A TOUR THROUGH SICILY AND MALTA.

VOL. I.

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A

TOUR

THROUGH

SICILY AND MALTA

VOL. I.

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A TOUR THROUGH SICILY AND MALTA.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq. OF SOMERLY IN SUFFOLK;

FROM

P. BRYDONE, F.R.S.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. STRAHAN; AND T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

HAD there been any book in our language on the ſubject of the following Letters, they never ſhould have ſeen the light. The Author wrote them for the amuſement of his friends, and as an aſſiſtance to his memory; and if it will in any degree apologize for their imperfections, he can with truth declare that they never were intended for publication: nor indeed was that idea ſuggeſted to him, till long after they were written. One principal motive he will own, was the deſire of giving to the world, and perhaps of tranſmitting to poſterity,

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a monument of his friendſhip with the gentleman to whom they are addreſſed.

When Mr. Forſter's tranſlation of Baron Riedeſel's book firſt appeared, theſe Letters were already in the preſs, and the Author apprehended an anticipation of his ſubject; however, on peruſal he had the ſatisfaction to find, that the two works did not much interfere.

In tranſcribing them for the preſs, he found it neceſſary both to retrench and to amplify; by which the eaſe of the epiſtolary ſtyle has probably ſuffered, and ſome of the letters have been extended much beyond their original length.

He

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He now preſents them to the Public with the greateſt diffidence; hoping that ſome allowance will be made for the very inconvenient circumſtances, little favourable to order or preciſion, in which many of them were written: But he would not venture to new-model them; apprehending, that what they might gain in form and expreſſion, they would probably loſe in eaſe and ſimplicity; and well knowing that the original impreſſions are better deſcribed at the moment they are felt, than from the moſt exact recollection.

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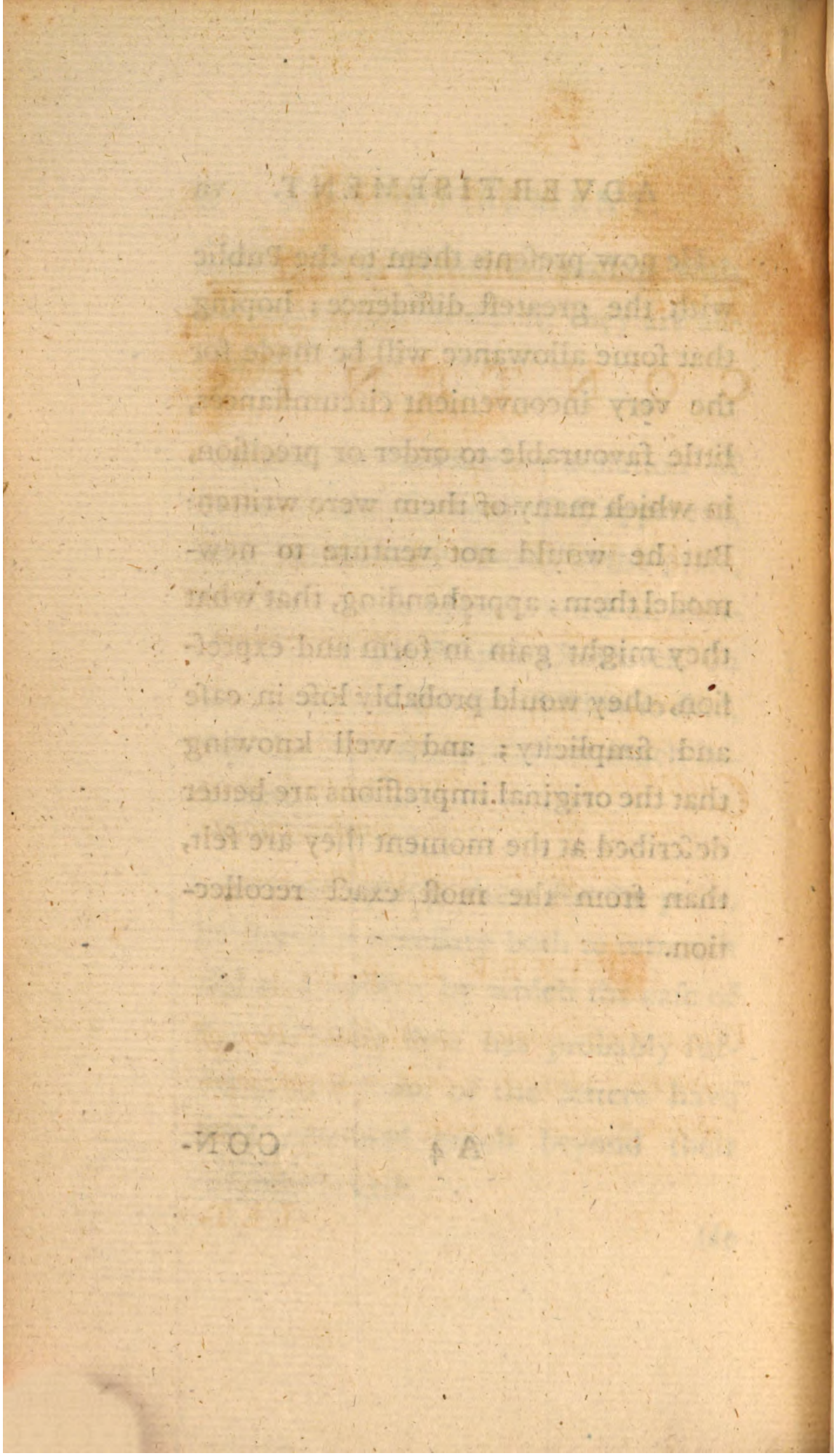

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LETTER I.

DEAR BECKFORD, Naples, May 14, 1770.

I Remember to have heard you regret, that in all your peregrinations through Europe, you had ever neglected the iſland of Sicily; and had ſpent much of your time in running over the old beaten track, and in examining the thread-bare ſubjects of Italy and France; when probably there were a variety of objects, not leſs intereſting,

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that ſtill lay buried in oblivion in that celebrated iſland. We intend to profit from this hint of yours.—Fullarton has been urging me to it with all that ardour, which a new proſpect of acquiring knowlege ever inſpires in him; and Glover, your old acquaintance, has promiſed to accompany us.

The Italians repreſent it as impoſſible: as there are no inns in the iſland, and many of the roads are over dangerous precipices, or through bogs and foreſts, infeſted by the moſt reſolute and daring banditti in Europe. However, all theſe conſiderations, formidable as they may appear, did not deter Mr. Hamilton*, his lady, and Lord Fortroſe†. They made this expedition laſt ſummer; and returned ſo much delighted with it, that they have animated us with the ſtrongeſt deſire of enjoying the ſame pleaſure.

* Now knight of the bath. † Now Earl of Seaforth.

Our

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Our firſt plan, was to go by land to Regium, and from thence, croſs over to Meſſina; but on making exact enquiry, with regard to the ſtate of the country, and method of travelling, we find that the danger from the banditti in Calabria and Apulia is ſo great, the accommodations ſo wretched, and inconveniencies of every kind ſo numerous, without any conſideration whatever to throw into the oppoſite ſcale, that we ſoon relinquiſhed that ſcheme; and in ſpite of all the terrors of Scylla and Charybdis, and the more real terrors of ſea ſickneſs (the moſt formidable monſter of the three) we have determined to go by water: And, that no time may be loſt, we have already taken our paſſage on board an Engliſh ſhip, which is ready to ſail with the firſt fair wind.

Now, as this little expedition has never been conſidered as any part of the grand tour; and as it will probably preſent

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many objects worthy of your attention, not mentioned in any of our books of travels; I flatter myself that a short account of these will not be unacceptable to you; and may in some degree make up for your having neglected to visit them. You may therefore expect to hear of me, from every town where we stop; and when I meet with any thing deserving of notice, I shall attempt to describe it in as few words as possible. We have been waiting with impatience for a fair wind, but at present there is little prospect of it. The weather is exceedingly rough, and not a ship has been able to get out of the harbour for upwards of three weeks past. This climate is by no means what we expected to find it; and the serene sky of Italy, so much boasted of by our travelled gentlemen, does not altogether deserve the great elogiums bestowed upon it. It is now the middle of May, and we have not as yet had any continuance of what may be called

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fine weather. It has, indeed, been abundantly warm, but ſeldom a day has paſſed without ſudden ſtorms of wind and rain, which render walking out here to the full as dangerous to our invalids, as it is in England.

I am perſuaded that our phyſicians are under ſome miſtake with regard to this climate. It is certainly one of the warmeſt in Italy; but it is as certainly one of the moſt inconſtant; and from what we have obſerved, diſagrees with the greateſt part of our valetudinarians; but more particularly with the gouty people, who have all found themſelves better at Rome; which though much colder in winter, is, I believe, a healthier climate. Naples to be ſure is more eligible in ſummer, as the air is conſtantly refreſhed by the ſea breeze, when Rome is often ſcorched by the moſt inſupportable heat. Laſt ſummer, Farenheit's thermometer never roſe higher at

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Naples than 76. At Rome it was at 89. The difference is often ſtill more conſiderable. In winter it is not leſs remarkable. Here, our greateſt degree of cold was in the end of January; the thermometer ſtood at 36; at Rome it fell to 27; ſo that the diſtance between the two extremes of heat and cold laſt year at Naples, was only 40 degrees; whereas at Rome it was no leſs than 62. Yet, by all accounts, their winter was much more agreeable and healthy than ours: For they had clear froſty weather, whilſt we were deluged with rains, accompanied with very high wind. The people here aſſure us, that in ſome ſeaſons it has rained every day for ſix or ſeven weeks. But the moſt diſagreeable part of the Neapolitan climate is the ſirocc or ſouth-eaſt wind, which is very common at this ſeaſon. It is infinitely more relaxing, and gives the vapours in a much higher degree, than the worſt of our rainy Novembers. It has now blown for theſe

ſeven

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ſeven days without intermiſſion; and has indeed blown away all our gaiety and ſpirits; and if it continues much longer, I do not know what may be the conſequence. It gives a degree of laſſitude, both to the body and mind, that renders them abſolutely incapable of performing their uſual functions. It is not perhaps ſurprizing, that it ſhould produce theſe effects on a phlegmatic Engliſh conſtitution; but we have juſt now an inſtance, that all the mercury of France muſt ſink under the load of this horrid, leaden atmoſphere. A ſmart Pariſian marquis came here about ten days ago: he was ſo full of animal ſpirits that the people thought him mad. He never remained a moment in the ſame place; but, at their grave converſations, uſed to ſkip from room to room with ſuch amazing elaſticity, that the Italians ſwore he had got ſprings in his ſhoes. I met him this morning, walking with the ſtep of a philoſopher; a ſmelling bottle in

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his hand, and all his vivacity extinguiſhed. I aſked what was the matter? "Ah! mon "ami," ſaid he, "je m'ennui à la mort; "—moi, qui n'ai jamais ſçu l'ennui. "Mais cet execrable vent m'accable; et "deux jours de plus, et je me pend."

The natives themſelves do not ſuffer leſs than ſtrangers; and all nature ſeems to languiſh during this abominable wind. A Neapolitan lover avoids his miſtreſs with the utmoſt care in the time of the ſirocc, and the indolence it inſpires, is almoſt ſufficient to extinguiſh every paſſion. All works of genius are laid aſide, during its continuance; and when any thing very flat or inſipid is produced, the ſtrongeſt phraſe of diſapprobation they can beſtow is, "Era ſcritto in tempo del ſirocco;" that it was writ in the time of the ſirocc. I ſhall make no other apology for this letter; and whenever I happen to tire you, be kind enough to remember (pray do) that

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it is not me you are to blame, but the ſirocc wind. This will put me much at my eaſe, and will ſave us a world of time in apologies.

I have been endeavouring to get ſome account of the cauſe of this very ſingular quality of the ſirocc; but the people here ſeldom think of accounting for any thing, and I do not find, notwithſtanding its remarkable effects, that it has ever yet been an object of enquiry amongſt them.

I have not obſerved that the ſirocc makes any remarkable change in the barometer. When it firſt ſet in, the mercury fell about a line and a half; and has continued much about the ſame height ever ſince; but the thermometer was at 43 the morning it began, and roſe almoſt immediately to 65; and for theſe two days paſt it has been at 70 and 71. However, it is certainly not the warmth of this wind,

that

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that renders it ſo oppreſſive to the ſpirits; it is rather the want of that genial quality, which is ſo enlivening; and which ever renders the weſtern breeze ſo agreeable: The ſpring and elaſticity of the air ſeems to be loſt; and that active principle which animates all nature, appears to be dead. This principle we have ſometimes ſuppoſed to be nothing elſe than the ſubtle electric fluid that the air uſually contains; and indeed, we have found, that during this wind, it appears to be almoſt annihilated, or at leaſt, its activity exceedingly reduced. Yeſterday, and to-day, we have been attempting to make ſome electrical experiments; but I never before found the air ſo unfavourable for them.

Sea-bathing we have found to be the beſt antidote againſt the effects of the ſirocc; and this we certainly enjoy in great perfection. Lord Fortroſe, who is the ſoul of our colony here, has provided a large

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large commodious boat for this purpoſe. We meet every morning at eight o'clock, and row about half a mile out to ſea, where we ſtrip and plunge into the water: Were it not for this, we ſhould all of us have been as bad as the French marquis. My lord has ten watermen, who are in reality a ſort of amphibious animals, as they live one half the ſummer in the ſea. Three or four of theſe generally go in with us, to pick up ſtragglers, and ſecure us from all accidents. They dive with eaſe to the depth of forty, and ſometimes of fifty feet; and bring up quantities of excellent ſhell-fiſh during the ſummer months; but ſo great is their devotion, that every time they go down they make the ſign of the croſs, and mutter an Ave Maria, without which they think they ſhould certainly be drowned; and were not a little ſcandalized at us for omitting this ceremony. To accuſtom us to ſwimming in all circumſtances, my lord has provided a ſuit of clothes, which

we

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we wear by turns; and from a very ſhort practice, we have found it almoſt as commodious to ſwim with as without them; we have likewiſe learned to ſtrip in the water, and find it no very difficult matter: And I am fully perſuaded, from being accuſtomed to this kind of exerciſe, that in caſe of ſhipwreck we ſhould have greatly the advantage over thoſe who had never practiſed it; for it is by the embarraſſment from the clothes, and the agitation that people are thrown into, from finding themſelves in a ſituation they had never experienced before, that ſo many lives are loſt in the water.

After bathing, we have an Engliſh breakfaſt at his lordſhip's; and after breakfaſt, a delightful little concert, which laſts for an hour and a half. Barbella, the ſweeteſt fiddle in Italy, leads our little band. This party, I think, conſtitutes one principal part of the pleaſure we enjoy at

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Naples. We have likewiſe ſome very agreeable ſociety amongſt ourſelves, though we cannot boaſt much of that with the inhabitants. There are to be ſure many good people amongſt them; but in general, there is ſo very little analogy betwixt an Engliſh and a Neapolitan mind, that the true ſocial harmony, that great ſweetener of human life, can ſeldom be produced. In lieu of this, (the exchange you will ſay is but a bad one) the country round Naples abounds ſo much in every thing that is curious, both in art and nature, and affords ſo ample a field of ſpeculation for the naturaliſt and antiquary, that a perſon of any curioſity may ſpend ſome months here very agreeably, and not without profit.

Beſides the diſcoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeia, which, of themſelves, afford a great fund of entertainment, the whole coaſt that ſurrounds this beautiful bay, particularly that near Puzzoli, Cuma,

Micenum,

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Micenum, and Baia, is covered with innumerable monuments of Roman magnificence. But, alas! how are the mighty fallen! This delightful coaſt, once the garden of all Italy, and inhabited only by the rich, the gay, and luxurious, is now abandoned to the pooreſt and moſt miſerable of mortals. Perhaps, there is no ſpot on the globe, that has undergone ſo thorough a change; or that can exhibit ſo ſtriking a picture of the vanity of human grandeur. Thoſe very walls that once lodged a Cæſar, a Lucullus, an Anthony, the richeſt and moſt voluptuous of mankind; are now occupied by the very meaneſt and moſt indigent wretches on earth, who are actually ſtarving for want in thoſe very apartments that were the ſcenes of the greateſt luxury. There we are told that ſuppers were frequently given, that coſt fifty thouſand pounds; and ſome, that even amounted to double that ſum.

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The luxury indeed of Baia was ſo great, that it became a proverb, even amongſt the luxurious Romans themſelves; and, at Rome, we often find them upbraiding with effeminacy and epicuriſm, thoſe who ſpent much of their time in this ſcene of delights; Clodius throws it in Cicero's teeth more than once: And that orator's having purchaſed a villa here, hurt him not a little in the opinion of the graver and more auſtere part of the ſenate. The walls of theſe palaces ſtill remain, and the poor peaſants, in ſome places, have built up their miſerable huts within them; but, at preſent, there is not one gentleman or man of faſhion reſiding in any part of this country; the former ſtate of which, compared with the preſent, certainly makes the moſt ſtriking contraſt imaginable. Yeſterday we rode over the greateſt part of it a ſhooting porcupines, a new ſpecies of diverſion, which I had never heard of before. We killed ſeveral of theſe animals on the

Monte

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Monte Barbaro, the place that formerly produced the Falernian wine, but now a barren waſte. I don't know if you are acquainted with this kind of ſport. To me, I own, its novelty was its greateſt merit; and I would not at any time give a day of partridge for a month of porcupine ſhooting. Neither indeed is the fleſh of theſe animals the moſt delicious in the world, though to-day moſt of us have dined upon it. It is extremely luſcious, and ſoon palls upon the appetite.

We are now going to lay in our ſea-ſtore, as there is ſome probability that we ſhall fail in a day or two.—Farewell—you ſhall hear from me again at Meſſina, if we are not ſwallowed up by Charybdis.

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LETTER II.

On Board the Charming Molly, off the Iſland of Caprè, May 15.

WE have now begun our expedition with every auſpicious omen. This morning the melancholy ſirocc left us; and in place of it we have gotten a fine briſk tramontane (or North wind) which in a few hours blew away all our vapours, and made us wonder how much the happineſs of mankind depends on a blaſt of wind. After eating a hearty dinner with many of our friends at Mr. Walter's, and drinking plentifully of his excellent burgundy, we took leave in the higheſt ſpirits. Had the ſirocc blown as yeſterday, we ſhould probably have been in tears; and not one of us would have ſuſpected that we were crying, only becauſe the wind was in the

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ſouth. We are not apt to ſuppoſe it; but probably a great part of our pleaſures and pains depend upon ſuch trivial cauſes, though always aſcribed to ſomething elſe; few people being willing to own themſelves like a weathercock, affected by every blaſt. Indeed we ſhould have naturally imputed it to the grief of parting with that excellent family whom you know ſo well; which no perſon could ever leave without regret, or ſee without pleaſure; but the agreeable proſpect of ſoon meeting again, (probably better qualified to amuſe and entertain them) abſorbed all melancholy thoughts; and even added to that alacrity, which the delightful tour before us had already inſpired.

We ſailed at five; and after firing our farewel ſignals to our friends on ſhore, (whom we diſcovered with our glaſſes at ſome miles diſtance) we ſoon found ourſelves in the middle of the bay of Naples, ſurrounded

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ſurrounded by the moſt beautiful ſcenery in the world. It fell calm for an hour, on purpoſe to give us time to contemplate all its beauties.

The bay is of a circular figure; in moſt places upwards of 20 miles in diameter; ſo that including all its breaks and inequalities, the circumference is conſiderably more than 60 miles. The whole of this ſpace is ſo wonderfully diverſified, by all the riches both of art and nature, that there is ſcarce an object wanting to render the ſcene compleat; and it is hard to ſay, whether the view is more pleaſing from the ſingularity of many of theſe objects, or from the incredible variety of the whole. You ſee an amazing mixture of the antient and modern; ſome riſing to fame, and ſome ſinking to ruin. Palaces reared over the tops of other palaces, and antient magnificence trampled under foot—by modern folly.—Mountains and iſlands, that were

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celebrated for their fertility, changed into barren waſtes; and barren waſtes into fertile fields and rich vineyards. Mountains ſunk into plains, and plains ſwelled into mountains. Lakes drunk up by volcanos, and extinguiſhed volcanos turned into lakes. The earth ſtill ſmoaking in many places; and in others throwing out flame.—In ſhort, nature ſeems to have formed this coaſt in her moſt capricious mood; for every object is a luſus naturæ. She never ſeems to have gone ſeriouſly to work; but to have devoted this ſpot to the moſt unlimited indulgence of caprice and frolick.

