastily returning to the door when it flew open, and the friendly Indian who made my secret box for me rushed into the room, followed by about twenty of the town Indians. 'Come with me, father Mathias,' said he—for that is my religious title—'for with us you will be safe.' 'What is the matter?' cried I; 'what does all this mean?' 'Father Michael and father Joseph,' returned he, 'have been rescued from the balsas by some tribes of the wild Charuas: they have joined the town Indians, who have risen in a body and are now surrounding every Spaniard's house; but I will preserve you.' Saying this, he threw part of a tiger's skin across my

shoulders, and pulled me after him out of the monastery, and towards the strand. All we past was tumult, horror, and confusion; the military were flying in all directions, pursued by the Charuas armed with long barbed darts, which they sent through the air with amazing celerity. The townsmen had taken possession of the signal post, storehouse, and arsenal, and being at the hour of siesta, all the Spaniards had been taken unprepared. This was the revolt which had been so long dreaded, and which the commandant too securely thought he had effectually circumvented through the intelligence received from the Indian. But this pretended confession, it now appears, was only a deep-laid scheme to deceive the commandant; the conspirators had foreseen the consequences, and provided accordingly. I perceived, as I passed along from the monastery to the water, that all who had not the whole or part of a tiger's skin upon their shoulders were immediately sacrificed either by the town Indians, who wore this symbol, or by the Charuas, who had theirs tied about their waists as their common, and indeed only, covering. When I reached the strand, the first objects I beheld were the dead bodies of the commandant and major-general, pierced in every part with darts and arrows. I have since learnt they dragged the former from his bed, and massacred him; his wife

and family were killed in much the same manner ; and so sudden and unexpected was the blow, that not a single destined victim had escaped. My friendly Indian I found had provided a piece of tiger's skin for me even before I returned with father Hernandez ; but so very secret were the conspirators that, although he reposed the greatest confidence in me, he would not venture to give me the token, or drop any hint concerning it, until he saw his friends had entered the town, and secured the principal characters, he then hastened to the convent to protect me. When the Indians pointed out to me the mangled body of the unfortunate Zulucta, the horror in my countenance became, I am certain, too visible not to be noticed by my conductor, who turned to his companions, and said he would take me to his friends at the town-house. Thither I was immediately hurried, amidst the shrieks of the vanquished, and the cries of the women and children, who vainly endeavoured to save from the uplifted weapon, a father, a husband, or a brother. The unsubdued Indians set no limits to their fury, but wreaked their vengeance indiscriminately, without sparing either age or sex. The tumult of my mind can be better imagined than described as I passed over the bleeding bodies of those who, in a moment of fatal security, had fallen by the hands of these merciless

beings. When we came to the public hall, I found a vast number of the town Indians keeping guard over some of the military whom they had taken prisoners without wounding them, but how they were to be disposed of I could not learn. When I entered, my friendly Indian introduced me to a relation of his, who held the post of teniente, saying to him—‘ This is my friend, and no Spaniard, he must be protected.’ He then handed me within a rail of bamboo that parted the room, and hastily quitted the place. The other immediately presented me some wine and biscuit—meat and drink are the first offering of Indian friendship—and I was constrained to partake of them, lest by a refusal I should offend ; but never did a morsel pass my lips with so much repugnance, not even my commons of mutton while at college. The tumult without now appeared to increase, but not a single gun was fired : I therefore concluded that all the mischief was done by darts and arrows. At length the sounds began to die away, and as night approached, silence came with it. The hall, however, where I still remained was soon filled with the town Indians and the chiefs of the wild tribe, to all of whom I was presented. They looked at me with a mixture of surprise and admiration ; this was owing to the colour of my skin ; they had never seen any man so white before. God knows,

I regarded them in a much less favourable light than they appeared to consider me. Most of them were covered with blood and dirt; they were strong muscular men, with a savage ferocity of countenance that made me shudder, though I am not apt to be frightened at any one: but a scene like this was entirely new to me, and I trust I shall never in my life witness such another. The whole of the night was spent by the Indians in consultation; but as they conversed in the Charuan language, which I was entirely unacquainted with, I cannot pretend to say what was the result.