The bay is ſhut out from the Mediterranean by the iſland of Caprè, ſo famous for the abode of Auguſtus; and afterwards ſo infamous for that of Tiberius. A little to the weſt lie thoſe of Iſchia, Procida, and Niſida; the celebrated promontory of Micænum, where Æneas landed; the claſſic fields of Baia, Cuma, and Puzzoli; with

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with all the variety of ſcenery that formed both the Tartarus and Elyſium of the ancients; the Campi Phlegrei, or burning plains where Jupiter overcame the giants; the Monte Novo, formed of late years by fire; the Monte Barbaro; the pictureſque city of Puzzoli, with the Solfaterra ſmoaking above it; the beautiful promontory of Pauſillipe, exhibiting the fineſt ſcenery that can be imagined; the great and opulent city of Naples, with its three caſtles, its harbour full of ſhips from every nation, its palaces, churches, and convents innumerable. The rich country from thence to Portici, covered with noble houſes and gardens, and appearing only a continuation of the city. The palace of the king, with many others ſurounding it, all built over the roofs of thoſe of Herculaneum, buried near a hundred feet, by the eruptions of Veſuvius. The black fields of lava that have run from that mountain, intermixed with gardens, vineyards, and orchards,

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Veſuvius itſelf, in the back ground of the ſcene, diſcharging volumes of fire and ſmoak, and forming a broad track in the air over our heads, extending without being broken or diſſipated to the utmoſt verge of the horizon. A variety of beautiful towns and villages, round the baſe of the mountain, thoughtleſs of the impending ruin that daily threatens them. Some of theſe are reared over the very roofs of Pompeia and Stabia, where Pliny periſhed; and with their foundations have pierced through the ſacred abodes of the antient Romans; thouſands of whom lie buried here, the victims of this inexorable mountain. Next follows the extenſive and romantic coaſt of Caſtello Mare, Sorrentum, and Mola; diverſified with every pictureſque object in nature. It was the ſtudy of this wild and beautiful country that formed our greateſt landſcape-painters. This was the ſchool of Pouſſin and Salvator Roſa, but more particularly of the laſt,

who

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who compoſed many of his moſt celebrated pieces from the bold craggy rocks that ſurround this coaſt; and no doubt it was from the daily contemplation of theſe romantic objects, that they ſtored their minds with that variety of ideas they have communicated to the world with ſuch elegance in their works.

Now, ſhould I tell you that this extenſive coaſt, this prodigious variety of mountains, valleys, promontories and iſlands, covered with an everlaſting verdure, and loaded with the richeſt fruits, is all the produce of ſubterraneous fire; it would require, I am afraid, too great a ſtretch of faith to believe me; yet the fact is certain, and can only be doubted by thoſe who have wanted time or curioſity to examine it: It is ſtrange, you will ſay, that nature ſhould make uſe of the ſame agent to create as to deſtroy; and that what has only been looked upon as the conſumer of

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countries, is in fact the very power that produces them. Indeed, this part of our earth ſeems already to have undergone the ſentence pronounced upon the whole of it: But, like the phœnix, has riſen again from its own aſhes, in much greater beauty and ſplendour than before it was conſumed. The traces of theſe dreadful conflagrations are ſtill conſpicuous in every corner; they have been violent in their operations, but in the end have proved ſalutary in their effects. The fire in many places is not yet extinguiſhed, but Veſuvius is now the only ſpot where it rages with any degree of activity.

Mr. Hamilton, our miniſter here, who is no leſs diſtinguiſhed in the learned, than in the polite world, has lately examined it with a truly philoſophic eye, and this is the reſult of all his obſervations; however, at preſent, I only ſit down to give you an account of the proſpect of this ſingular country,

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country, and not to write its natural hiſtory; which would lead me into too vaſt a field: I ſhall reſerve that curious ſubject till our return, when I ſhall have more leiſure to make you acquainted with it.—I beg therefore you would at leaſt ſuſpend your judgment for the preſent, and do not condemn me before I am heard.

After contemplating this delightful proſpect, till ſun-ſet, the wind ſprung up again, and we have now almoſt reached Capre, 30 miles diſtant from Naples. We have juſt ſpoken with an Engliſh ſhip. They tell us, that the Marquis of Carmarthen, Lord Fortroſe, and Mr. Hamilton obſerving the calm, took a boat to make us a viſit; but unfortunately miſtaking their veſſel for ours, we have had the mortification to miſs them.

The night is very dark; and mount Veſuvius is flaming at a dreadful rate: We can

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can obſerve the red-hot ſtones thrown to a vaſt height in the air; and, after their fall rolling down the ſide of the mountain. Our ſhip is going ſo ſmooth, that we are ſcarce ſenſible of the motion; and if this wind continue, before to-morrow night we ſhall be in ſight of Sicily. Adieu. The captain is making a bowl of grog, and promiſing us a happy voyage.

16th. All wrong—Sick to death—Execrable ſirocc wind, and directly contrary—Vile heaving waves—A plague of all ſea voyages.—That author was ſurely right, who ſaid, that *land voyages* * were much to be preferred.

17th in the morning. For theſe 24 hours paſt we have been groaning to one another from our beds; execrating the waves, and wiſhing that we had rather been at the mercy of all the banditti of

* See *Tour to the Eaſt.*

Calabria.

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Calabria. We are now beginning to change our tune. The ſirocc is gone, and the wind is conſiderably fallen; however, we are ſtill three woeful figures. Our ſervants too are as ſick and as helpleſs as we. The captain ſays, that Philip, our Sicilian man, was frightened out of his wits; and has been praying to St. Januarius with all his might. He now thinks he has heard him, and imputes the change of the weather entirely to his intereſt with his ſaint.

17th. Three o'clock. Weather pleaſant and favourable.—A fine breeze ſince ten; —have juſt come in ſight of Strombolo.— Our pilot ſays it is near 20 leagues off. We have likewiſe a view of the mountains of Calabria, but at a very great diſtance. Ship ſteady; and ſea-ſickneſs almoſt gone.

Eleven at night. The weather is now fine, and we are all well. After ſpying Strombolo, by degrees we came in ſight of the

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the reſt of the Lipari iſlands, and part of the coaſt of Sicily. Theſe iſlands are very pictureſque, and ſeveral of them ſtill emit ſmoak, particularly Volcano and Volcanello; but none of them, for ſome ages paſt, except Strombolo, have made any eruptions of fire. We are juſt now lying within about three miles of that curious iſland, and can ſee its operations diſtinctly. It appears to be a volcano of a very different nature from Veſuvius, the exploſions of which ſucceed one another with ſome degree of regularity, and have no great variety of duration. Now I have been obſerving Strombolo, ever ſince it fell dark, with a good deal of pleaſure, but not without ſome degree of perplexity, as I cannot account for its variety. Sometimes its exploſions reſemble thoſe of Veſuvius, and the light ſeems only to be occaſioned by the quantity of fiery ſtones thrown into the air; and as ſoon as theſe have fallen down, it appears to be extinguiſhed, till another

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exploſion cauſes a freſh illumination: This I have obſerved always to be the caſe with Veſuvius; except when the lava has riſen to the ſummit of the mountain, and continued without variety to illuminate the air around it.—The light from Strombolo evidently depends on ſome other cauſe. Sometimes a clear red flame iſſues from the crater of the mountain, and continues to blaze without interruption, for near the ſpace of half an hour. The fire is of a different colour from the exploſions of ſtones, and is evidently produced from a different cauſe. It would ſeem as if ſome inflammable ſubſtance were ſuddenly kindled up in the bowels of the mountain. It is attended with no noiſe, nor exploſion that we are ſenſible of. It has now fallen calm, and we ſhall probably have an opportunity of examining this volcano more minutely to-morrow. We were told at Naples that it had lately made a violent eruption, and had begun to form a new

iſland

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iſland at ſome little diſtance from the old; which piece of intelligence was one of our great inducements to this expedition. We think we have diſcovered this iſland, as we have obſerved ſeveral times the appearance of a ſmall flame ariſing out of the ſea, a little to the ſouth-weſt of Strombolo; and ſuppoſe it muſt have iſſued from this new iſland; but it is poſſible this light may come from the lower part of the iſland of Strombolo itſelf. We ſhall ſee to-morrow.

18th. We are ſtill off Strombolo, but unfortunately at preſent it intercepts the view of that ſpot from whence we obſerved the flame to ariſe, and we can ſee no appearance of any new iſland, nor indeed of any lava that has of late ſprung from the old one. We have a diſtinct view of the crater of Strombolo, which ſeems to be different from Veſuvius, and all the old volcanos that ſurround Naples. Of theſe, the craters are without excep-

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tion in the center, and form the higheſt part of the mountain. That of Strombolo is on its ſide, and not within 200 yards of its ſummit. From the crater to the ſea, the iſland is entirely compoſed of the ſame ſort of aſhes and burnt matter as the conical part of Veſuvius; and the quantity of this matter is perpetually increaſing, from the uninterrupted diſcharge from the mountain; for of all the volcanos we read of, Strombolo ſeems to be the only one that burns without ceaſing. Ætna and Veſuvius often lie quiet for many months, even years, without the leaſt appearance of fire, but Strombolo is ever at work, and for ages paſt has been looked upon as the great light-houſe of theſe ſeas.

It is truly wonderful, how ſuch a conſtant and immenſe fire is maintained for thouſands of years, in the midſt of the ocean! That of the other Lipari iſlands

ſeems

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ſeems now almoſt extinct, and the force of the whole to be concentered in Strombolo, which acts as one great vent to them all. We ſtill obſerve Volcano and Volcanello throwing out volumes of ſmoak, but during the whole night we could not perceive the leaſt ſpark of fire from either of them.

It is probable, that Strombolo, as well as all the reſt of theſe iſlands, is originally the work of ſubterraneous fire. The matter of which they are compoſed, in a manner demonſtrates this; and many of the Sicilian authors confirm it. There are now eleven of them in all; and none of the antients mention more than ſeven. Fazzello, one of the beſt Sicilian authors, gives an account of the production of Volcano, now one of the moſt conſiderable of theſe iſlands. He ſays it happened in the early time of the republick, and is recorded by Euſebius, Pliny, and others. He adds, that even

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even in his time, in the beginning of the 16th century, it ſtill diſcharged quantities of fire and of pumice ſtones; but that in the preceding century, in the year 1444, on the 5th of February, there had been a very great eruption of this iſland, which ſhook all Sicily, and alarmed the coaſt of Italy as far as Naples. He ſays the ſea boiled all around the iſland, and rocks of a vaſt ſize were diſcharged from the crater; that fire and ſmoke in many places pierced through the waves, and that the navigation amongſt theſe iſlands was totally changed; rocks appearing where it was formerly deep water; and many of the ſtraits and ſhallows were entirely filled up. He obſerves, that Ariſtotle, in his book on meteors, takes notice of a very early eruption of this iſland, by which not only the coaſt of Sicily, but likewiſe many cities in Italy were covered with aſhes. It has probably been that very eruption which formed the iſland. He deſcribes Strombolo

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to have been, in his time, pretty much the ſame as at this day; only that it then produced a great quantity of cotton, which is not now the caſe. The greateſt part of it appears to be barren. On the north ſide there are a few vineyards; but they are very meagre: Oppoſite to theſe, there is a rock at ſome diſtance from land; it ſeems to be entirely of lava, and is not leſs than 50 or 60 feet above the water.

The whole iſland of Strombolo is a mountain that riſes ſuddenly from the ſea; it is about ten miles round, and is not of the exact conical form, ſuppoſed common to all volcanos. We were determined to have landed on the iſland, and to have attempted to examine the volcano; but our Sicilian pilot aſſures us, that the crater is not only inacceſſible (which indeed I own it appears to be) but that we ſhall likewiſe be obliged to perform a quarantine of 48 hours at Meſſina; and that beſides, we ſhould

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ſhould run a great riſk of being attacked by the natives, who are little better than ſavages, and always on the alarm againſt the Turks.—On weighing theſe reaſons, and putting the queſtion, it was carried, To proceed on our voyage.

I own it is with much regret that I leave this curious iſland, without being better acquainted with it. I have been looking with a good glaſs all round, but can ſee no marks of the eruption we heard ſo much of at Naples; indeed, the ſouth-weſt part, where we ſaw the appearance of fire, is ſtill hid from us by the interpoſition of the iſland; and if there has been an eruption, it was certainly on that ſide: It is probable we ſhall never be able to learn whether there has been one or not; or, at leaſt, to make ourſelves maſters of any of the particulars relating to it; for events of that kind do not make ſuch a

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noiſe in this ignorant and indolent country, as the blowing of an aloe, or a gooſeberry buſh at Chriſtmas, does in England. Strombolo riſes to a great height; our pilot ſays, higher than Veſuvius; but I think he is miſtaken. Both the captain and he agree, that in clear weather it is diſcoverable at the diſtance of 25 leagues; and that at night its flames are to be ſeen ſtill much farther; ſo that its viſible horizon cannot be leſs than 500 miles, which will require a very conſiderable elevation.

The revenue theſe iſlands bring to the king of Naples is by no means inconſiderable. They produce great quantities of alum, ſulphur, nitre, cinnabar, and moſt ſorts of fruits, particularly raiſins, currants, and figs in great perfection; ſome of their wines are likewiſe much eſteemed; particularly the Malvaſia, well known all over Europe.

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The iſland of Lipari (from which all the reſt take the name) is by much the largeſt, as well as the moſt fertile. By the deſcription of Ariſtotle, it appears that it was in his time, what Strombolo is in ours, conſidered by ſailors as a light-houſe, as its fires were never extinguiſhed. It has not ſuffered from ſubterraneous fires for many ages paſt, though it every where bears the marks of its former ſtate. This is the iſland ſuppoſed by Virgil (who is one of our travelling companions) to be the habitation of Æolus; but indeed all of them were formerly called Æolian. As they were full of vaſt caverns, roaring with internal fires, the poets feigned that Æolus kept the winds priſoners here, and let them out at his pleaſure. This allegorical fiction is of great uſe both to Virgil and Homer, when they want to make a ſtorm, and forms no inconſiderable part of their machinery. A goddeſs has nothing to do but take a

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flight to the Lipari iſlands, and Æolus, who was the very pink of courteſy, has always a ſtorm ready at her command.

Homer indeed, departing ſadly from his uſual dignity, ſuppoſes that Æolus kept the winds here, each tied up in their reſpective bags; and when any particular wind was demanded, he made them a preſent of a bag full of it, to uſe at diſcretion. Some of the antient hiſtorians (Diodorus I think) ſays that this fable took its riſe from a wiſe king named Æolus; who, from obſerving the ſmoke of theſe burning iſlands, and other phænomena attending them, had learned to foretel the weather; and from thence was ſaid to have the command of the winds.

The forge of Vulcan too has been ſuppoſed by the poets to be placed in Hiera, one of theſe iſlands. Virgil ſends him here, to make the celeſtial armour for Æneas,

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Æneas, and gives a noble deſcription of this gloomy habitation *, where he found the Cyclops buſy forging a thunderbolt for Jupiter; the account of which is very ſingular †. This iſland is now called Volcano, the ſame that is recorded to have been produced by fire in the time of the Republic. So that Virgil commits here a very great anachroniſm, in ſending Vulcan to a place which at that time did not exiſt, nor for many ages after. But this bold poetical licence he amply repays us

* Amid the Heſperian and Sicilian flood
All black with ſmoke, a rocky iſland ſtood,
The dark Vulcanian land, the region of the god.
Here the grim Cyclops ply, in vaults profound,
The huge Æolian forge, that thunders round.
Th' eternal anvils ring the dungeon o'er;
From ſide to ſide the fiery caverns roar, &c.

† Beneath their hands, tremendous to ſurvey!
Half rough, half form'd, the dreadful engine lay.
Three points of rain; three forks of hail conſpire;
Three arm'd with wind, and three were barb'd with fire.
The maſs they temper'd thick with livid rays,
Fear, wrath, and terror, and the lightning's blaze.
PITT.

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for, by the fine deſcription he gives of it. Theſe iſlands, he ſays, were called Volcanian as well as Æolian:

"Volcani domus, et Volcania nomine tellus."

So that the change of the name from Hiera to Volcano was a very natural one. This is the iſland that Pliny calls Teraſia; and both Strabo and he give an account of its production.

19th. Found ourſelves within half a mile of the coaſt of Sicily, which is low, but finely variegated. The oppoſite coaſt of Calabria is very high, and the mountains are covered with the fineſt verdure. It was almoſt a dead calm, our ſhip ſcarce moving half a mile in an hour, ſo that we had time to get a complete view of the famous rock of Scylla, on the Calabrian ſide, Cape Pylorus on the Sicilian, and the celebrated Straits of the Faro that runs between them. Whilſt we were ſtill ſome miles

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miles diſtant from the entry of the Straits, we heard the roaring of the current, like the noiſe of ſome large impetuous river confined between narrow banks. This increaſed in proportion as we advanced, till we ſaw the water in many places raiſed to a conſiderable height, and forming large eddies or whirlpools. The ſea in every other place was as ſmooth as glaſs. Our old pilot told us, that he had often ſeen ſhips caught in theſe eddies, and whirled about with great rapidity, without obeying the helm in the ſmalleſt degree. When the weather is calm, there is little danger; but when the waves meet with this violent current, it makes a dreadful ſea. He ſays, there were five ſhips wreck'd in this ſpot laſt winter. We obſerved that the current ſet exactly for the rock of Scylla, and would infallibly have carried any thing thrown into it againſt that point; ſo that it was not without reaſon the ancients have painted it as an object of ſuch terror. It

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is about a mile from the entry of the Faro, and forms a ſmall promontory, which runs a little out to ſea, and meets the whole force of the waters, as they come out of the narroweſt part of the Straits. The head of this promontory is the famous Scylla. It muſt be owned that it does not altogether come up to the formidable deſcription that Homer gives of it; the reading of which (like that of Shakeſpear's Cliff) almoſt makes one's head giddy. Neither is the paſſage ſo wondrous narrow and difficult as he makes it. Indeed it is probable that the breadth of it is greatly increaſed ſince his time, by the violent impetuoſity of the current. And this violence too muſt have always diminiſhed, in proportion as the breadth of the channel encreaſed.

Our pilot ſays, there are many ſmall rocks that ſhew their heads near the baſe of the large one. Theſe are probably the dogs

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dogs that are deſcribed as howling round the monſter Scylla. There are likewiſe many caverns that add greatly to the noiſe of the water, and tend ſtill to encreaſe the horror of the ſcene. The rock is near 200 feet high. There is a kind of caſtle or fort built on its ſummit; and the town of Scylla, or Sciglio, containing three or four hundred inhabitants, ſtands on its ſouth ſide, and gives the title of prince to a Calabreſe family.

As the current was directly againſt us, we were obliged to lie to, for ſome hours, till it turned. The motion of the water ceaſed for ſome time, but in a few minutes it began in the oppoſite direction, though not with ſuch violence. We lay juſt oppoſite to Cape Pylorus; (where the lighthouſe is now built.) It is ſaid to have been thus named by Hannibal, in recompence to Pelorus, his pilot, for having put him to death on this ſpot, on a falſe ſuſpicion of

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his wanting to betray him: For ſeeing himſelf land-locked on all ſides, he thought there was no eſcaping, and that Pelorus had been bribed to deliver him up; but as ſoon as he diſcovered the Straits, he repented of his raſhneſs, and ſome years afterwards erected a ſtatue here, in atonement to the manes of Pelorus. Pomponius Mela tells this ſtory; from whence he draws two very wiſe inferences: That Hannibal muſt have been extremely paſſionate; and that he knew nothing at all of geography. Others deny this authority, and ſay it was named Pelorus from Ulyſſes's pilot, who was drowned near to this place; but there can be no ſort of foundation for this conjecture; for Ulyſſes' whole crew were drowned at the ſame time, and he himſelf was driven through theſe Straits, mounted on the broken maſt of his ſhip. It is like moſt diſputes amongſt antiquaries, a matter of mighty little conſequence; and I leave you at full liberty

to

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to chuſe which of the two accounts you pleaſe.

From hence we had an opportunity of obſerving a pretty large portion of Calabria, which formerly conſtituted a conſiderable part of that celebrated country, known by the name of Great Greece, and looked upon as one of the moſt fertile in the empire. Theſe beautiful hills and mountains are covered with trees and bruſh-wood to the very ſummit; and appear pretty much in the ſame ſtate as ſome of the wilds of America that are juſt beginning to be cultivated. Some little ſpots where the woods are cleared away, juſt ſerve to ſhew the natural fertility of the ſoil; and what this country might ſoon be brought to, were induſtry and population encouraged; but it ſtill remains a good deal in the ſame ſituation as when the barbarous nations left it; and I believe it is hard to ſay, whether their tyranny or that of Spain has been

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been the moſt oppreſſive. After the invaſion of thoſe nations, and during the time of the dark and barbarous ages, this country (like many others) from the higheſt ſtate of culture and civilization, became a wild and barren wilderneſs, overgrown with thickets and foreſts; and, indeed, ſince the revival of arts and agriculture, perhaps of all Europe this is the country that has profited the leaſt; retaining ſtill, both in the wildneſs of its fields and ferocity of its inhabitants, more of the Gothic barbarity than is to be met with any where elſe. Some of theſe foreſts are of a vaſt extent, and abſolutely impenetrable; and no doubt conceal in their thickets many valuable monuments of its ancient magnificence. Of this indeed we have a very recent proof in the diſcovery of Peſtum, a Grecian city, that had not been heard of for many ages; till of late, ſome of its lofty temples were ſeen, peeping over the tops of the woods; upbraiding mankind for their ſhameful neglect;

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glect; and calling upon them to bring it once more to light. Accordingly curioſity, and the hopes of gain, a ſtill more powerful motive, ſoon opened a paſſage, and expoſed to view theſe valuable and reſpectable relics.—But here it would be out of place to give you an account of them; I ſhall reſerve that till my return.

As ſoon as our ſhip entered the current, we were carried along with great velocity towards Meſſina, which is twelve miles from the entry of the Straits. However, as the paſſage widens in proportion as you advance, the current of conſequence becomes leſs rapid. At Meſſina it is four miles broad. At the mouth of the Straits, betwixt the promontories of Pelorus in Sicily, and the Coda de Volpe (or the Fox's Tail) in Calabria, it appears ſcarcely to be a mile. Moſt of the ancient writers are of opinion that Sicily was formerly joined to the continent in this ſpot, and that the

ſeparation

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ſeparation muſt have been made by ſome violent convulſion of the earth. If this is true, which indeed does not appear improbable, it muſt have happened far beyond the reach of all hiſtorians, as none of them, at leaſt that I have ſeen, pretend any thing but conjecture for the foundation of their opinion. Indeed Claudian (were credit to be given to poets) ſays poſitively,

"Trinacria quondam Italiæ pars una fuit."

And Virgil too, in his third Eneid, tells the ſame ſtory:

"Hæc loca vi quondam, et vaſta convulſa
"ruina, &c."

Pliny, Strabo, Diodorus, and many others, both hiſtorians and philoſophers, are of the ſame ſentiments, and pretend that the ſtrata in the oppoſite ſides of the Straits perfectly correſpond: Like the white rocks near Dover and Boulogne, which have given riſe to an opinion of the ſame kind. However,

the

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the ſimilarity in that caſe, is much more ſtriking to the eye at leaſt than in this.

The approach to Meſſina is the fineſt that can be imagined; it is not ſo grand as that of Naples, but it is much more beautiful, and the key exceeds any thing I have ever yet ſeen, even in Holland. It is built in the form of a creſcent, and is ſurrounded by a range of magnificent buildings, four ſtories high, and exactly uniform, for the ſpace of an Italian mile. The ſtreet betwixt theſe and the ſea is about an hundred feet wide, and forms one of the moſt delightful walks in the world. It enjoys the freeſt air, and commands the moſt beautiful proſpect: It is only expoſed to the morning ſun, being ſhaded all the reſt of the day by theſe buildings. It is beſides conſtantly refreſhed by the cooling breeze from the Straits; for the current of the water produces likewiſe a current in the air,

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that renders this one of the cooleſt habitations in Sicily.

We caſt anchor about four this afternoon, near the center of this enchanted ſemicircle, the beauty of which greatly delighted us; but our pleaſure was ſoon interrupted by a diſcovery that the name of one of our ſervants had been omitted in our bills of health; and an aſſurance from the captain, that if he was diſcovered we ſhould certainly be obliged to perform a long quarantine. Whilſt we were deliberating upon this weighty matter, we obſerved a boat with the people of the health-office approaching us. We had juſt time to get him wrapped up in a hammock, and ſhut down below the hatches; with orders not to ſtir in caſe of a ſearch, and not to appear again above deck till he ſhould be called. The poor fellow was obliged to keep in his hole till it was dark, as our conſul and ſome people

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people of the health-office ſtayed on board much longer than we could have wiſhed, and we are ſtill obliged to conceal him; for if he be diſcovered, we ſhall probably get into a very bad ſcrape. They are particularly ſtrict here in this reſpect: and indeed they have great reaſon to be ſo; ſince this beautiful city was almoſt annihilated by the plague in the year 1743, when upwards of 70,000 people are ſaid to have died in it and its diſtrict in the ſpace of a few months.

We have now got on ſhore, and are lodged in the moſt wretched of inns; although ſaid to be a firſt-rate one for Sicily: but we are contented; for ſurely after bad ſhip accommodation and ſea-ſickneſs, any houſe will appear a palace, and any bit of dry land a paradiſe.

I ſhall ſend this off by the poſt, which goes to-morrow for Naples, and ſhall con-

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tinue from day to day to give you some account of our transactions; trifling as they are, there will probably be something new; and it will add greatly to the pleasure of our expedition, to think that it has contributed to your entertainment. Adieu.

Ever yours, &c.

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LETTER III.

Meſſina, May 20.

THE harbour of Meſſina is formed by a ſmall promontory or neck of land that runs off from the eaſt end of the city, and ſeparates that beautiful baſon from the reſt of the Straits. The ſhape of this promontory is that of a reaping hook, the curvature of which forms the harbour, and ſecures it from all winds. From the ſtriking reſemblance of its form, the Greeks, who never gave a name that did not either deſcribe the object or expreſs ſome of its moſt remarkable properties, called this place Zancle or the Sickle, and feigned that the ſickle of Saturn fell on this ſpot, and gave it its form. But the Latins, who were not quite ſo fond of fable, changed its name to Meſſina (from *meſſis*, a harveſt)

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becauſe of the great fertility of its fields. It is certainly one of the ſafeſt harbours in the world after ſhips have got in; but it is likewiſe one of the moſt difficult acceſs. The celebrated gulph or whirlpool of Charybdis lies near to its entry, and often occaſions ſuch an inteſtine and irregular motion in the water, that the helm loſes moſt of its power, and ſhips have great difficulty to get in, even with the faireſt wind that can blow. This whirlpool, I think, is probably formed by the ſmall promontory I have mentioned; which contracting the Straits in this ſpot, muſt neceſſarily increaſe the velocity of the current; but no doubt other cauſes, of which we are ignorant, concur, for this will by no means account for all the appearances which it has produced. The great noiſe occaſioned by the tumultuous motion of the waters in this place, made the antients liken it to a voracious ſea-monſter perpetually roaring for its prey; and it has been

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repreſented by their authors, as the moſt tremendous paſſage in the world. Ariſtotle gives a long and a formidable deſcription of it in his 125th chapter De Admirandis, which I find tranſlated in an old Sicilian book I have got here. It begins, "Adeo "profundum, horridumque ſpectaculum, "&c." but it is too long to tranſcribe. It is likewiſe deſcribed by Homer *, 12th of the Odyſſey; Virgil †, 3d Æneid; Lucretius,

* Dire Scylla there a ſcene of horror forms,
And here Charybdis fills the deep with ſtorms:
When the tide ruſhes from her rumbling caves,
The rough rock roars; tumultuous boil the waves;
They toſs, they foam, a wild confuſion raiſe,
Like waters bubbling o'er the fiery blaze;
Eternal miſts obſcure th' aereal plain,
And high above the rock ſhe ſpouts the main.
When in her gulphs the ruſhing ſea ſubſides,
She drains the ocean with the refluent tides.
The rock re-bellows with a thundering ſound;
Deep, wondrous deep, below appears the ground.
POPE.

† That realm of old, a ruin huge was rent,
In length of ages from the continent.
With force convulſive burſt the iſle away;
Through the dread opening broke the thundering ſea.

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tius, Ovid, Salluſt, Seneca, as alſo by many of the old Italian and Sicilian poets, who all ſpeak of it in terms of horror; and repreſent it as an object that inſpired terror, even when looked on at a diſtance. It certainly is not now ſo formidable; and very probably, the violence of this motion, continued for ſo many ages, has by degrees worn ſmooth the rugged rocks, and jutting ſhelves, that may have intercepted and confined the waters. The breadth of the Straits too, in this place, I make no doubt is conſiderably enlarged. Indeed, from the nature of things it muſt be ſo; the perpetual friction occaſioned by the current muſt

---

At once the thundering ſea Sicilia tore,
And ſunder'd from the fair Heſperian ſhore;
And ſtill the neighbouring coaſts and towns divides
With ſcanty channels and contracted tides.
Fierce to the right tremendous Scylla roars,
Charybdis on the left the flood devours:
Thrice ſwallow'd in her womb ſubſides the ſea,
Deep, deep as hell; and thrice ſhe ſpouts away
From her black bellowing gulphs diſgorg'd on high
Waves after waves, that daſh againſt the ſky. PITT.

wear

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wear away the bank on each ſide, and enlarge the bed of the water.

The veſſels in this paſſage were obliged to go as near as poſſible to the coaſt of Calabria, in order to avoid the ſuction occaſioned by the whirling of the waters in this vortex; by which means when they came to the narroweſt and moſt rapid part of the Straits, betwixt Cape Pelorus and Scylla, they were in great danger of being carried upon that rock. From whence the proverb, ſtill applied to thoſe, who in attempting to avoid one evil fall into another,

"Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens evitare Caribdem."

There is a fine fountain of white marble on the key, repreſenting Neptune holding Scylla and Charybdis chained, under the emblematical figures of two ſea-monſters, as repreſented by the poets.

The little neck of land, forming the harbour of Meſſina, is ſtrongly fortified.

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The citadel, which is indeed a very fine work, is built on that part which connects it with the main land. The farthermoſt point, which runs out to ſea, is defended by four ſmall forts, which command the entry into the harbour. Betwixt theſe lie the lazaret, and a light-houſe to warn ſailors of their approach to Charybdis, as that other on Cape Pelorus is intended to give them notice of Scylla.

It is probably from theſe light-houſes (by the Greeks called Pharoi) that the whole of this celebrated Strait has been denominated the Faro of Meſſina.

There are a number of gallies and galliots in this beautiful harbour, which ſtill add greatly to its beauty. Three of theſe ſailed this morning, in order to cruize round the iſland, and to protect it from the ſudden invaſions of the Barbarians, who are often very troubleſome on the ſouth-

coaſt.

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coaſt. Theſe veſſels made a very picturesque appearance as they went out of the harbour; their oars moving all together, with the greateſt regularity. I think there are nine or ten men to each oar; and indeed it appears to be the hardeſt work you can imagine. They all riſe, every ſtroke of the oar, and when they pull, they almoſt throw themſelves on their backs, and ſeem to exert their utmoſt force. Theſe wretches are chained to their oars, and ſleep every night on the bare benches, without any thing to throw over them. Yet, what is ſtrange, notwithſtanding all the miſery they ſuffer, I am told there was never known an inſtance of any of them putting themſelves to death. They often, indeed, confer that favour upon one another, but it is only in their quarrels, and by no means out of kindneſs. In a company of Engliſh in the ſame circumſtances, promotion would probably go on much faſter, as there would be no want of vacancies,

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cancies, provided only ropes and knives were to be had.

We intended this morning to have paid our reſpects to the prince of Villa Franca, the governor, and to have delivered our letters; but he is gone to his country houſe, and as there are no carriages to be had, we are obliged to wait his arrival in town, which will probably be to-morrow or next day.

We are ſtill under a good deal of uneaſineſs about our ſervant, and are obliged to conceal him carefully from the people of the health-office, who ſeem to haunt us, as we have met them this morning in all our walks. Were he to be diſcovered, perhaps ſome of us might have the pleaſure of making a little voyage, on board one of thoſe gallies, for our amuſement. Indeed the captain of the ſhip, poor fellow, would run the greateſt riſk, who is obliged to

anſwer

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anſwer for every perſon on board.—We ſhall leave this place as ſoon as poſſible; for I do not believe there is much more to be ſeen about it.

20th at night. After dinner our depute-conſul (a Sicilian) carried us to ſeveral convents, where we were received by the nuns with great politeneſs and affability. We converſed with them for ſome hours through the grate, and found ſome of them by no means deficient, either in point of knowlege or ſprightlineſs; but none of them had ſincerity enough (which we met with in Portugal more than once) to acknowledge the unhappineſs of their ſituation. All pretended to be happy and contented, and declared they would not change their priſon for the moſt brilliant ſituation in life. However, ſome of them had a ſoft melancholy in their countenances, that gave the lie to their words; and I am perſuaded, in a tête-a-tête, and on a more intimate acquaintance,

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quaintance, they would have told a very different ſtory. Several of them are extremely handſome; but, indeed, I think they always appear ſo; and am very certain, from frequent experience, that there is no artificial ornament, or ſtudied embelliſhment whatever, that can produce half ſo ſtrong an effect, as the modeſt and ſimple attire of a pretty young nun, placed behind a double iron grate. To ſee an amiable, unaffected, and unadorned perſon, that might have been an honour and an ornament to ſociety, make a voluntary reſignation of her charms, and give up the world and all its pleaſures, for a life of faſting and mortification, it cannot fail to move our pity;

"And pity melts the mind to love."

There is another conſideration which tends much to increaſe theſe feelings; that is, our total incapacity ever to alter her ſituation.—The pleaſure of relieving an object in

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in diſtreſs, is the only refuge we have againſt the pain which the ſeeing of that object occaſions; but here, this is utterly denied us, and we feel with ſorrow, that pity is all we can beſtow.

From theſe, and the like reflections, a man generally feels himſelf in bad ſpirits after converſing with amiable nuns. Indeed, it is hardly poſſible, without a heavy heart, to leave the grate; that inexorable and impenetrable barrier.—At laſt we took our leave, expreſſing our happineſs, in being admitted ſo near them; but at the ſame time deploring our miſery, in ſeeing them for ever removed at ſo unmeaſurable a diſtance from us. They were much pleaſed with our viſit, and begged we would repeat it every day during our ſtay at Meſſina; but this might prove dangerous.

On leaving the convent, we obſerved a great concourſe of people on the top of a high

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high hill, at ſome diſtance from the city. The conſul told us, it was the celebration of a great feſtival in honour of St. Francis, and was worth our going to ſee. Accordingly, we arrived juſt as the ſaint made his appearance. He was carried through the crowd with vaſt ceremony, and received the homage of the people with a becoming dignity; after which he was again lodged in his chapel, where he performs a number of miracles every day, to all thoſe who have abundance of money and abundance of faith. His miniſters, however, are only a ſet of poor greaſy capuchins; who indeed do not ſeem to have enriched themſelves in his ſervice. In general, he is but a ſhabby maſter, if one may judge by the tattered cloaths of his ſervants; and St. Benedict, who does not pretend to half his ſanctity, beats him all to nothing. The people continued to dance, in ſoft Sicilian meaſures, till after ſun-ſet, when they retired. Many of the country girls are extremely

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extremely handſome, and dance with a good grace. The young fellows were all in their Sunday's cloaths, and made a good appearance. The aſſembly room was a fine green plain on the top of the hill. It pleaſed us very much, and put us in mind of ſome of Theocritus's deſcriptions of the Sicilian pleaſures. But Theocritus, if he could have raiſed up his head, would probably have been a good deal puzzled what to make of the ſhabby figure of St. Francis, marching through amongſt them with ſuch majeſty and ſolemnity. Another part of the ceremony too would have greatly alarmed him, as indeed it did us. The whole court before the church was ſurrounded with a triple row of ſmall iron cannon, about ſix inches long; theſe were charged to the muzzle, and rammed very hard; after which they were ſet cloſe to each other, and a train laid, that completed the communication through the whole number, which muſt have exceeded

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2000. Fire was ſet to the train, and in two or three minutes, the whole was diſcharged, by a running fire; the reports fo'lowing one another ſo quick, that it was impoſſible for the ear to ſeparate them. The effect was very grand; but it would have been nothing without the fine echo from the high mountains on each ſide of the Straits, which prolonged the ſound for ſome conſiderable time after the firing was finiſhed.

The view from the top of this hill, is beautiful beyond deſcription. The Straits appear like a vaſt majeſtic river, flowing ſlowly betwixt two ridges of mountains, and opening by degrees from its narroweſt point, till it ſwells to the ſize of an ocean. Its banks, at the ſame time, adorned with rich corn-fields, vineyards, orchards, towns, villages, and churches. The proſpect is terminated on each ſide by the tops of high mountains covered with wood.

We

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We obſerved in our walks to-day, many of the flowers that are much eſteemed in our gardens, and others too that we are not acquainted with. Larkſpur, flos Adonis, Venus' looking-glaſs, hawkſweed, and very fine lupins grow wild over all theſe mountains. They have likewiſe a variety of flowering ſhrubs; particularly one in great plenty, which I do not recollect ever to have ſeen before: It bears a beautiful round fruit, of a bright ſhining yellow. They call it, Il pomo d'oro, or golden apple. All the fields about Meſſina are covered with the richeſt white clover, intermixed with a variety of aromatic plants, which perfume the air, and render their walks exceedingly delightful. But what is remarkable, we were moſt ſenſible of this perfume, when walking on the harbour which is at the greateſt diſtance from theſe fields. I mentioned this peculiarity to a Meſſineſe gentleman, who tells me, that the ſalt produced here by the heat of the ſun, emits a grateful odour, ſomething like violets;

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and it is that, probably, which perfumes the ſea-ſhore. On conſulting Fazzello De rebus Siculis, I find he takes notice of the ſame ſingularity; and likewiſe obſerves, that the water of the Straits has a viſcous or glutinous quality, which by degrees cements the ſand and gravel together, and at laſt conſolidates them to the ſolidity of rock.

There are fine ſhady walks on all ſides of Meſſina; ſome of theſe run along the ſea-ſhore, and are for ever fanned by the cooling breeze from the Straits. The houſes are large, and moſt of the articles of life are cheap and in plenty; particularly fiſh, which are reckoned better here, than any where elſe in the Mediterranean. The hire of lodgings is next to nothing; almoſt one half of that noble range of buildings I have deſcribed, being abſolutely uninhabited ſince the deſolation of 1743; ſo that the proprietors are glad to get tenants on any terms. It now occurs to me, that from

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all theſe conſiderations, there is no place I have ſeen, ſo admirably calculated for the reſidence of that flock of valetudinarians, which every autumn leave our country with the ſwallows, in ſearch of warm climates. I have been inquiring with regard to their winter ſeaſon, and find all agree, that, in general, it is much preferable to that of Naples. They allow, they have ſometimes heavy rain for two or three weeks; but it never laſts longer; and beſides, they have always ſome fair hours every day, when people can go out for exerciſe; for the moment the rain is over the walks are dry, the ſoil being a light gravel.