In the morning father Michael and father Joseph entered, to whom the Indians paid great respect; they came to me, enquired after my health, and said they hoped I was not alarmed at what had happened. I hardly know what answer I made them; but they replied I was perfectly right in remaining passive, and I might then return to the convent in safety with them, for order was everywhere restored. I thanked them, and enquired whether it was their intention to remain here, or return to Buenos Ayres. They replied, to remain, as they were among friends whom they could trust as they needed no superiors; and if I chose to continue at the convent, I should find no difference between my past and future situation, unless that I should enjoy unlimited liberty, provided I would

take an oath to abide by the rules they were about to adopt for the government of the community. I again thanked them for their friendly offers, but said if they would permit me to return to Buenos Ayres I should esteem myself most sensibly obliged to them, as it had been the wish of the good father Hernandez that I should do so, with a view of gaining permission to accompany father Pablo to Chile. They paused on what I said, and at last observed, that, as they knew I was an English prisoner, they thought I could not do better than stay with them; however they would consider of my proposal, and let me know the result. I was then conducted back to the monastery. As I passed I found the bodies of the slain had been removed; but how they had been disposed of nobody would tell me, nor could I get any one for several days to hold any conversation with me: no forms of religion were observed, nor was I once summoned to attend mass. From some discourse, however, which passed between those who came in and out at my meals, I gathered that near twelve hundred of the military and town Indians had fallen in the conflict. This loss was to be supplied by the Charuas, who meant to enroll themselves among the liberated townsmen, as they were termed. On the sixth day in the evening, father Michael came to me, and apologised for not

seeing me before, saying, that the many material things he had had to arrange alone prevented him. He then entered into a long dissertation on the necessity the town Indians had been under of adopting the decisive measures they had pursued, to obtain that liberty the state of Spain had so long deprived them of, and which it was their firm determination to secure against whatever steps the crown might have recourse to, to prevent them; for although they respected the laws, they were not disposed to abide by any but those they themselves should frame: their oppressors had reigned long enough, and they were resolved to enjoy their native freedom, or perish in the attempt. I endeavoured to reason with him on his mistaken conduct, and shew how wrong it was for a servant of God to take up the sword, and by his arguments and example to lead a large body of men into error: but I soon found he had the better side of the question; his arguments were founded on facts so evident, that I was at last obliged to acquiesce in all he said. He then urgently pressed me to become a member of the community, offering to pledge his life that I should be safe in every change that might take place; and if I desired it at a future period, he would take care to have me safely conveyed to England. But I steadily refused his offers, and alleged the re-

quest of father Hernandez as the most cogent reason for my conduct, adding, that it was the first wish of my heart to visit Chile. He paid a deference to the opinion of his late excellent superior; but said he doubted much if, when I had passed the Cordillera, I should find the presidencies much more composed than the one I was about to leave: however, since I was determined to quit them, he would do all in his power to accommodate me; the balsas which annually convey the articles of barter from the settlement to the capital were then preparing, and I should depart in one of them. He said he had taken care that no tell-tales should be trusted on board; and he should exact this much of me, that I would remain concealed in the balsa upon its arrival at the harbour de las Conchas on the Plata until the Indians had finished their business; when, as soon as they had taken on board the lading they were to bring back to the presidency, they should sail about a league or two up the river on their return, when I should be put on shore, and from thence I must get to Buenos Ayres in the best manner I could. ‘This,’ added father Michael, ‘is all I can do for you; when you reach the city you may relate as much as you think proper of what has been acted here, for before any force can come against us we shall be prepared to receive them.’

I asked him if he had no fears of an attack from any of the neighbouring presidencies. He said none, for they were provided against all events. Our discourse lasted a long while, and we parted very sincere friends for aught I know to the contrary ; he had convinced me of the rectitude of his conduct, and promised to inform me of every particular circumstance that might occur by means of an Indian friend he had at Buenos Ayres, for as to a friend among his own countrymen, he never entertained an idea of finding any thing of the kind.

Thus we parted, and I went to prepare for my departure, and write this much to you. I go from hence early to-morrow ; my next, I hope, will be dated from my old habitation, the convent of St. Dominic. Adieu!

LETTER XXXIII.