The advantages of Meſſina over Naples in other reſpects, I think, are conſiderable. At Naples there are no walks; and, the truth is, they have no occaſion for them, no more indeed than they have for legs; for you know as well as I, that walking

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there, is little leſs infamous than ſtealing; and any perſon that makes uſe of his limbs is looked upon as a blackguard, and deſpiſed by all good company. The rides too are all at a great diſtance; and you are obliged to go ſome miles on ſtreets and pavement before you get into the country; beſides paſſing the vile grotto of Pauſillipe, where you are in danger of being blinded, and ſtifled with duſt. There are ſeldom any public diverſions here; the attending of which at Naples, and complying with their bad hours, does often more than counteract all the benefit obtained from the climate. That deteſtable practice of gaming too, is by no means ſo prevalent here; which from the anxiety it occaſions to the mind, and laſſitude to the body, muſt be death to all hectick people, weak breaſts, or delicate nerves. I could ſay much more on this ſubject, but as I have many of theſe circumſtances only from the report of the

inhabitants,

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inhabitants, it makes me more diffident, than if I had known them from my own experience.

We found our banker, Mr. M——, a very ſenſible man, and ſpent ſome hours with him, both this morning and evening very agreeably. He has given us ſome account of the police of the country, the moſt ſingular, perhaps, of any in the world, to ſuch a degree, indeed, that I ſhall not venture to tell it you, till I have talked it over with ſome other people, to ſee if the accounts agree;—though from the character that gentleman bears, both here and at Naples, he is as good authority as any in the iſland.

The prince of Villa Franca is arrived; ſo that we ſhall probably have our audience to-morrow morning. Adieu—We are juſt going to ſup upon ſteaks made of the peſce ſpada or ſword fiſh, which are caught in great plenty in theſe ſeas. The ſword of

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this one, is upwards of four feet long; and a formidable weapon it is;—not unlike a Highland broad ſword. This fiſh, when cut, bears a perfect reſemblance to fleſh; ſo much, that none of us doubted, it was beef-ſteaks they were dreſſing for us, and expreſſed our ſurprize at finding that diſh in Sicily.—Good night.

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LETTER IV.

21ſt. WE are juſt returned from the prince's. He received us politely, but with a good deal of ſtate. He offered us the uſe of his carriages, as there are none to be hired; and, in the uſual ſtile, deſired to know in what he could be of ſervice to us. We told him, (with an apology for our abrupt departure) that we were obliged to ſet off to-morrow, and begged his protection on our journey. He replied, that he would give orders for guards to attend us, that ſhould be anſwerable for every thing; that we need give ourſelves no farther trouble; that whatever number of mules we had occaſion for, ſhould be ready at the door of the inn, at any hour we ſhould think proper to appoint: He added, that we might entirely

rely

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rely on thoſe guards, who were people of the moſt determined reſolution, as well as of the moſt approved fidelity, and would not fail to chaſtiſe on the ſpot, any perſon who ſhould preſume to impoſe upon us.

Now, who do you think theſe truſty guards are compoſed of? Why of the moſt daring, and moſt hardened villains, perhaps, that are to be met with upon earth, who, in any other country, would have been broken upon the wheel, or hung in chains; but are here publickly protected, and univerſally feared and reſpected. It was this part of the police of Sicily, that I was afraid to give you an account of: But I have now converſed with the prince's people on the ſubject, and they have confirmed every circumſtance Mr. M—— made me acquainted with.

He told me, that in this eaſt part of the iſland, called Val Demoni, (from the devils that

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that are ſuppoſed to inhabit mount Ætna) it has ever been found impracticable to extirpate the banditti; there being numberleſs caverns and ſubterraneous paſſages in that mountain, where no troops could poſſibly purſue them: That, beſides, as they are known to be perfectly determined and reſolute, never failing to take a dreadful revenge on all who have offended them, the prince of Villa Franca has embraced it, not only as the ſafeſt, but likewiſe as the wiſeſt, and moſt political ſcheme, to become their declared patron and protector. And ſuch of them as think proper to leave their mountains and foreſts, though perhaps only for a time, are ſure to meet with good encouragement, and ſecurity in his ſervice; they enjoy the moſt unbounded confidence, which, in no inſtance, they have ever yet been found to make an improper or a diſhoneſt uſe of. They are clothed in the prince's livery, yellow and green, with ſilver lace; and wear likewiſe a badge of their

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their honourable order, which entitles them to univerſal fear and reſpect from the people.

I have juſt been interrupted by an upper ſervant of the prince's, who, both by his looks and language, ſeems to be of the ſame worthy fraternity. He tells us, that he has ordered our muleteers, at their peril, to be ready by day-break; but that we need not go till we think proper; for it is their buſineſs to attend on *noſtri eccellenzi*. He ſays he has likewiſe ordered two of the moſt deſperate fellows in the whole iſland to accompany us; adding, in a ſort of whiſper, that we need be under no apprehenſion; for if any perſon ſhould preſume to impoſe upon us to the value of a ſingle baiocc *, they would certainly put them to death. I gave him an ounce †, which I knew was what he expected; on which he redoubled his bows and his eccellenzis,

* A ſmall coin. † About eleven ſhillings.

and

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and declared we were the moſt *honorabili Signori* he had ever met with, and that if we pleaſed, he himſelf ſhould have the honour of attending us, and would chaſtiſe any perſon that ſhould dare to take the wall of us, or injure us in the ſmalleſt trifle. We thanked him for his zeal, ſhewing him we had ſwords of our own. On which, bowing reſpectfully, he retired.

I can now, with more aſſurance, give you ſome account of the converſation I had with Signior M——, who as I ſaid appears to be a very intelligent man, and has reſided here, for theſe many years.

He ſays, that in ſome circumſtances theſe banditti are the moſt reſpectable people of the iſland; and have by much the higheſt, and moſt romantic notions of what they call their point of honour. That, however criminal they may be with regard to ſociety in general; yet, with reſpect to one another,

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another, and to every perſon to whom they have once profeſſed it, they have ever maintained the moſt unſhaken fidelity. The magiſtrates have often been obliged to protect them, and even pay them court, as they are known to be perfectly determined, and deſperate; and ſo extremely vindictive, that they will certainly put any perſon to death, who has ever given them juſt cauſe of provocation. On the other hand, it never was known that any perſon who had put himſelf under their protection, and ſhewed that he had confidence in them, had cauſe to repent of it, or was injured by any of them, in the moſt minute trifle; but on the contrary, they will protect him from impoſitions of every kind, and ſcorn to go halves with the landlord, like moſt other conductors and travelling ſervants; and will defend him with their lives, if there is occaſion. That thoſe of their number, who have thus enliſted themſelves in the ſervice of ſociety, are known and

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reſpected by the other banditti all over the iſland; and the perſons of thoſe they accompany are ever held ſacred. For theſe reaſons, moſt travellers chuſe to hire a couple of them from town to town; and may thus travel over the whole iſland in ſafety. To illuſtrate their character the more, he added two ſtories, which happened but a few days ago, and are ſtill in every body's mouth:

A number of people were found digging in a place where ſome treaſure was ſuppoſed to have been hid during the plague: As this had been forbid under the moſt ſevere penalties, they were immediately carried to priſon, and expected to have been treated without mercy; but, luckily for the others, one of theſe heroes happened to be of the number. He wrote to the Prince of Villa Franca, and made uſe of ſuch powerful arguments in their favour, that they were all immediately ſet at liberty.

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This will ſerve to ſhew their conſequence with the civil power; the other ſtory will give you a ſtrong idea of their barbarous ferocity, and the horrid mixture of ſtubborn vice and virtue (if I may call it by that name) that ſeems to direct their actions. I ſhould have mentioned, that they have a practice of borrowing money from the country people, who never dare refuſe them; and if they promiſe to pay it, they have ever been found punctual and exact, both as to the time and the ſum; and would much rather rob and murder an innocent perſon, than fail of payment at the day appointed: And this they have often been obliged to do, only in order (as they ſay) to fulfil their engagements, and to ſave their honour.

It happened within this fortnight, that the brother of one of theſe heroic banditti having occaſion for money, and not knowing how to procure it, determined to make

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make uſe of his brother's name and authority, an artifice which he thought could not eaſily be diſcovered; accordingly he went to a country prieſt, and told him his brother had occaſion for twenty ducats, which he deſired he would immediately lend him. The prieſt aſſured him that he had not then ſo large a ſum, but that if he would return in a few days it ſhould be ready for him. The other replied, that he was afraid to return to his brother with this anſwer; and deſired, that he would by all means take care to keep out of his way, at leaſt till ſuch time as he had pacified him; otherwiſe he could not be anſwerable for the conſequences.—As bad fortune would have it, the very next day the prieſt and the robber met in a narrow road; the former fell a-trembling, as the latter approached, and at laſt dropped on his knees to beg for mercy. The robber, aſtoniſhed at this behaviour, deſired to know the cauſe of it. The trembling prieſt anſwered, "Il denaro,

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"il denaro," the money, the money—but ſend your brother to-morrow, and you ſhall have it. The haughty robber aſſured him, that he diſdained taking money of a poor prieſt; adding, that if any of his brothers had been low enough to make ſuch a demand, he himſelf was ready to advance the ſum. The prieſt then acquainted him with the viſit he had received the preceding night from his brother, by his order; aſſuring him, that if he had been maſter of the ſum, he ſhould immediately have ſupplied it.—Well, ſays the robber, I will now convince you whether my brother or I are moſt to be believed; you ſhall go with me to his houſe, which is but a few miles diſtant.—On their arrival before the door, the robber called on his brother, who never ſuſpecting the diſcovery, immediately came to the balcony; but on perceiving the prieſt, he began to make excuſes for his conduct. The robber told him, there was no excuſe to be made; that he only deſired to know

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the fact, Whether he had gone to borrow money of that prieſt in his name or not? —On his owning he had, the robber with deliberate coolneſs lifted his blunderbuſs to his ſhoulder, and ſhot him dead; and turning to the aſtoniſhed prieſt, "You will "now be perſuaded, ſaid he, that I had no "intention of robbing you at leaſt."

You may now judge how happy we muſt be in the company of our guards. I don't know but this very hero may be one of them; as we are aſſured they are two of the moſt intrepid and reſolute fellows in the iſland. I will not cloſe this letter, till I give you ſome account of our journey. In the mean time, adieu. We are going to take a look of the churches and public buildings; but with theſe I ſhall trouble you very little.

21ſt at night. We have been very well entertained, both from what we have ſeen and heard. We uſed to admire the dexte-

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rity of ſome of the divers at Naples, when they went to the depth of forty-eight or fifty feet, and could not conceive how a man could remain three minutes under water without drawing breath; but theſe are nothing to the feats of one Colas, a native of this place, who is ſaid to have lived for ſeveral days in the ſea, without coming to land; and from thence got the ſirname of Peſce, or the fiſh. Some of the Sicilian authors affirm, that he caught fiſh merely by his agility in the water; and the credulous Kircher aſſerts, that he could walk acroſs the Straits at the bottom of the ſea. —Be that as it will, he was ſo much celebrated for ſwimming and diving, that one of their kings (Frederick) came on purpoſe to ſee him perform: which royal viſit proved fatal to poor Peſce; for the king, after admiring his wonderful force and agility, had the cruelty to propoſe his diving near the gulph of Charybdis; and to tempt him the more, threw in a large golden cup,

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cup, which was to be his prize ſhould he bring it up. Peſce made two attempts, and aſtoniſhed the ſpectators by the time he remained under water; but in the third, it is thought he was caught by the whirlpool, as he never appeared more; and his body is ſaid to have been found ſome time afterwards near Taurominum (about thirty miles diſtant) it having been obſerved, that what is ſwallowed up by Charybdis is carried ſouth by the current, and thrown out upon that coaſt. On the contrary, nothing wrecked here was ever carried through the Straits, or thrown out on the north ſide of Sicily, unleſs we believe what Homer ſays of the ſhip of Ulyſſes.

We have been again to take a view of the Straits at this famous whirlpool, and are more and more convinced, that it muſt be infinitely diminiſhed; indeed, in compariſon of what it was, almoſt reduced to nothing. The ſea appeared to have no ex-

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traordinary motion there, and ſhips and boats ſeemed to paſs it with eaſe. When we compare this its preſent ſtate, with the formidable deſcription of ſo many antient authors, poets, hiſtorians, and philoſophers, it appears indeed not improbable that this iſland has been torn from the continent by ſome violent convulſion, and that near to this ſpot, huge caverns have been opened, which, drinking in the waters in one courſe of the current, and throwing them out in the other, may perhaps in ſome meaſure account for the phænomena of Charybdis. —I find it is deſcribed both by Homer and Virgil, as alternately ſwallowing up, and throwing out every object that approached it *. Now, is it not probable, that theſe caverns in proceſs of time have been, in a

* Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
Obſidet, atque imo barathri ter gurgite vaſtos
Sorbet in abruptum fluctus, rurſuſque ſub auras
Erigit alternos, et ſidera verberat unda.

great

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great meaſure, filled up by the immenſe quantities of rocks, ſand, gravel, &c. that were perpetually carried in by the force of the current?—I own I am not quite ſatisfied with this ſolution, but at preſent I cannot think of a better:—The fact, however, is certain, that it muſt have been a dreadful object even in Virgil's time, elſe he never would have made Æneas and his fleet perceive its effects at ſo great a diſtance, and immediately run out to ſea to avoid it; nor would he have made Helenus at ſuch pains to caution him againſt that dangerous gulph, and adviſe him rather to make the whole tour of Sicily than attempt to paſs it. Indeed, it is ſo often mentioned both in the voyage of Æneas and Ulyſſes, and always in ſuch frightful terms, that we cannot doubt of its having been a very terrible object *.

After

* Seneca gives this account of it in a letter to Lucillus: "Scyllam ſaxum eſſe, et quidem terribile na-

"vigantibus

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After ſeeing the beautiful harbour of Meſſina, we have found nothing much worthy of notice in the city. Some of the churches are handſome, and there are a few tolerable paintings. One ceremony, from the account they give of it, I ſhould

---

" vigantibus optime ſcio; Charybdis an reſpondeat " fabulis perſcribi mihi deſidero, fac nos certiores, " utrum uno tantum vento agatur in vortices, an omnis " tempeſtas, ac mare illud contorqueat, et an verum " ſit quidquid illo freti turbine areptum eſt, &c."

And the following is a tranſlation from Strabo.

" Ante urbem Paululum in trajectu Charybdis " oſtenditur: Profundum quidem immenſum: Quo " inundationes freti: mirum in modum navigia detra- " hunt: magnas per circumductiones, et vortices pre- " cipitata, quibus abſorptis, ac diſſolutis; naufra- " giorum fragmenta ad Tauromitanum lictus attra- " huntur, &c."

" Eſt igitur Charybdis, (ſays Salluſt) mare periculoſum nautis; quod contrariis fluctuum curſibus, " colliſionem facit, et rapta quoque abſorbet."

But theſe are moderate indeed when compared to the deſcriptions of the poets,

like

like much to have ſeen: The celebration of the feaſt of the Vara. It appears, indeed, to be a very ſingular exhibition, and I am heartily ſorry it does not happen at this ſeaſon. In order to the more dignified appearance of the Virgin Mary on this occaſion, they have invented a very curious machine, which I am told repreſents heaven, or at leaſt a part of it. It is of a huge ſize, and moves through the ſtreet with vaſt pomp and ceremony. In the center is the principal figure, which repreſents the Virgin; and, a little higher, there are three others to denote the Trinity. Round theſe, there are a number of wheels, ſaid to be of a very curious conſtruction. Every wheel contains a legion of angels, according to their different degrees of precedency; ſeraphims, cherubims, and powers. Theſe are repreſented by a great number of beautiful little children, all glittering in clothes of gold and ſilver tiſſue; with wings of painted feathers fixed to their

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their ſhoulders. When the machine is ſet in motion, all theſe wheels move round, and the different choirs of angels continue in a conſtant flutter, ſinging Hallelujahs round the Trinity and the Virgin during the whole of the proceſſion, and are ſaid to make a moſt beautiful appearance. This is all I could learn of this ſingular ſhew, neither were we admitted to ſee the machine; conſcious, I ſuppoſe, of the ridicule of which it is ſuſceptible, they did not chuſe to unveil ſo ſacred an object to the eyes of heretics.—This iſland has ever been famous for the celebration of its feaſts, even in antient as well as modern times. They ſpare no expence; and as they have a large ſhare both of ſuperſtition and invention, they never fail to produce ſomething either very fine, or very ridiculous. The feaſt of St. Roſolia at Palermo is ſaid to be the fineſt ſhew in Europe, and coſts that city every year a large ſum. They aſſure us there is more taſte and magnificence

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nificence diſplayed in it, than in any thing of the kind in Italy; and adviſe us by all means to attend it, as it happens ſome time near the middle of ſummer, when we ſhall probably be in that end of the iſland.

If you pleaſe we ſhall now take leave of Meſſina;—I did not expect to make ſo much out of it.—But it would not be fair neither; without at leaſt putting you in mind of the great veneration it has ever been held in by the reſt of Sicily, for the aſſiſtance it gave to Count Rugiero in freeing the iſland from the yoke of the Saracens; in conſideration of which, great privileges were granted it by the ſucceeding kings; ſome of which are ſaid ſtill to remain. It was here that the Normans landed; and this city, by the policy of ſome of its own inhabitants, was the firſt conqueſt they made; after which their victorious arms were ſoon extended over the

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the whole iſland; and a final period put to the Saracen tyranny. Count Rugiero fixed the ſeat of government at Palermo; and put the political ſyſtem of the iſland upon a ſolid baſis; of which the form (and the form alone) ſtill remains to this day. He divided the whole iſland into three parts; one he gave to his officers, another to the church, and a third he reſerved for himſelf. Of theſe three branches he compoſed his parliament, that reſpectable body, of which the ſkeleton only now exiſts; for it has long ago loſt all its blood, nerves, and animal ſpirits; and for many ages paſt has been reduced to a perfect caput mortuum. The ſuperſtitious tyranny of Spain has not only deſtroyed the national ſpirit of its own inhabitants, but likewiſe that of every other country which has fallen under its power. Adieu.

Ever yours.

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P. S. Apropos! There is one thing I had almoſt forgot, and I never ſhould have forgiven myſelf. Do you know, the moſt extraordinary phænomenon in the world is often obſerved near to this place? I laugh'd at it at firſt, as you will do; but I am now convinced of its reality; and am perſuaded too, that if ever it had been thoroughly examined by a philoſophical eye, the natural cauſe muſt long ago have been aſſigned.

It has often been remarked, both by the antients and moderns, that in the heat of ſummer, after the ſea and air have been much agitated by winds, and a perfect calm ſucceeds, there appears, about the time of dawn, in that part of the heavens over the Straits, a great variety of ſingular forms, ſome at reſt and ſome moving about with great velocity. Theſe forms, in proportion as the light increaſes, ſeem to become more aerial; till at laſt, ſome time

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time before ſun-riſe, they entirely diſappear.

The Sicilians repreſent this as the moſt beautiful ſight in nature; Leanti, one of their lateſt and beſt writers, came here on purpoſe to ſee it: He ſays, the heavens appear crowded with a variety of objects: He mentions palaces, woods, gardens, &c. beſides the figures of men, and other animals, that appear in motion amongſt them. No doubt the imagination muſt be greatly aiding, in forming this aerial creation; but as ſo many of their authors, both antient and modern, agree in the fact, and give an account of it from their own obſervation, there certainly muſt be ſome foundation for the ſtory. There is one Giardina, a Jeſuit, who has lately written a treatiſe on this phænomenon, but I have not been able to find it: The celebrated Meſſineſe Gallo has likewiſe publiſhed ſomething on this ſingular ſubject; if

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if I can procure either of them in the iſland, you ſhall have a more perfect account of it. The common people, according to cuſtom, give the whole merit to the devil; and indeed it is by much the ſhorteſt and eaſieſt way of accounting for it: Thoſe who pretend to be philoſophers, and refuſe him this honour, are greatly puzzled what to make of it. They think it may be owing to ſome uncommon refraction, or reflection of the rays, from the water of the Straits; which, as it is at that time carried about in a variety of eddies and vortexes, muſt conſequently, ſay they, make a variety of appearances on any medium where it is reflected. This, I think, is nonſenſe; or, at leaſt very near it; and till they can ſay more to the purpoſe, I think they had much better have left it in the hands of the old gentleman. I ſuſpect it is ſomething in the nature of our Aurora Borealis; and, like many of the great phænomena of nature, depends upon

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upon electrical cauſes; which, in future ages, I have little doubt, will be found to be as powerful an agent in regulating the univerſe, as gravity is in this age, or as the ſubtile fluid was in the laſt.

The electrical fluid, in this country of volcanos, is probably produced in much greater quantity than in any other. The air ſtrongly impregnated with this matter, and confined betwixt two ridges of mountains; at the ſame time, exceedingly agitated from below, by the violence of the current, and the impetuous whirling of the waters; may it not be ſuppoſed to produce a variety of appearances? And may not the lively Sicilian imaginations, animated by a belief in dæmons, and all the wild offspring of ſuperſtition, give theſe appearances as great a variety of forms? Remember, I do not ſay it is ſo; and hope yet to have it in my power to give you a better account of this matter.

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ter. However, if you ſhould ſuppoſe me in this ſtory, or in any future one I may tell you, to be inclined to the fabulous, you will pleaſe to remember, that I am now in the country of fable; this iſland having given riſe to more perhaps, except Greece, than all the world beſide. You have, therefore, only to ſuppoſe that theſe regions are ſtill contagious; and call to mind that mount Ætna has ever been the great mother of monſters and chimeras both in the antient and the modern world. However, I ſhall, if poſſible, keep free of the infection, and entertain you only with ſuch ſubjects as fall under my own obſervation. But indeed, from what I have already heard of that wonderful mountain, the moſt moderate account of it would appear highly fabulous to all ſuch as are unacquainted with objects of this kind. Adieu. We think of ſetting off to-morrow by day-break. I am ſorry it has not been a ſtorm, that we might have had a chance of ſeeing

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Pandemonium reared over our heads, and all the devils at work around it.

I ſhall leave this to be ſent by the firſt poſt, and ſhall write you again from Catania, if we eſcape unhurt from all the perils of Ætna.

Adieu!

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LETTER V.

Giardini, near Taurominum, May 22d.

WE have had a delightful journey, and if all Sicily be but as agreeable, we ſhall not repent of our expedition. We left Meſſina early this morning, with ſix mules for ourſelves and ſervants, and two for our baggage. This train, I aſſure you, makes no contemptible appearance; particularly when you call to mind our front and rear guard; by much the moſt conſpicuous part of it. Theſe are two great drawcanſir figures, armed cap-a-pie, with a broad hanger, two enormous piſtols, and a long arquebuſe: This they kept cock'd and ready for action in all ſuſpicious places; where they recounted abundance of wonderful ſtories of robberies and murders; ſome of them with ſuch very minute

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circumſtances, that I am fully perſuaded they themſelves were the principal actors. However, I look upon our ſituation as perfectly ſecure; they pay us great reſpect, and take the utmoſt pains that we ſhall not be impoſed upon. Indeed, I think they impoſe upon every body except us; for they tax the bills according to their pleaſure; and ſuch cheap ones I never paid before. To-day's dinner for eleven men (our three muleteers included) and feeding for ten mules and horſes, did not amount to half a guinea. And, although we pay them high, (an ounce a day each) yet I am perſuaded they ſave us at leaſt one half of it on our bills. They entertained us with ſome of their feats, and make no ſcruple of owning their having put ſeveral people to death; but add, "Mas tutti, tutti ho-"norabilmente,"—That is to ſay, they did not do it in a daſtardly manner, nor without juſt provocation.

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The ſea-coaſt of Sicily is very rich; the ſides of ſome of the mountains are highly cultivated, and preſent the moſt agreeable aſpect that can be imagined;—corn, wine, oil, and ſilk, all mixed together, and in the greateſt abundance: However, the cultivated part is but ſmall in proportion to what is lying waſte, and only ſerves to ſhew the great fertility of this iſland, were it peopled, and in induſtrious hands. The ſides of the road are covered with a variety of flowers and of flowering ſhrubs; ſome of them exceedingly beautiful. The incloſures are many of them fenced with hedges of the Indian fig, or prickly pear; as in Spain and Portugal; and our guides aſſure us, that in many of the parched ravines round Ætna, there are plenty of trees which produce both cinnamon and pepper; not ſo ſtrong, they allow, as thoſe of the ſpice iſlands, but which are ſold to the merchants at a low price, by a ſet of banditti, who dreſs themſelves like her-

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mits: Theſe ſpices are mixed with the true pepper and cinnamon from the Indies, and ſent over all Europe.

The road from Meſſina to this place is extremely romantic. It lies the whole way along the coaſt, and commands the view of Calabria, and the ſouth part of the Straits; covered with chebecks, galleys, galliots, and a quantity of fiſhing-boats. The view on the right hand is confined by high mountains, on the very ſummits of which they have built ſeveral conſiderable towns and villages, which with their churches and ſteeples make a very pictureſque appearance. They have choſen this elevated ſituation, I ſuppoſe, with a double view; to protect them both from their enemies, and from the violent heat of the climate: This forenoon we found it exceſſive, but had the fineſt ſwimming in the world before dinner; which kept us cool and freſh for all the reſt of the day. We have beſides

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beſides provided ourſelves with umbrellas, without which, at this ſeaſon, travelling would be impracticable.

Betwixt this place and Meſſina, a little to the right, lie the mountains, formerly called the Nebrodes; and likewiſe the mountain of Neptune, which is reckoned the higheſt of that chain. It is celebrated for a gulph or crater on its ſummit, from whence, at particular times, there iſſues an exceeding cold wind, with ſuch violence that it is difficult to approach it. I was ſorry to paſs this ſingular mountain, but it would have delayed us a day or two to viſit it; and we are haſtening with impatience to a much greater object: It is now named Il monte Scuderio, and is ſaid to be ſo high that the Adriatic can be ſeen from its ſummit. From the deſcription they give of it, it appears evidently to be an old volcano. The Niſſo takes its riſe from this mountain; a river renowned in antiquity

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for the gold found in its channel; for which reaſon, it was by the Greeks called Chryſothoas. It is ſaid, the remains of the antient gold mines are ſtill to be ſeen near the ſource of this river; but the modern maſters of Sicily have never been enterpriſing enough to explore them. It was on this charming coaſt, where the flocks of Apollo were kept by his daughters, Phaethuſa and Lampetie; the ſeizing of which by Ulyſſes' companions, proved the cauſe of their deaths, and of all his ſubſequent misfortunes. The mountain of Tauromina is very high and ſteep, and the road up to it is exceedingly rugged.

This once famous city is now reduced to an inſignificant burgh; yet even theſe ſmall remains give a high idea of its former magnificence. The theatre, I think, is accounted the largeſt in the world. It appears to me greatly ſuperior to that of Adrian's villa, near Rome. It is entire enough,

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enough, to give a very tolerable idea of the Roman theatre, and indeed aſtoniſhes by its vaſtneſs; nor can I conceive how any voice could extend through the prodigious number of people it muſt have contained. I paced about one quarter of it; over the boxes that were intended for the women, which is not near the outward circle of all; the reſt is ſo broken, that I could get no farther. It meaſured about 120 ordinary ſteps, ſo that you may conceive the greatneſs of the whole. The ſeats front mount Ætna, which makes a glorious appearance from this place; and no doubt has often diverted their attention from the ſcene. It ariſes from an immenſe baſe, and mounts equally on all ſides to its ſummit: It is juſt now throwing out volumes of white ſmoak, which do not riſe in the air, but ſeem to roll down the ſide of the mountain like a vaſt torrent. The aſcent of Ætna on each ſide is computed at about 30 miles, and the circumference

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ference of its baſe at 150: I think it does not appear to be ſo much; but I ſhall probably be enabled to give you a fuller account of it afterwards.

After admiring the great theatre of Taurominum, we went to examine the Naumachia, and the reſervoirs for ſupplying it with water. About 150 paces of one ſide of the wall of the Naumachia remains; but as this is not complete, there is no judging of its original dimenſions. This is ſuppoſed to have been a large ſquare, incloſed with ſtrong walls, and capable of being filled with water on occaſion; intended for the exhibition of ſea-fights, and all naval exerciſes: There were four reſervoirs for ſupplying this with water. All are upon the ſame grand ſcale. One of theſe is almoſt entire; it is ſupported by a great number of ſtrong pillars, in the ſame manner as thoſe of Titus' baths at Rome, and ſeveral others you may have ſeen in Italy.

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Italy.—I would dwell longer on objects of this kind; but I am perſuaded deſcriptions can give but a very imperfect idea of them; and to mark out the preciſe dimenſions with a mathematical exactneſs, where there is nothing very remarkable, muſt ſurely be but a dry work, both to the writer and reader. I ſhall therefore content myſelf (I hope it will content you too) with endeavouring to communicate, as entire as poſſible, the ſame impreſſion I myſelf ſhall receive, without deſcending too much to particulars; or fatiguing myſelf or you with the menſuration of antique walls, merely becauſe they are ſuch, except where there is indeed ſomething very ſtriking; and different too, from what has already been deſcribed in Italy.

I own I deſpair of ſucceſs: Few things I believe in writing being more difficult than thus "s'emparer de l'imagination," to ſeize,

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ſeize,—to make ourſelves maſters of the reader's imagination, to carry it along with us through every ſcene, and make it in a manner congenial with our own; every proſpect opening upon him with the ſame light, and ariſing in the ſame colours, and at the ſame inſtant too, as upon us: For where deſcriptions fail in this, the pleaſure of reading them muſt be very trivial. Now, perhaps, this ſame journal ſtile is the moſt favourable of any to produce theſe effects. It is at leaſt the moſt agreeable to the writer; who never has his ſubject to ſeek, but needs only recollect what has paſſed ſince he laſt laid down the pen, and travel the day over again; and if he travels it to good purpoſe, it ought to be equally agreeable to the reader too, who thereby becomes one of the party, and bears a ſhare in all the pleaſures of the journey without ſuffering from the fatigues of it.

One

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One of my greateſt difficulties, I ſee, will be the finding proper places to write in, for the inns are altogether execrable, and there is no ſuch thing as getting a room to one's ſelf: I am juſt now writing on the end of a barrel, which I choſe rather than the table, as it is farther removed from noiſe. I muſt therefore intreat you, once for all, to excuſe incorrectneſs and want of method. How can one be methodical upon a barrel!—It has ever been the moſt declared enemy to method. You might as well expect a ſermon from Bacchus, or a coherent ſpeech from our friend lord —— after he has finiſhed the third bottle. You will be pleaſed then juſt to take things as they occur. Were I obliged to be ſtrictly methodical, I ſhould have no pleaſure in writing you theſe letters; and then, if my poſition is juſt, you could have no pleaſure in reading them.

Our

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Our guards have procured us beds; though not in the town of Taurominum, but in Giardini, a village at the foot of the mountain on which it ſtands. The people are extremely attentive, and have produced us an excellent ſupper and good wine, which now waits—but ſhall wait no longer. Adieu. To-morrow we intend to climb mount Ætna on this (its eaſt) ſide, if we find it practicable.

Ever your's.

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LETTER VI.

Catania, May 24th.

I AM already almoſt two days in arrears. Yeſterday we were ſo much fatigued with the abominable roads of mount Ætna, that I was not able to wield a pen; and to-day, I aſſure you, has by no means been a day of reſt; however, I muſt not delay any longer, otherwiſe I ſhall never be able to make up my lee-way. I am afraid you will ſuffer more from the fatigues of the journey than I at firſt apprehended.

We left Giardini at five o'clock. About half a mile farther the firſt region of mount Ætna begins, and here they have ſet up the ſtatue of a ſaint, for having prevented the lava from running up the mountain of Taurominum, and deſtroying the adjacent country;

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country; which the people think it certainly muſt have done, had it not been for this kind interpoſition; but he very wiſely, as well as humanely, conducted it down a low valley to the ſea.

We left the Catania road on the left, and began to aſcend the mountain, in order to viſit the celebrated tree, known by the name of *Il Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli* (The cheſnut tree of an hundred horſe;) which for ſome centuries paſt has been looked upon as one of the greateſt wonders of Ætna. We had likewiſe propoſed (if poſſible) to gain the ſummit of the mountain by this ſide, and to deſcend by the ſide of Catania; but we were ſoon convinced of the impoſſibility of this, and obliged, with a good deal of reluctance, to relinquiſh that part of our ſcheme.

As we advanced in the firſt region of Ætna, we obſerved that there had been eruptions

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eruptions of fire all over this country at a great diſtance from the ſummit, or principal crater of the mountain. On our road to the village of Piedmonte, I took notice of ſeveral very conſiderable craters; and ſtones of a large ſize, ſcattered all around, that had been diſcharged from them. Theſe ſtones are preciſely ſuch as are thrown out of the crater of mount Veſuvius; and indeed, the lava too ſeems to be of the ſame nature, though rather more porous.

The diſtance from Giardini to Piedmonte is only ten miles, but as the road is exceedingly rough and difficult, we took near four hours to travel it. The barometer, which at Giardini (on the ſea ſide) ſtood at 29 inches ten lines, had now fallen to 27: 3. Farenheit's thermometer (made by Mr. Adams in London) 73 degrees. We found the people extremely curious and inquiſitive to know our errand, which when we told, many of them offered to accom-

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pany us. Of theſe we choſe two; and after drinking our tea, which was matter of great ſpeculation to the inhabitants, who had never before ſeen a breakfaſt of this kind, we began to climb the mountain.

We were directed for five or ſix miles of our road by an aqueduct, which the prince of Palagonia has made at a great expence, to ſupply Piedmonte with water. After we left the aqueduct, the aſcent became a a good deal more rapid, till we arrived at the beginning of the ſecond region, called by the natives *la Regione Sylvoſa*, or the woody region; becauſe it is compoſed of one vaſt foreſt, that extends all around the mountain. Part of this was deſtroyed by a very ſingular event, not later than the year 1755.—During an eruption of the volcano, an immenſe torrent of boiling water iſſued, as is imagined, from the great crater of the mountain, and in an inſtant poured down to its baſe; overwhelming

and

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and ruining every thing it met with in its courſe. Our conductors ſhewed us the traces of this torrent, which are ſtill very viſible; but are now beginning to recover verdure and vegetation, which for ſome time appeared to have been loſt. The track it has left, ſeems to be about a mile and a half broad; and in ſome places ſtill more.

The common opinion, I find, is, that this water was raiſed by the power of ſuction, through ſome communication betwixt the volcano and the ſea; the abſurdity of which is too glaring to need a refutation. The power of ſuction alone, even ſuppoſing a perfect vacuum, could never raiſe water to more than thirty-three or thirty-four feet, which is equal to the weight of a column of air the whole height of the atmoſphere. But this circumſtance, I ſhould imagine, might be eaſily enough accounted for; either by a ſtream of lava

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falling ſuddenly into one of the vallies of ſnow, that occupy the higher regions of the mountain, and melting it down: or, what I think is ſtill more probable, that the melted ſnow, finding vaſt caverns and reſervoirs in the mountain, where it is lodged for ſome time, till the exceſſive heat of the lava below burſts the ſides of theſe caverns, produces this phænomenon, which has been matter of great ſpeculation to the Sicilian philoſophers, and has employed the pens of ſeveral of them. The ſame thing happened in an eruption of Veſuvius laſt century, and in an inſtant ſwept away about 500 people, who were marching in proceſſion at the foot of the mountain, to implore the mediation of St. Januarius.

Near to this place we paſſed through ſome beautiful woods of cork and evergreen oak, growing abſolutely out of the lava, the ſoil having as yet hardly filled the crevices of that porous ſubſtance; and not

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not a great way farther, I obſerved ſeveral little mountains that ſeemed to have been formed by a late eruption. I diſmounted from my mule, and climbed to the top of them all. They are ſeven in number; every one of them with a regular cup or crater on the top, and in ſome the great gulph or (as they call it) *Voragine*, that had diſcharged the burnt matter of which theſe little mountains are formed, is ſtill open. I tumbled ſtones down into theſe gulphs, and heard the noiſe for a long time after. All the fields round, to a conſiderable diſtance, are covered with large burnt ſtones diſcharged from theſe little volcanos.

From this place, it is not leſs than five or ſix miles to the great cheſnut-trees, through foreſts growing out of the lava, in ſeveral places almoſt impaſſable. Of theſe trees there are many of an enormous ſize; but the Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli is by much the moſt celebrated. I have even found it

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marked in an old map of Sicily, publiſhed near an hundred years ago; and in all the maps of Ætna, and its environs, it makes a very conſpicuous figure. I own I was by no means ſtruck with its appearance, as as it does not ſeem to be one tree, but a buſh of five large trees growing together. We complained to our guides of the impoſition; when they unanimouſly aſſured us, that by the univerſal tradition and even teſtimony of the country, all theſe were once united in one ſtem; that their grandfathers remembered this, when it was looked upon as the glory of the foreſt, and viſited from all quarters; that for many years paſt it had been reduced to the venerable ruin we beheld. We began to examine it with more attention, and found that there was indeed an appearance as if theſe five trees had really been once united in one. The opening in the middle is at preſent prodigious; and it does indeed require faith to believe, that ſo vaſt a ſpace was once occupied

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cupied by ſolid timber.—But there is no appearance of bark on the inſide of any of the ſtumps, nor on the ſides that are oppoſite to one another. Mr. Glover and I meaſured it ſeparately, and brought it exactly to the ſame ſize; viz. 204 feet round. If this was once united in one ſolid ſtem, it muſt with juſtice indeed have been looked upon as a very wonderful phænomenon in the vegetable world, and was deſervedly ſtiled, the glory of the foreſt.

I have ſince been told by the Canonico Recupero, an ingenious eccleſiaſtic of this place, that he was at the expence of carrying up peaſants with tools to dig round the Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli, and he aſſures me, upon his honour, that he found all theſe ſtems united below ground in one root. I alleged that ſo extraordinary an object muſt have been mentioned by many of their writers. He told me that it had, and produced ſeveral examples; Philoteo,

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Carrera, and ſome others. Carrera begs to be excuſed from telling its dimenſions, but ſays, he is ſure there was wood enough in that one tree to build a large palace. Their poet Bagolini too has celebrated a tree of the ſame kind, perhaps the ſame tree*; and Maſſa, one of their moſt eſteeemed authors, ſays he has ſeen ſolid oaks upwards of 40 feet round; but adds, that the ſize of the cheſnut-trees was beyond belief, the hollow of one of which, he ſays, contained 300 ſheep; and 30 people on horſeback had often been in it at a time. I ſhall not pretend to ſay, that this is the ſame tree he means; or whether it ever was one tree or not. There are many others that are well deſerving the curioſity of travellers. One of theſe, about a mile and a half higher on the mountain, is called *Il Caſtagno del*

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* Supremos inter montes monſtroſior omni
Monſtroſi fætum ſtipitis Ætna dedit,
Caſtaneam genuit, cujus modo concava cortex
Turmam equitum haud parvum continet, atque greges, &c.

Galea;

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Galeà; it riſes from one ſolid ſtem to a conſiderable height, after which it branches out, and is a much finer object than the other. I meaſured it about two feet from the ground, and found it 76 feet round. There is a third called *Il Caſtagno del Nave*, that is pretty nearly of the ſame ſize. All theſe grow on a thick rich ſoil, formed originally, I believe, of aſhes thrown out by the mountain.

The climate here is much more temperate than in the firſt region of Ætna, where the exceſſive heats muſt ever prevent a very luxuriant vegetation. I found the barometer had now fallen to 26 : $5\frac{1}{2}$; which announces an elevation of very near 4000 feet: equivalent in the opinion of ſome of the French academicians, to 18 or 20 degrees of latitude in the formation of a climate.

The

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The vaſt quantity of nitre contained in the aſhes of Ætna, probably contributes greatly to increaſe the luxuriance of this vegetation; and the air too, ſtrongly impregnated with it from the ſmoke of the volcano, muſt create a conſtant ſupply of this ſalt, termed by ſome, not without reaſon, the food of vegetables.

There is the ruins of a houſe in the inſide of the great cheſnut-tree which had been built for holding the fruit it bears, which is ſtill conſiderable; here we dined with excellent appetite, and being convinced, that it was in vain to attempt getting to the top of the mountain on that ſide, we began to deſcend; and after a very fatiguing journey over old lavas, now become fertile fields and rich vineyards, we arrived about ſunſet at *Jaci Reale*, where, with no ſmall difficulty, we at laſt got lodging in a convent of Dominicans.

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The laſt lava we croſſed before our arrival there, is of a vaſt extent, I thought we never ſhould have had done with it; it certainly is not leſs than ſix or ſeven miles broad, and appears in many places to be of an enormous depth.