*Convent of St. Dominic,
Buenos Ayres, May, 1793.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THANK Heaven, I am once more safely lodged in this mansion of peace, and, truth compels me to confess, heartily tired of my adventures in the wilds of Paraguay. God of my fathers, how weak and erring is the mind of man! The fairest object on which his every hope and wish was centred when viewed in the perspective only, and hard to be obtained, if thy indulgent hand yield it to his grasp how little does he feel the folly of anticipation! Every promised pleasure fades in the moment of possession, and with enjoyment brings dissatisfaction and disgust.

Fashion, O thou almighty Ruler of the universe! my future fortunes as best shall please thy heavenly wisdom. Henceforth, my friend, I form no more vain wishes: experience has taught me resignation; and to the latest hour of my life, however long I labour through this world of disappointment and deception, still shall this conviction be my guide—

That what Omnipotence decrees, man must acknowledge right.

My voyage from Rioja Minor was far more tedious than when I travelled with the good father Hernandez, whose death is here universally lamented. As we slowly passed the ruined presidency at Tiger creek, I could not restrain the tear of affectionate regret, which flowed from the remembrance that it was there that venerable man received the wound which ultimately proved the final end of all his sorrows. Every object that I beheld and recollected served but to recall him more forcibly to my mind; and the uninteresting conversation of my companions was by no means calculated to dispel such melancholy thoughts. We met with no adventures to enliven our passage; the Indians hunted for their suppers unmolested; nor did any troop of friendly natives appear upon the banks of the river to amuse us with their antics—all around seemed to mourn in silence with me for the friend and father I had lost.

When we reached the harbour de las Conchas, I was obliged, in compliance with the orders of father Michael, to keep close concealed in the apartment of the balsa until the Indians had completed their business of barter with the agents, who came for that purpose from Buenos Ayres. In five days all was concluded, and on the sixth

they returned up the river. When they had rowed about two leagues from the harbour, they stopped to put me on shore : my baggage was all contained in a little leathern caravan; and, with many expressions of esteem and regret on their parts, they left me. Then, with my treasure on my back, I patiently plodded on foot my way back to Rio las Conchas; where I fortunately met with a Jew merchant, who was one of those that had trafficked with my departed friends : he was going back in a cart laden with purchases to Buenos Ayres, and readily agreed to give me a lift. On our way he was very inquisitive as to my business, and where I had been ; but I pretty well evaded his questions : and on the following evening, about seven o'clock, he set me down at the gate of St. Dominic's convent. My appearance, and the accounts I brought with me, have thrown not only the community, but the government, into consternation : all is bustle and hurry to get troops sent off to bring back the insurgents to their duty, though their place of destination is concealed from the public. How they will succeed, God only knows : I cannot say that my good wishes go with them ; I have seen too much of the other side of the picture. Silence is enjoined me under the severest penalty ; and not even don Manuel must I make acquainted with what has passed. I have been upon this business twice to

the governor, and three times to the bishop, who has been so kind as to give me his promise that I shall be sent to father Pablo as soon as they receive intelligence of his arrival at St. Iago. I have experienced a very cordial welcome from all my old friends in this city, who say they are very happy to see me returned, and I really believe would be much more so could I be prevailed on to disclose my adventures.

All my letters, I find, have been sent to you, and by a means which leads me to hope they will reach you in safety. I found in don Manuel's hands a remittance from New York, which came very opportunely. I have made my accustomed offering to these holy fathers, and, in the hope of being sent to Chili, have been rather more liberal than usual. The bishop informed me that he had received a letter from father Hernandez—written as he was about to depart for the baths of Ariciffe—respecting me. His reverence was pleased to say he honoured and esteemed that worthy man, and for his sake should make a point of obliging me. The present superior of this convent, too, had likewise been written to by my lamented friend; and, according to his request, I have been favoured with all his papers. These will occupy all my leisure hours; and, as there is no time fixed for my returning them until I leave America, I shall

transcribe many of them for your perusal, and out of the whole I hope to be able to form a concise history of the many missions he was engaged in for near twenty-five years. As this will engross most of my time while I am waiting for news from St. Iago, you will not perhaps receive another letter from me while in this city. Trouble not yourself about the probable consequences of my wanderings : I have no fears,

“ For God is ever present, ever felt—
In the wide waste, as in the city, full.”

His almighty hand, I trust, will guide, succour, and preserve, your sincere friend, in every region and in every climate.

THE END.





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