When we came near the ſea, I was deſirous to ſee what form it had aſſumed in meeting with the water. I went to examine it, and found it had driven back the waves for upwards of a mile, and had formed a large black high promontory, where before it was deep water. This lava, I imagined, from its barrenneſs, for it is as yet covered with a very ſcanty ſoil, had run from the mountain only a few ages ago; but was ſurpriſed to be informed by Signor Recupero, the hiſtoriographer of Ætna, that this very lava is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus to have burſt from Ætna in the time of the ſecond Punic war, when Syracuſe was beſieged by the Romans. A detach-

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detachment was ſent from Taurominum to the relief of the beſieged. They were ſtopped on their march by this ſtream of lava, which having reached the ſea before their arrival at the foot of the mountain, had cut off their paſſage; and obliged them to return by the back of Ætna, upwards of 100 miles about. His authority for this, he tells me, was taken from inſcriptions on Roman monuments found on this lava, and that it was likewiſe well aſcertained by many of the old Sicilian authors. Now as this is about 2000 years ago, one would have imagined, if lavas have a regular progreſs in becoming fertile fields, that this muſt long ago have become at leaſt arable: this however is not the caſe, and it is as yet only covered with a very ſcanty vegetation, and incapable of producing either corn or vines. There are indeed pretty large trees growing in the crevices, which are full of a rich earth; but in all probability it will be ſome hundred years yet, before there

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there is enough of it to render this land of any uſe to the proprietors.

It is curious to conſider, that the ſurface of this black and barren matter, in proceſs of time, becomes one of the moſt fertile ſoils upon earth: But what muſt be the time to bring it to its utmoſt perfection, when after 2000 years it is ſtill in moſt places but a barren rock?—Its progreſs is poſſibly as follows. The lava being a very porous ſubſtance, eaſily catches the duſt that is carried about by the wind; which, at firſt, I obſerve only yields a kind of moſs; this rotting, and by degrees increaſing the ſoil, ſome ſmall meagre vegetables are next produced; which rotting in their turn, are likewiſe converted into ſoil. But this progreſs, I ſuppoſe, is often greatly accelerated by ſhowers of aſhes from the mountain, as I have obſerved in ſome places the richeſt ſoil, to the depth of 5 or 6 feet and upwards; and ſtill below that, nothing but rocks

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rocks of lava. It is in theſe ſpots that the trees arrive at ſuch an immenſe ſize. Their roots ſhoot into the crevices of the lava, and lay ſuch hold of it, that there is no inſtance of the winds tearing them up; though there are many, of its breaking off their largeſt branches. A branch of one of the great cheſnut-trees, where we paſſed yeſterday, has fallen acroſs a deep gully, and formed a very commodious bridge over the rivulet below. The people ſay it was done by St. Agatha, the guardian ſaint of the mountain, who has the ſuperintendance of all its operations.

In the loweſt part of the firſt region of Ætna, the harveſt is almoſt over; but in the upper parts of the ſame region, near the confines of the Regione Sylvoſa, it will not begin for ſeveral weeks.

The reapers, as we went along, abuſed us from all quarters, and more excellent black-

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black-guards I have never met with; but indeed, our guides were a full match for them. They began as ſoon as we were within hearing, and did not finiſh till we were got quite without reach of their voices; which they extended as much as they could. As it was all in Sicilian, we could make very little of it, but by the interpretation of our guides; however we could not help admiring the volubility and natural elocution with which they ſpoke. This cuſtom is as old as the time of the Romans, and probably much older, as it is mentioned by Horace, and others, of their authors. It is ſtill in vogue here as much as ever; the maſters encourage it; they think it gives them ſpirits, and makes the work go on more chearfully; and I believe they are right, for it is amazing what pleaſure they ſeemed to take in it, and what laughing and merriment it occaſioned.

I for-

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I forgot to mention that we paſſed the ſource of the famous cold river *(il fiume Freddo.)* This is the river ſo celebrated by the poets in the fable of Acis and Galatea. It was here that Acis was ſuppoſed to have been killed by Poliphemus, and the gods out of compaſſion converted him into this river; which, as ſtill retaining the terrour inſpired by the dreadful voice of the Cyclops, runs with great rapidity, and about a mile from its ſource throws itſelf into the ſea. It riſes at once out of the earth a large ſtream. Its water is remarkably pure, and ſo extremely cold, that it is reckoned dangerous to drink it; but I am told it has likewiſe a poiſonous quality, which proceeds from its being impregnated with vitriol; to ſuch a degree, that cattle have often been killed by it. It never freezes; but, what is remarkable, it is ſaid often to contract a degree of cold greater than that of ice.

Theſe

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Theſe particulars I was informed of by the prieſts at Aci; which place, antiently called Aci Aquileia, and ſeveral others near it, Aci Caſtello, Aci Terra, &c. take their names from the unfortunate ſhepherd Acis.

A little to the eaſt of the river Acis, is the mouth of the river Alcantara, one of the moſt conſiderable in the iſland. It takes its riſe on the north ſide of mount Ætna, and marks out the boundary of the mountain for about 60 miles. Its courſe has been ſtopped in many places, by the eruptions of the volcano; ſo that ſtrictly ſpeaking, the ſkirts of Ætna extend much beyond it; though it has generally been conſidered as the boundary. We paſſed it on our way to Piedmonte, over a large bridge built entirely of lava; and near to this the bed of the river is continued for a great way, through one of the moſt remarkable, and probably one of the moſt antient lavas that ever run from Ætna. In many places the

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current of the river, which is extremely rapid, has worn down the ſolid lava to the depth of 50 or 60 feet. Recupero, the gentleman I have mentioned, who is engaged in writing the natural hiſtory of Ætna, tells me, he had examined this lava with great attention, and he thinks that its courſe, including all its windings, is not leſs than 40 miles. It iſſued from a mountain on the north ſide of Ætna, and finding ſome valleys that lay to the eaſt, it took its courſe that way; interrupting the Alcantara in many places, and at laſt arrived at the ſea not far from the mouth of that river.

The city of Jaci or Aci, and indeed all the towns on this coaſt, are founded on immenſe rocks of lava, heaped one above another, in ſome places to an amazing height; for it appears that theſe flaming torrents, as ſoon as they arrived at the ſea, were hardened into rock, which not yielding

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ing any longer to the preſſure of the liquid fire behind; the melted matter continuing to accumulate, formed a dam of fire, which, in a ſhort time, run over the ſolid front, pouring a ſecond torrent into the ocean: this was immediately conſolidated, and ſucceeded by a third, and ſo on.

Many of the places on this coaſt ſtill retain their antient names; but the properties aſcribed to them by the antients are now no more. The river Acis, which is now ſo poiſonous, was of old celebrated for the ſweetneſs and ſalubrity of its waters *; which Theocritus ſays, were ever held ſacred by the Sicilian ſhepherds.

We were ſurpriſed to find that ſo many places retained the name of this ſwain, who I imagined had never exiſted, but in the

* Quique per Ætnæos Acis petit æquora fines,
Et dulce gratum Nereide perluit unda. SIL. ITAL.

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imagination of the poets: But the Sicilian authors ſay, that Acis was the name of a king who reigned in this part of the iſland, in the time of the moſt remote antiquity; in confirmation of which, Maſſa gives the tranſlation of an inſcription found near Aci Caſtello †. He is ſaid to have been ſlain in a fit of jealouſy by Poliphemus, one of the giants of Ætna; which gave riſe to the fable. Anguillara, a Sicilian poet, in relating this ſtory gives a tremendous idea of the voice of Poliphemus; the paſſage has been greatly admired.

" Tremo per troppo horrore Ætna; e Tifeo
" Fece maggior la fiamma uſcir del monte;

---

† DIÆ
OGNIÆ, SATURNIÆ, ÆTNÆÆ
DEORUM,
MARTI, FILIÆ, UXORI,
IN PORTU
SEPULCHRUM, TEMPLUM, ET ARCEM
ACIS,
FAUNI FILIUS, PICI NEPOS,
SATURNI PRONEPOS,
LATINI FRATER.

" E Pac-

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" E Pacchino, e Peloro, e Lilibeo
" Quaſi attuffar nel mar l'altera fronte;
" Cadde il martel di man nel monte Ætneo,
" All Re di Lenno, a Sterope, e a Bronte;
" Fugir fiere & augei di lor ricetto
" E ſi ſtrinſe ogni madre il figlio al Petto."

You will obſerve however, that the Sicilian poet cannot in juſtice claim the entire merit of theſe lines, as they are evidently borrowed from Virgil's deſcription of the ſound of the fury Alecto's horn, in the 7th Æneid. The laſt line, perhaps the moſt beautiful of the whole, is almoſt word for word.

" Et trepidæ matres preſſere ad pectora natos."

It has been obſerved too, by ſome critics, that even this deſcription of Virgil is not his own, but copied from the account that Apollonius Rhodius gives of the roaring of the dragon that guarded the golden fleece; ſo that you ſee there is nothing new under the ſun. Rhodius probably ſtole it from ſome-

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body elſe, and ſo on. Poets have ever been the greateſt of all thieves, and happy it is, that poetical theft is no felony; otherwiſe, I am afraid, Parnaſſus would have been but thinly peopled.

Farewell; to-morrow I ſhall endeavour to bring you up with us; for at preſent you will pleaſe to obſerve, that you have got no farther than the city of Jaci; and have ſtill many extinguiſhed volcanos to paſs before your arrival here.

Ever yours, &c.

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LETTER VII.

Catania, May 25th.

THE road from Jaci to this city is entirely over lava, and conſequently very fatiguing and troubleſome. Within a few miles of that place, we counted eight mountains formed by eruption, with every one its crater, from whence the burnt matter was diſcharged. Some of theſe are very high, and of a great compaſs. It appears evidently, that the eruptions of mount Ætna have formed the whole of this coaſt, and in many places have driven back the ſea for ſeveral miles from its antient boundary. The account the Sicilian authors give of the conflict betwixt theſe two adverſe elements is truly tremendous; and in relating it, they ſeem to have been ſhaken with horror. Conceive the front of a torrent of fire, ten miles in breadth, and

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heaped up to an enormous height, rolling down the mountain; and pouring its flames into the ocean? The noiſe, they aſſure us, is infinitely more dreadful than the loudeſt thunder; and is heard through the whole country to an immenſe diſtance. The water ſeemed to retire and diminiſh before the fire, and to confeſs its ſuperiority; yielding up its poſſeſſions, and contracting its banks, to make room for its imperious maſter, who commands it: "Thus far "ſhalt thou come, and no farther."—The clouds of ſalt vapour darken the face of the ſun, covering up this ſcene, under a veil of horror and of night; and laying waſte every field and vineyard in theſe regions of the iſland. The whole fiſh on the coaſt are deſtroyed, the colour of the ſea itſelf is changed, and the tranſparency of its waters loſt for many months.

There are three rocks of lava at ſome little diſtance from ſhore, which Pliny takes fre-

quent

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quent notice of, and calls them the Three Cyclops. It is pretty ſingular, that they are ſtill diſtinguiſhed by the ſame name.

The fate of Catania has been very remarkable, and will ever appear fabulous. It is ſituated immediately at the foot of this great volcano, and has been ſeveral times deſtroyed by it: That indeed is not extraordinary; it would have been much more ſo had it eſcaped; but what I am going to relate, is a ſingularity that probably never happened to any city but itſelf. It was always in great want of a port, till by an eruption in the 16th century; and no doubt, by the interpoſition of St. Agatha, what was denied them by nature, they received from the generoſity of the mountain. A ſtream of lava, running into the ſea, formed a mole which no expence could have furniſhed them. This laſted for ſome time a ſafe and commodious harbour, till at laſt, by a ſubſequent eruption, it was entirely filled

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filled up and demoliſhed; ſo that probably the poor ſaint had much ſunk in her credit. For at this unfortunate period, her miraculous veil, looked upon as the greateſt treaſure of Catania, and eſteemed an infallible remedy againſt earthquakes and volcanos, ſeems to have loſt its virtue. The torrent burſt over the walls, ſweeping away the images of every ſaint that were placed there to oppoſe it; and laying waſte great part of this beautiful city, poured into the ſea. However, the people ſay, that at that time they had given their ſaint very juſt provocation, but that ſhe has long ago been reconciled to them; and has promiſed never to ſuffer the mountain to get the better of them for the future. Many of them are ſo thoroughly convinced of this (for they are extremely ſuperſtitious) that I really believe if the lava were at their walls, they would not be at the pains to remove their effects. Neither is it the veil of St. Agatha alone, that they think poſſeſſed of this

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this wonderful dominion over the mountain; but every thing that has touched that piece of ſacred attire, they ſuppoſe is impregnated in a leſſer degree with the ſame miraculous properties. Thus there are a number of little bits of cotton and linen fixed to the veil; which, after being bleſſed by the biſhop, are ſuppoſed to acquire power enough to ſave any perſon's houſe or garden; and wherever this expedient has failed, it is always aſcribed to the want of faith of the perſon, not any want of efficacy in the veil. However, they tell you many ſtories of theſe bits of cotton being fixed to the walls of houſes and vineyards, and preſerving them entirely from the conflagration.

On our arrival at Catania, we were amazed to find, that in ſo noble and beautiful a city, there was no ſuch thing as an inn. Our guides, indeed, conducted us to a houſe they called ſuch; but it was ſo wretchedly

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wretchedly mean and dirty, that we were obliged to look out for other lodgings; and by the aſſiſtance of the Canonico Recupero, for whom we had letters, we ſoon found ourſelves comfortably lodged in a convent. The prince of Biſcaris (the governor of the place) a perſon of very great merit and diſtinction, returned our viſit this forenoon, and made us the moſt obliging offers.

Signor Recupero, who obligingly engages to be our Cicerone, has ſhewn us ſome curious remains of antiquity; but they have been all ſo ſhaken and ſhattered by the mountain, that hardly any thing is to be found entire.

Near to a vault, which is now thirty feet below ground, and has probably been a burial place, there is a draw-well, where there are ſeveral ſtrata of lavas, with earth to a conſiderable thickneſs over the ſurface of each ſtratum. Recupero has made uſe of this

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this as an argument to prove the great antiquity of the eruptions of his mountain. For if it requires two thouſand years or upwards, to form but a ſcanty ſoil on the ſurface of a lava, there muſt have been more than that ſpace of time betwixt each of the eruptions which have formed theſe ſtrata. But what ſhall we ſay of a pit they ſunk near to Jaci, of a great depth. They pierced through ſeven diſtinct lavas one under the other, the ſurfaces of which were parallel, and moſt of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth. Now, ſays he, the eruption which formed the loweſt of theſe lavas, if we may be allowed to reaſon from analogy, muſt have flowed from the mountain at leaſt 14000 years ago.

Recupero tells me, he is exceedingly embarraſſed, by theſe diſcoveries, in writing the hiſtory of the mountain.—That Moſes hangs like a dead weight upon him, and blunts all his zeal for inquiry; for that really he has

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has not the conſcience to make his mountain ſo young, as that prophet makes the world.—What do you think of theſe ſentiments from a Roman Catholic divine?—The biſhop, who is ſtrenuouſly orthodox—for it is an excellent ſee—has already warned him to be upon his guard: and not to pretend to be a better natural hiſtorian than Moſes; nor to preſume to urge any thing that may in the ſmalleſt degree be deemed contradictory to his ſacred authority. Adieu.

Ever yours.

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LETTER VIII.

Catania, May 26th.

THIS morning we went to ſee the houſe and muſeum of the prince of Biſcaris; which, in antiques, is inferior to none I have ever ſeen, except that of the king of Naples at Portici. What adds greatly to the value of theſe is, that the prince himſelf has had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing moſt of them brought to light. He has dug them out of the ruins of the antient theatre of Catania, at an incredible expence; but happily his pains have been amply repaid, by the number and variety of curious objects he has diſcovered. It would be endleſs to enter into an enumeration of them; even during our ſhort ſtay, we had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing part of a rich Corinthian cornice, and ſeveral pieces of ſtatues,

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produced again to the light, after lying for ſo many ages in darkneſs and oblivion. His collection of medals, cameios, and intaglios is likewiſe very princely, and ſo are the articles in natural hiſtory: but the polite and amiable behaviour of the owner, gives more pleaſure than all his curioſities. He did not, oſtentatiouſly, like the prince of Villa Franca, tell us, that his houſe and carriages were at our command; but without any hint being given of it, we found his coach waiting at our door; and we ſhall probably be obliged to make uſe of it during our ſtay. His family conſiſts of the princeſs his wife, a ſon, and a daughter, who ſeem to emulate each other in benignity. They put me in mind of ſome happy families I have ſeen in our own country, but reſemble nothing we have yet met with on the continent. He is juſt now building a curious villa on a promontory formed by the lava of 1669. The ſpot where the houſe ſtands was formerly at leaſt 50 feet

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deep of water; and the height of the lava above the preſent level of the ſea, is not leſs than 50 more.

This afternoon I walked out alone to examine the capricious forms and ſingular appearances that this deſtructive branch has aſſumed in laying waſte the country. I had not gone far when I ſpied a magnificent building at ſome diſtance, which ſeemed to ſtand on the higheſt part of it. My curioſity led me on, as I had heard no mention of any palace on this ſide of the city. On entering the great gate, my ſurprize was a good deal increaſed on obſerving a façade almoſt equal to that of Verſailles; a noble ſtaircaſe of white marble, and every thing that announced a royal magnificence. I had never heard that the kings of Sicily had a palace at Catania, and yet I could not account for what I ſaw in any other way. I thought the vaſt

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front before me had been the whole of the palace; but conceive my amazement, when on turning the corner, I found another front of equal greatneſs; and diſcovered that what I had ſeen was only one ſide of a ſquare.

I was no longer in doubt, well knowing that the church alone could be miſtreſs of ſuch magnificence. I haſtened home to communicate this diſcovery to my friends; when I found the Canonico Recupero already with them. He abuſed me exceedingly for preſuming to go out without our Cicerone, and declared he had never been ſo much diſappointed in his life; as he had come on purpoſe to carry us there, and to enjoy our ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment. He then told us, that it was no other than a convent of fat Benedictine monks; who were determined to make ſure of a paradiſe, at leaſt in this world, if not in the other.

He

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He added that they were worth about 15,000 *l.* a year; an immenſe ſum indeed for this country.

We went with Recupero to pay our reſpects to theſe ſons of humility, temperance, and mortification; and we muſt own, they received and entertained us with great civility and politeneſs, and even without oſtentation. Their muſeum is little inferiour to that of the prince of Biſcaris, and the apartments that contain it are much more magnificent. But their garden is the greateſt curioſity: Although it be formed on the rugged and barren ſurface of the lava, it has a variety and a neatneſs ſeldom to be met with. The walks are broad, and paved with flints; and the trees and hedges (which by the by are in a bad taſte, and cut into a number of ridiculous ſhapes) thrive exceedingly. The whole ſoil muſt have been brought from a great diſtance, as the ſurface of this lava (only 150 years old)

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is as hard and bare as a piece of iron. The church belonging to this convent, if finiſhed, would be one of the fineſt in Europe; but as it is founded on the ſurface of the porous and brittle lava, part of the foundation has given way to the preſſure of ſo huge a fabric; and ſeveral of the large arches that were intended to form the different chapels, have already fallen down. Only the weſt limb of the croſs (not a fifth of the whole) is finiſhed; and even this alone makes a very fine church. Here they have the fineſt organ I ever heard, even ſuperiour, I think, to that at Harlem.

We went next to examine where the lava had ſcaled the walls of Catania. It muſt have been a noble ſight. The walls are 64 palms high, (near 60 feet) and of a great ſtrength; otherwiſe they muſt have been borne down by the force of the flaming matter which roſe over this height, and ſeems to have mounted conſiderably above

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above the top of the wall before it made its entry; at laſt it came down, ſweeping before it every ſaint in the calendar, who were drawn up in order of battle on purpoſe to oppoſe its paſſage; and marching on in triumph, annihilated, in a manner, every object that dared to oppoſe it. Amongſt other things, it covered up ſome fine fountains; one of which was ſo much eſteemed, that they have at a great expence pierced through the lava, and have now recovered their favourite ſpring. This excavation is a very curious work, and worthy of the attention of travellers.

Catania is looked upon as one of the moſt antient cities in the iſland, or indeed in the world.—Their legends bear, that it was founded by the Cyclops, or giants of Ætna, ſuppoſed to have been the firſt inhabitants of Sicily after the deluge; and ſome of the Sicilian writers pretend that it was built by Deucalion and Pyrrha as ſoon

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as the waters ſubſided, and they had got down again to the foot of the mountain. Its antient name was Catetna, or the city of Ætna.

It is now reckoned the third city in the kingdom; though ſince Meſſina was deſtroyed by the plague, it may well be conſidered as the ſecond. It contains upwards of 30,000 inhabitants; has an univerſity, the only one in the iſland; and a biſhoprick. The biſhop's revenues are conſiderable, and ariſe principally from the ſale of the ſnow on mount Ætna. One ſmall portion of which, lying on the north of the mountain, is ſaid to bring him in upwards of 1000 *l.* a year; for Ætna furniſhes ſnow and ice, not only to the whole iſland of Sicily, but likewiſe to Malta and a great part of Italy, and makes a very conſiderable branch of commerce; for even the peaſants in theſe hot countries, regale themſelves with ices during the

ſummer

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ſummer heats; and there is no entertainment given by the nobility, of which theſe do not always make a principal part: a famine of ſnow, they themſelves ſay, would be more grievous, than a famine of either corn or wine. It is a common obſervation amongſt them, that without the ſnows of mount Ætna, their iſland could not be inhabited; ſo eſſential has this article of luxury become to them. But Ætna not only keeps them cool in ſummer, but likewiſe keeps them warm in winter; the fuel for the greateſt part of the iſland being carried from the immenſe and inexhauſtible foreſts of this volcano, and conſtitutes too, a very large branch of commerce.—But this amazing mountain perpetually carries me away from my ſubject; I was ſpeaking of this city.—What of it was ſpared by the eruption 1669, was totally ruined by the fatal earthquake 1693; when the greateſt part of its inhabitants were buried under the walls of their houſes and churches.

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Yet, after ſuch repeated, and ſuch diſmal diſaſters, ſo ſtrange is their infatuation, that they never could be prevailed upon to change their ſituation. The whole city was ſoon rebuilt, after a new and an elegant plan, and is now much handſomer than ever. There is ſcarce any doubt, that in ſome future commotion of the mountain, it will be again laid in aſhes. But at preſent they are in perfect ſecurity: The Virgin and St. Agatha have both engaged to protect them; and under their banner they hold Ætna, with all the devils it contains, at defiance.

There are many remains of antiquity in this city, but indeed moſt of them are in a very ruinous ſtate. One of the moſt remarkable is an elephant of lava, with an obeliſk of Egyptian granite on his back. There are likewiſe conſiderable remains of a great theatre, beſides the one belonging to the prince of Biſcaris; a large

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large bath almoſt entire; the ruins of the great aqueduct, 18 miles long; the ruins of ſeveral temples, one of Ceres, another of Vulcan; The church called *Bocca di Fuoco* was likewiſe a temple. But the moſt entire of all, is a ſmall rotundo, which, as well as the pantheon at Rome, and ſome others to be met with in Italy, in my opinion, demonſtrates that form to be the moſt durable of any.

It has now been purged and purified from all the infection contracted from the heathen rites, and is become a chriſtian church, dedicated to the bleſſed Virgin; who has long been conſtituted univerſal legatee, and executrix to all the antient goddeſſes, celeſtial, terreſtrial, and infernal: and, indeed, little more than the names are changed, the things continuing pretty much the ſame as ever.—The Catholicks themſelves do not attend to it: but it is not a little curious to conſider, how ſmall is the deviation

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deviation in almoſt every article of their preſent rites from thoſe of the antients. I have ſomewhere ſeen an obſervation, which ſeems to be a juſt one: That during the long reign of heatheniſm, ſuperſtition had altogether exhauſted her talent for invention; ſo that when a ſuperſtitious ſpirit ſeized chriſtians, they were under a neceſſity of borrowing from their predeceſſors, and imitating ſome part of their idolatry. This appears to be ſtrictly the caſe. I took notice of it to Signor R——, who is not the moſt zealous ſectary in the world, and who frankly owned the truth of the obſervation.

In ſome places the very ſame images ſtill remain: They have only chriſtened them; and what was Venus or Proſerpine, is now Mary Magdalene, or the Virgin. The ſame ceremonies are daily performed before theſe images; in the ſame language, and nearly in the ſame manner. The ſaints are perpetually

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petually coming down in perſon, and working miracles, as the heathen gods did of old. The walls of the temples are covered with the vows of pilgrims, as they were formerly. The holy water, which was held in ſuch deteſtation by the firſt chriſtians, is again revered, and ſprinkled about with the ſame devotion as in the time of paganiſm. The ſame incenſe is burnt, by prieſts arrayed in the ſame manner, with the ſame grimaces and genuflections, before the ſame images, and in the ſame temples too. In ſhort, ſo nearly do the rites coincide, that were the pagan high-prieſt to come back, and re-aſſume his functions, he would only have to learn a few new names; to get the Maſs, the Paters, and the Aves by heart; which would be much eaſier to him, as they are in a language he underſtands, but which his modern ſucceſſors are often ignorant of. Some things, to be ſure, would puzzle him; and he would ſwear that all the

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myſteries of Eleuſis were nothing to the amazing myſtery of tranſubſtantiation; the only one that ever attempted to ſet both our underſtanding and our ſenſes at defiance, and baffles equally all the faculties both of the ſoul and body. —He would, likewiſe, be a good deal at a loſs to account for the ſtrange metamorphoſis of ſome of his old friends. That (he would ſay) I can well remember, was the ſtatue of Venus Meretrix, and was only worſhipped by the looſe and voluptuous. She ſeems to be wonderfully improved ſince you made her a chriſtian; for I find ſhe is now become the great protectreſs of chaſtity and of virtue.—Juno too, who was ſo implacable and ſo revengeful, you have ſoftened down into a very moderate ſort of deity; for I obſerve you addreſs her with as little fear or ceremony as any of the reſt of them; I wiſh you would make the Furies chriſtians too, for ſurely they would be much the

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the better for it.—But obſerving the figure of St. Anthony, he would exclaim with aſtoniſhment.—But what do I behold!—Jupiter, the ſovereign of gods and men, with a ragged cloak over his ſhoulders! What a humiliating ſpectacle! Well do I remember, with what awe we bent before that once reſpectable image. But what has become of the thunderbolt, which he held in his hand to chaſtiſe the world; and what is that he has got in its place? His conductor would tell him, that it was only a piece of rope, with knots upon it, to chaſtiſe himſelf; adding, that he was now doing penance for his long uſurpation; and that the thunder had long ago been put into better hands.—However, he would ſoon find, that even theſe ſaints ſometimes change their names, according to the enthuſiaſtic caprice of the people; and from this verſatility, he would ſtill be in hopes, in proceſs of time, to ſee his friend Jupiter re-aſſume his bolt and his dignity.

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Do you remember old Huet,—the greateſt of all originals? One day, as he paſſed the ſtatue of Jupiter in the capitol, he pulled off his hat, and made him a bow.—A jacobite gentleman, who obſerved it, aſked him why he paid ſo much reſpect to that old gentleman.—For the ſame reaſon, replied Huet, that you pay ſo much to the Pretender. Beſides, added he, I think there is rather a greater probability that his turn will come round again, than that of your hero; I ſhall therefore endeavour to keep well with him, and hope he will never forget that I took notice of him in the time of his adverſity.

Indeed, within the courſe of my own obſervation, I can recollect ſome of the moſt capital ſaints, in the calendar, who have been diſgraced by the people, and new names given to their ſtatues. When we were in Portugal laſt war, the people of Caſtel Branco were ſo enraged at St. Antonio,

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tonio, for allowing the Spaniards to plunder their town, contrary, as they affirmed, to his expreſs agreement with them, that they broke many of his ſtatues to pieces; and one that had been more revered than the reſt, they took the head off, and clapped on one of St. Francis in its place; whoſe name the ſtatue ever after retained. Even the great St. Januarius himſelf, I am told, was in imminent danger during the laſt famine at Naples. A Swiſs gentleman aſſured me, that he had heard them load him with abuſe and invective; and declared point-blank, that if he did not procure them corn by ſuch a time, he ſhould no longer be their ſaint. However, ſuch inſtances are but rare; and in general the poor catholicks are fully indemnified for theſe ſudden fits of paſſion and reſentment, from the full perſuaſion of the immediate preſence and protection of their beloved patrons.

I have

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I have obſerved, with pleaſure, that glow of gratitude and affection that has animated their countenances; and am perſuaded that the warmth of enthuſiaſtic devotion they often feel before their favourite ſaints, particularly their female ones, muſt have ſomething extremely delightful in it; reſembling, perhaps, the pure and delicate ſenſations of the moſt reſpectful love. I own I have ſometimes envied them their feelings; and in my heart curſed the pride of reaſon and philoſophy, with all its cool and taſteleſs triumphs, that lulls into a kind of ſtoical apathy theſe moſt exquiſite ſenſations of the ſoul. Who would not chuſe to be deceived, when the deception raiſes in him theſe delicious paſſions, that are ſo worthy of the human heart; and for which, of all others, it ſeems to be the moſt fitted? But if once you have ſteeled it over with the hard and impenetrable temper of philoſophy; theſe fine-ſpun threads of weakneſs and affection,

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fection, that were ſo pliable, and ſo eaſily tied, become hard and inflexible; and for ever loſe that delicate tone of ſenſibility that put them into a kind of uniſon and vibration with every object around us: For it is certainly true, what has been ſaid of one part of our ſpecies, and may almoſt with equal juſtice be applied to the whole,

"That to their weakneſs half their charms we owe."

I remember Doctor Tiſſot told me, he had a patient that actually died of love for Chriſt; and when in the laſt extremity, ſeemed ſtill to enjoy the greateſt happineſs; calling upon him with all the fondneſs of the moſt enthuſiaſtic paſſion. And from what I have often obſerved before the ſtatues of the Virgin and St. Agatha, I am perſuaded, they have many inamoratos that would willingly lay down their lives for them.

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Now, pray don't you think too, that this perſonal kind of worſhip is much better adapted to the capacities of the vulgar, than the more pure and ſublime modes of it; which would only diſtract and confound their ſimple underſtandings, unaccuſtomed to ſpeculation; and that certainly require ſomething groſs and material, ſome object of ſenſe to fix their attention?—This even ſeems to have been the opinion of ſome of the ſacred writers, who often repreſent God under ſome material form.

Were you to attempt to give a country-fellow an idea of the deity; were you to tell him of a being that is immaterial, and yet whoſe eſſence penetrates all matter; who has exiſted from all eternity, and whoſe extenſion is equally boundleſs with his duration; who fills and pervades millions of worlds, and animates every object they contain; and who, in the ſublime language of our poet,

"Tho'

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" Tho' chang'd thro' all, is yet in all the ſame,
" Great in the earth, as in th' ætherial frame:
" Warms in the ſun, refreſhes in the breeze,
" Glows in the ſtars, and bloſſoms in the trees;
" Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent;
" Spreads undivided, operates unſpent.
" To him no high, no low, no great, no ſmall;
" He fills, he bounds, connects and equals all."

Now, what do you imagine he would think of ſuch a being? I am afraid his underſtanding would be ſo bewildered, that he could not think at all. But, ſet up before him the figure of a fine woman, with a beautiful child in her arms, the moſt intereſting object in nature; and tell him ſhe can procure him every thing he wants; he knows perfectly well what he is about; feels himſelf animated by the object, and prays to her with all his might.

Adieu.—We are going to be very buſy; and are preparing every thing for one of the greateſt objects of our expedition; the examination of mount Ætna. Indeed, we

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have received but bad encouragement; and are beginning to doubt of the poſſibility of ſucceſs. Recupero tells us, that the ſeaſon is not far enough advanced yet, by ſome months; and that he does not think it will be poſſible to get near the ſummit of the mountain. The laſt winter, he ſays, was ſo uncommonly ſevere, that the circle of ſnow extended much nearer the foot of the mountain than uſual; that although this circle is now greatly contracted, it ſtill extends nine or ten miles below the crater.—He adviſes us to return this way in the month of Auguſt; and, if poſſible, make Ætna the laſt part of our expedition. If we do not ſucceed to-morrow, we ſhall probably follow his advice; but we are all determined to make a bold puſh for it. The weather is the moſt favourable that can be imagined: Here is a delightful evening; and by the ſtar-light we can obſerve the ſmoke rolling down the ſide of the mountain like a vaſt torrent. Recupero ſays,

this

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this is a ſure indication of the violence of the cold in theſe exalted regions of the atmoſphere, which condenſes the vapour, and makes it fall down, the moment it iſſues out of the crater. He adviſes us, by all means, to provide plenty of *liqueurs*, warm fur cloaks, and hatchets to cut wood; as we ſhall probably be obliged to paſs the night in the open air, in a climate, he aſſures us, as cold as that of Greenland. It is very ſingular if this be true; for at preſent we are melting with heat, in thin ſuits of taffeta. Adieu. You ſhall know it all on our return, if we do not ſhare the fate of Empedocles.

Ever yours.

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LETTER IX.

Catania, May 29th.

ON the 27th, by day-break, we ſet off to viſit mount Ætna, that venerable and reſpectable father of mountains. His baſe, and his immenſe declivities, are covered over with a numerous progeny of his own: for every great eruption produces a new mountain; and perhaps, by the number of theſe, better than by any other method, the number of eruptions, and the age of Ætna itſelf, might be aſcertained.

The whole mountain is divided into three diſtinct regions, called *La Regione Culta*, or *Piedmonteſe*, The Fertile Region; *la Regione Sylvoſa*, or *Nemoroſa*, The Woody Region; and *la Regione Deſerta*, or *Scoperta*, The Barren Region.

Theſe

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Theſe three are as different, both in climate and productions, as the three zones of the earth; and perhaps, with equal propriety, might have been ſtiled the Torrid, the Temperate, and the Frigid zone. The firſt region ſurrounds the foot of the mountain, and conſtitutes the moſt fertile country in the world on all ſides of it, to the extent of about fourteen or fifteen miles, where the woody region begins. It is compoſed almoſt entirely of lava, which, after a number of ages, is at laſt converted into the moſt fertile of all ſoils.

At Nicoloſi, which is twelve miles up the mountain, we found the barometer at 27 : $1\frac{1}{2}$; at Catania it ſtood at 29 : $8\frac{1}{2}$; although the former elevation is not very great, probably not exceeding 3000 feet, yet the climate was totally changed. At Catania the harveſt was entirely over, and the heats were inſupportable; here they were moderate, and in many places the

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corn is as yet green. The road for theſe twelve miles is the worſt I ever travelled; entirely over old lavas and the mouths of extinguiſhed volcanos, now converted into corn fields, vineyards, and orchards.

The fruit of this region is reckoned the fineſt in Sicily, particularly the figs, of which they have a great variety. One of theſe of a very large ſize, eſteemed ſuperior in flavour to all the reſt, they pretend is peculiar to Ætna.

The lavas, which as I have already ſaid form this region of the mountain, take their riſe from an infinite number of the moſt beautiful little mountains on earth, which are every where ſcattered on the immenſe declivity of Ætna. Theſe are all of a regular figure; either that of a cone, or a ſemiſphere; and all, but a very few, are covered with beautiful trees, and the richeſt verdure: Every eruption generally forms one

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one of theſe mountains. As the great crater of Ætna itſelf is raiſed to ſuch an enormous height above the lower regions of the mountain, it is not poſſible, that the internal fire raging for a vent, even round the baſe, and no doubt vaſtly below it, ſhould be carried to the height of twelve or thirteen thouſand feet, for probably ſo high is the ſummit of Ætna. It has therefore generally happened, that after ſhaking the mountain and its neighbourhood for ſome time, it at laſt burſts open its ſide, and this is called an eruption. At firſt it only ſends forth a thick ſmoke and ſhowers of aſhes that lay waſte the adjacent country: Theſe are ſoon followed by red hot ſtones, and rocks of a great ſize, thrown to an immenſe height in the air. The fall of theſe ſtones, together with the quantities of aſhes diſcharged at the ſame time, at laſt form the ſpherical and conical mountains I have mentioned. Sometimes this proceſs is finiſhed in the courſe of a few days, ſometimes

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times it lasts for months, which was the case in the great eruption 1669. In that case, the mountain formed is of a great size; some of them are not less than seven or eight miles round, and upwards of 1000 feet in perpendicular height; others are not more than two or three miles round, and 3 or 400 feet high.

After the new mountain is formed, the lava generally bursts out from its lower side; and bearing every thing before it, is for the most part terminated by the sea. This is the common progress of an eruption; however, it sometimes happens, though rarely, that the lava bursts at once from the side of the mountain, without all these attending circumstances; and this is commonly the case with the eruptions of Vesuvius, where the elevation being so much smaller, the melted matter is generally carried up into the crater of the mountain, which then exhibits the phænomena I have described;

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deſcribed; diſcharging ſhowers of ſtones and aſhes from the mouth of the volcano, without forming any new mountain, but only adding conſiderably to the height of the old one; till at laſt the lava, riſing near the ſummit, burſts the ſide of the crater, and the eruption is declared. This has literally been the caſe with two eruptions I have been an attentive witneſs of in that mountain; but Ætna is upon a much larger ſcale, and one crater is not enough to give vent to ſuch oceans of liquid fire.

Recupero aſſures me, he ſaw in an eruption of that mountain large rocks of fire diſcharged to the height of ſome thouſand feet, with a noiſe much more terrible than that of thunder. He meaſured from the time of their greateſt elevation till they reached the ground, and found they took twenty-one ſeconds to deſcend; which, according to the rule of the ſpaces, being as the ſquares of the times, amounts, I think,

to

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to upwards of 7000 feet. A moſt aſtoniſhing height ſurely, and requiring a force of projection beyond what we have any conception of. I meaſured the height of the exploſions of Veſuvius by the ſame rule, and never obſerved any of the ſtones thrown from it to take more than nine ſeconds to deſcend, which ſhews they had riſen to little more than 1200 feet.

Our landlord at Nicoloſi gave us an account of the ſingular fate of the beautiful country near Hybla, at no great diſtance from hence. It was ſo celebrated for its fertility, and particularly for its honey, that it was called Mel Paſſi, till it was overwhelmed by the lava of Ætna; and having then become totally barren, by a kind of pun its name was changed to Mal Paſſi. In a ſecond eruption, by a ſhower of aſhes from the mountain, it ſoon re-aſſumed its antient beauty and fertility; and for many years

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years was called Bel Paſſi. Laſt of all, in the unfortunate æra of 1669, it was again laid under an ocean of fire, and reduced to the moſt wretched ſterility, ſince which time it is known again by its ſecond appellation of Mal Paſſi. However, the lava, in its courſe over this beautiful country, has left ſeveral little iſlands or hillocks; juſt enough to ſhew what it formerly was. Theſe make a ſingular appearance, in all the bloom of the moſt luxuriant vegetation, ſurrounded and rendered almoſt inacceſſible by large fields of black and rugged lava. The mountain from whence the firſt eruption iſſued, that covered the Mel Paſſi, is known by the name of Monpelieri; I was ſtruck with its beautiful appearance at a diſtance, and could not reſiſt the deſire I had of examining it minutely, as well as of obſerving the effects of the two eruptions that overwhelmed this celebrated country.

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Monpelieri is rather of a ſpherical than a conical ſhape, and does not riſe in perpendicular height above 300 feet, but it is ſo perfectly regular on every ſide, and ſo richly overſpread with fruits and flowers, that I could not leave ſo heavenly a ſpot, without the greateſt regret. Its cup or crater is large in proportion to the mountain, and is as exactly hollowed out as the beſt made bowl. I walked quite round its outward edge, and think the circumference muſt be ſomewhat more than a mile.

This mountain was formed by the firſt eruption that deſtroyed the country of Mel Paſſi, and is of a very old date. It buried a great number of villages and country houſes; and particularly two noble churches, which are more regretted than all the reſt, on account of three ſtatues, reckoned at that time the moſt perfect in the iſland. They have attempted, but in vain, to recover them; as the ſpot where the churches

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ſtood could never be juſtly aſcertained. Indeed it is impoſſible it ſhould; for theſe churches were built of lava, which it is well known is immediately melted, when it comes into contact with a torrent of new erupted matter: And Maſſa ſays, that in ſome eruptions of Ætna, the lava has poured down with ſuch a ſudden impetuoſity, that in the courſe of a few hours, churches, palaces, and villages, have been entirely melted down, and the whole run off in fuſion without leaving the leaſt mark of their former exiſtence. But if the lava has had any conſiderable time to cool, this ſingular effect never happens.

The great eruption of 1669, after ſhaking the whole country around for four months, and forming a very large mountain of ſtones and aſhes, burſt out about a mile above Monpelieri, and deſcending like a torrent, bore directly againſt the middle of that mountain, and (they pretend) perfo-

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rated it from ſide to ſide: this however I doubt, as it muſt have broken the regular form of the mountain, which is not the caſe. But certain it is, that it pierced it to a great depth. The lava then divided into two branches; and ſurrounding this mountain, joined again on its ſouth ſide; and laying waſte the whole country betwixt that and Catania, ſcaled the walls of that city, and poured its flaming torrent into the ocean. In its way, it is ſaid to have deſtroyed the poſſeſſions of near 30,000 people, and reduced them to beggary. It formed ſeveral hills where there were formerly valleys, and filled up a large lake, of which there is not now the leaſt veſtige to be ſeen.

As the events of this eruption are better known than any other, they tell a great many ſingular ſtories of it; one of which, however incredible it may appear, is well aſcertained. A vineyard, belonging to a convent

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convent of jeſuits, lay directly in its way. This vineyard was formed on an antient lava, probably a thin one, with a number of caverns and crevices under it. The liquid lava entering into theſe caverns, ſoon filled them up, and by degrees bore up the vineyard; and the jeſuits, who every moment expected to ſee it buried, beheld with amazement the whole field begin to move off. It was carried on the ſurface of the lava to a conſiderable diſtance; and though the greateſt part was deſtroyed, yet ſome of it remains to this day.

We went to examine the mouth from whence this dreadful torrent iſſued; and were ſurpriſed to find it only a ſmall hole, of about three or four yards diameter. The mountain from whence it ſprung, I think, is little leſs than the conical part of Veſuvius.

There is a vaſt cavern on the oppoſite ſide of it, where people go to ſhoot wild

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pigeons, which breed there in great abundance. The innermoſt parts of this cavern are ſo very diſmal and gloomy, that our landlord told us ſome people had loſt their ſenſes from having advanced too far, imagining they ſaw devils and the ſpirits of the damned; for it is ſtill very generally believed here, that Ætna is the mouth of hell.

We found a degree of wildneſs and ferocity in the inhabitants of this mountain, that I have not obſerved any where elſe. It put me in mind of an obſervation the Padre della Torre (the hiſtoriographer of mount Veſuvius) told me he had often made in the confines of Naples; that in the places where the air is moſt impregnated with ſulphur and hot exhalations, the people were always moſt wicked and vicious. Whatever truth there may be in the obſervation, the people about Nicoloſi at leaſt ſeem to confirm it. The whole village

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flocked round us, and the women in particular abuſed us exceedingly; the cauſe of which we at laſt found was, that F——'s blooming complexion and white ſkin had made them take him for one of their own ſex. They made a great clamour, and it was with difficulty we could appeaſe them. The perſon whom Recupero had appointed to accompany us, known by the name of the Cyclops, (the man in the iſland that is beſt acquainted with mount Ætna) was ordered by them not to go with us; and if we had not at laſt obtained their conſent by ſoothing and flattery, the beſt method with women, he durſt not have diſobeyed them. At firſt we had been obliged to ſhut the gate of the court, they were ſo very noiſy and tumultuous; but when our landlord (a prieſt) for whom we had letters from Catania, aſſured them that we were Chriſtians, and came with no bad intentions, they became more moderate, and we ventured out amongſt them.—This con-

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ſidence ſoon acquired theirs; and in a ſhort time we became good friends, and had a great deal of converſation.

It was with much difficulty I could perſuade them that we were not come to ſearch for hidden treaſures, a great quantity of which they believe is to be found in Monpelieri; and when I went to that mountain they were then fully convinced that this was our intention. Two of the men followed me, and kept a cloſe eye on every ſtep that I took; and when I lifted any bit of lava or pumice, they came running up, thinking it was ſomething very precious; but when they obſerved they were only bits of ſtone, and that I put them into my pocket, they laughed heartily, talking to one another in their mountain jargon, which is unintelligible even to Italians. However, as moſt of them ſpeak Italian ſo as to be underſtood, they aſked me what I was going to make of thoſe bits of ſtone?

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I told them they were of great value in our country; that the people there had a way of making gold of them: At this they both ſeemed exceedingly ſurpriſed, and ſpoke again in their own tongue. However, I found they did not believe me; one of them told me, if that had been true, I certainly would not have been ſo ready in telling it: But, ſaid he, if it is ſo, we will ſerve you for ever, if you will teach us that art; for then we ſhall be the richeſt people on earth. I aſſured them that I had not yet learned it myſelf, and that it was a ſecret known only to very few. They were likewiſe a good deal ſurpriſed to ſee me pull out of my pocket a magnetical needle and a ſmall electrometer, which I had prepared at Catania to examine the electrical ſtate of the air; and I was at firſt afraid they ſhould have taken me for a conjurer (which you know already happened amongſt the Appenines) but luckily that idea did not ſtrike them.

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On our way back to Nicoloſi we were joined by three or four more, with their wives. I began to be a little afraid of myſelf, leſt they ſhould inſiſt on knowing the ſecret. However, I took out my bits of lava, and told them they were at their ſervice, if they had any occaſion for them. But they refuſed them, ſaying, they wiſhed to the Virgin, and St. Agatha, that I could take away the whole of it; as it had ruined the fineſt country in all Sicily.

One fellow, who aſſumed an air of ſuperior wiſdom and dignity to the reſt, made them form a circle round him, and began to interrogate me with great gravity and compoſure. It was with difficulty I could keep my countenance; but as I was alone with them, at ſome diſtance from the village, I was afraid of offending. He deſired me to anſwer him with truth and preciſion, what were the real motives of our coming ſo fatiguing and diſagreeable a journey?

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journey? I told him, on my word, that we had no other motive but curioſity to examine mount Ætna. On which, laughing to one another with great contempt; *Un bel ragione queſto, non è vero*, ſaid they: (a very pretty reaſon, truly.) The old fellow then aſked me what country we were of. I told him, we were *Ingleſe*. *E dove è loro paeſe*, ſaid he; whereabouts does their country lie? I told him it was a great way off, on the other ſide of the world. *Da vero*, ſaid the fellow,—*e credono in Chriſto quelli Ingleſe?*—I told him (laughing) that they did.—Ah, ſaid he, ſhaking his head, *mi pare che non credono troppo*.—One of the company then obſerved, that he remembered ſeveral of theſe Ingleſe, that, at different times, had paid viſits to mount Ætna, and that they never yet could find out their motive; but that he recollected very well, to have heard many of their old people ſay, that the Ingleſe had a queen that had burnt in the mountain for many years paſt; and

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that they ſuppoſed theſe viſits were made from ſome devotion or reſpect to her memory. I aſſured them that the Ingleſe had but too little reſpect for their queens when they were alive, but that they never troubled themſelves about them after they were dead: however, as all the others confirmed this teſtimony, I thought it was beſt to ſay little againſt it; but I was extremely curious to know who this queen might be. They alleged that I knew much better than they; but added, that her name was Anna.

I could not conceive what queen Anne had done to bring her there; and was puzzling myſelf to find it out, when one of them ſoon cleared up the matter; he told me ſhe was wife to a king that had been a Chriſtian, and that ſhe had made him an Heretic, and was in conſequence condemned to burn for ever in mount Ætna. In ſhort, I found it was no other than poor Anne Boloyne. So ſoon as I mentioned

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the name, *Si ſignor*, ſaid the fellow, *l'iſteſſa, l'iſteſſa, la connoſce meglio che noi.* I aſked, if her huſband was there too, for that he deſerved it much better than ſhe: *ſicuro*, ſaid he, and all his heretic ſubjects too; and if you are of that number, you need not be in ſuch a hurry to get thither, you will be ſure of it at laſt. I thanked him, and went to join our company, not a little amuſed with the converſation.

We ſoon after left Nicoloſi, and in an hour and an half's travelling, over barren aſhes and lava, we arrived on the confines of the Regione Sylvoſa, or the Temperate Zone. So ſoon as we entered theſe delightful foreſts, we ſeemed to have got into another world. The air, which before was ſultry and hot, was now cool and refreſhing; and every breeze was loaded with a thouſand perfumes, the whole ground being covered over with the richeſt aromatic plants. Many parts of this region are ſurely

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the moſt heavenly ſpots upon earth; and if Ætna reſembles hell within, it may with equal juſtice be ſaid to reſemble paradiſe without.

It is indeed a curious conſideration, that this mountain ſhould reunite every beauty and every horrour; and, in ſhort, all the moſt oppoſite and diſſimilar objects in nature. Here you obſerve a gulph, that formerly threw out torrents of fire, now covered with the moſt luxuriant vegetation; and from an object of terrour, become one of delight. Here you gather the moſt delicious fruit, riſing from what was but lately a black and barren rock. Here the ground is covered with every flower; and we wander over theſe beauties, and contemplate this wilderneſs of ſweets, without conſidering that hell, with all its terrours, is immediately under our feet; and that but a few yards ſeparate us from lakes of liquid fire and brimſtone.

But

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But our aſtoniſhment ſtill increaſes, on caſting our eyes on the higher regions of the mountain. There we behold, in perpetual union, the two elements that are at perpetual war; an immenſe gulph of fire, for ever exiſting in the midſt of ſnows which it has not power to melt; and immenſe fields of ſnow and ice for ever ſurrounding this gulph of fire, which they have not power to extinguiſh.

The woody region of Ætna aſcends for about eight or nine miles, and forms a zone or girdle, of the brighteſt green, all around the mountain. This night we paſſed through little more than the half of it; arriving ſome time before ſun-ſet at our lodgings, which was no other than a large cave, formed by one of the moſt antient and venerable lavas. It is called *La Spelonca dal Capriole*, or the goats cavern, becauſe frequented by thoſe animals; who take refuge there in bad weather.

Here

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Here we were delighted with the contemplation of many grave and beautiful objects; the proſpect on all ſides is immenſe; and we already ſeem to be lifted up from the earth, and to have got into a new world.

Our cavern is ſurrounded by the moſt ſtately and majeſtic oaks; of the dry leaves of which, we made very comfortable beds; and with our hatchets, which we had brought on purpoſe, we cut down great branches, and, in a ſhort time, had a fire large enough to roaſt an ox. I obſerved my thermometer, and found, from 71 at Nicoloſi, it had now fallen below 60. The barometer ſtood at 24 : 2. In one end of our cave we ſtill found a great quantity of ſnow, which ſeemed to be ſent there on purpoſe for us, as there was no water to be found. With this we filled our tea-kettle, as tea and bread and butter was the only ſupper we had provided; and probably the beſt

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one to prevent us from being overcome by ſleep or fatigue.

Not a great way from this cavern, are two of the moſt beautiful mountains of all that number that ſpring from Ætna. I mounted one of our beſt mules, and with a good deal of difficulty arrived at the ſummit of the higheſt of them, juſt a little before ſun-ſet. The proſpect of Sicily, with the ſurrounding ſea and all its iſlands, was wonderfully noble. The whole courſe of the river Semetus, the ruins of Hybla, and ſeveral other ancient towns; the rich corn-fields and vineyards on the lower region of the mountain, and the amazing number of beautiful mountains below, made a delightful ſcene. The hollow craters of theſe two mountains are each of them conſiderably larger than that of Veſuvius. They are now filled with ſtately oaks, and covered to a great depth with the richeſt ſoil. I obſerved that this region

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of Ætna, like the former, is compoſed of lava; but this is now covered ſo deep with earth, that it is no where to be ſeen, but in the beds of the torrents. In many of theſe it is worn down by the water to the depth of fifty or ſixty feet, and in one of them ſtill conſiderably more.—What an idea does not this give of the amazing antiquity of the eruptions of this mountain!

As ſoon as it was dark we retired to our cave, and took poſſeſſion of our bed of leaves. Our reſt, however, was ſomewhat diſturbed by the noiſe of a mountain that lay a good way off on our right. It diſcharged quantities of ſmoke, and made ſeveral exploſions like heavy cannon at a diſtance; but what is ſingular, we could obſerve no appearance of fire.—This mountain was formed by an eruption in 1766, now upwards of four years ago; the fire of which is not yet extinguiſhed, neither is the lava by any means cold. This lava

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ſpent its fury on a beautiful foreſt, which it laid waſte to the extent of a good many miles. In many places it has run into gullies of a great depth, which it has filled up to the height, we are told, of 200 feet. It is in theſe places where it retains the greateſt heat. On our road to-day we ſcrambled up this lava, and went a conſiderable way over its ſurface which appeared perfectly cold; but it is certain, that in many places it ſtill emits volumes of ſmoke, particularly after rain; and the people ſay, what I can readily believe, that this will continue to be the caſe for ſome years, where the lava is thickeſt. A ſolid body of fire ſome hundreds of feet thick, and of ſo great an extent, muſt certainly retain its heat for many years. The ſurface indeed ſoon becomes black and hard, and incloſes the liquid fire within, in a kind of ſolid box, excluding all impreſſions from the external air or from the weather. Thus, I have ſeen, many months after

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eruptions of mount Veſuvius, a bed of lava though only of a few feet thick, has continued red hot in the center long after the ſurface was cold; and a ſtick thruſt into its crevices, inſtantly took fire, although there was no perceptible heat without.

Maſſa, a Sicilian author of credit, ſays, he was at Catania eight years after the great eruption in 1669, and that he ſtill found the lava in many places was not cold: But there is an eaſy method of calculating the time that bodies take to cool:—Sir Iſaac Newton, I think, in his account of the comet of 1680, ſuppoſes the times to be as the ſquares of their diameters; and finding that a ſolid ball of metal of two inches, made red hot, required upwards of an hour to become perfectly cold, made the calculation from that to a body of the diameter of the earth, and found it would require upwards of twenty thouſand years. If this rule be juſt, you may eaſily compute the

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the time that the lava will take to become thoroughly cold; and that you may have time to do ſo, I ſhall here break off my letter, which I am obliged to write in bed, in a very aukward and diſagreeable poſture; the cauſe of which ſhall be explained to you in my next. Adieu.

Ever your's.

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LETTER X.

Catania, May 29th, at night.

AFTER getting a comfortable nap on our bed of leaves in the Spelonca del Capriole, we awoke about eleven o'clock; and melting down a ſufficient quantity of ſnow, we boiled our tea-kettle, and made a hearty meal, to prepare us for the remaining part of our expedition. We were nine in number; for we had our three ſervants, the Cyclops (our conductor) and two men to take care of our mules. The Cyclops now began to diſplay his great knowledge of the mountain, and we followed him with implicit confidence. He conducted us over "Antres vaſt, and De-"ſarts wild," where ſcarce human foot had ever trod. Sometimes through gloomy foreſts, which by day-light were delightful;

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ful; but now, from the univerſal darkneſs, the ruſtling of the trees; the heavy, dull, bellowing of the mountain; the vaſt expanſe of ocean ſtretched at an immenſe diſtance below us; inſpired a kind of awful horror. Sometimes we found ourſelves aſcending great rocks of lava, where if our mules ſhould make but a falſe ſtep, we might be thrown headlong over the precipice. However, by the aſſiſtance of the Cyclops, we overcame all theſe difficulties; and he managed matters ſo well, that in the ſpace of two hours we found we had got above the regions of vegetation; and had left the foreſts of Ætna far behind. Theſe appeared now like a dark and gloomy gulph below us, that ſurrounded the mountain.

The proſpect before us was of a very different nature; we beheld an expanſe of ſnow and ice that alarmed us exceedingly, and almoſt ſtaggered our reſolution. In

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the center of this, but ſtill at a great diſtance, we deſcried the high ſummit of the mountain, rearing its tremendous head, and vomiting out torrents of ſmoke. It indeed appeared altogether inacceſſible, from the vaſt extent of the fields of ſnow and ice that ſurrounded it. Our diffidence was ſtill increaſed by the ſentiments of the Cyclops. He told us, it often happened, that the ſurface of the mountain being hot below, melted the ſnow in particular ſpots, and formed pools of water, where it was impoſſible to foreſee our danger; that it likewiſe happened, that the ſurface of the water, as well as the ſnow, was ſometimes covered with black aſhes, that rendered it exceedingly deceitful; that however, if we thought proper, he ſhould lead us on with as much caution as poſſible. Accordingly, after holding a council of war, which you know people generally do when they are very much afraid, we detached our cavalry to the foreſt below, and prepared to climb

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the ſnows. The Cyclops, after taking a great draught of brandy, deſired us to be of good cheer; that we had plenty of time, and might take as many reſts as we pleaſed. That the ſnow could be little more than ſeven miles, and that we certainly ſhould be able to paſs it before ſun-riſe. Accordingly, taking each of us a dram of liqueur, which ſoon removed every objection, we began our march.

The aſcent for ſome time was not ſteep; and as the ſurface of the ſnow ſunk a little, we had tolerable good footing; but as it ſoon began to grow ſteeper, we found our labour greatly increaſe: however, we determined to perſevere, calling to mind in the midſt of our labour, that the emperor Adrian and the philoſopher Plato had undergone the ſame; and from the ſame motive too, to ſee the riſing ſun from the top of Ætna. After incredible labour and fatigue, but at the ſame time mixed with

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a great deal of pleaſure, we arrived before dawn at the ruins of an antient ſtructure, called *Il Torre del Filoſofo*, ſuppoſed to have been built by the philoſopher Empedocles, who took up his habitation here the better to ſtudy the nature of mount Ætna. By others, it is ſuppoſed to be the ruins of a temple of Vulcan, whoſe ſhop, all the world knows (where he uſed to make excellent thunderbolts and celeſtial armour, as well as nets to catch his wife when ſhe went aſtray) was ever kept in mount Ætna. Here we reſted ourſelves for ſome time, and made a freſh application to our liqueur bottle, which I am perſuaded, both Vulcan and Empedocles, had they been here, would have greatly approved of after ſuch a march.

I found the mercury had fallen to 20 : 6. We had now time to pay our adorations in a ſilent contemplation of the ſublime objects of nature. The ſky was clear, and the

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the immenſe vault of the heavens appeared in awful majeſty and ſplendour. We found ourſelves more ſtruck with veneration than below, and at firſt were at a loſs to know the cauſe; till we obſerved with aſtoniſhment, that the number of ſtars ſeemed to be infinitely increaſed; and the light of each of them appeared brighter than uſual. The whiteneſs of the milky way was like a pure flame that ſhot acroſs the heavens; and with the naked eye we could obſerve cluſters of ſtars that were inviſible in the regions below. We did not at firſt attend to the cauſe, nor recollect that we had now paſſed through ten or twelve thouſand feet of groſs vapour, that blunts and confuſes every ray, before it reaches the ſurface of the earth. We were amazed at the diſtinctneſs of viſion, and exclaimed together, What a glorious ſituation for an obſervatory! Had Empedocles had the eyes of Gallileo what diſcoveries muſt he not have made! We regretted that Jupiter was not

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viſible, as I am perſuaded we might have diſcovered ſome of his ſatellites with the naked eye, or at leaſt with a ſmall glaſs which I had in my pocket. We obſerved a light a great way below us on the mountain, which ſeemed to move amongſt the foreſts, but whether an Ignis Fatuus, or what it was, I ſhall not pretend to ſay. We likewiſe took notice of ſeveral of thoſe meteors called Falling Stars, which ſtill appeared to be as much elevated above us, as when ſeen from the plain; ſo that in all probability, thoſe bodies move in regions much beyond the bounds that ſome philoſophers have aſſigned to our atmoſphere.

After contemplating theſe objects for ſome time, we ſet off, and ſoon after arrived at the foot of the great crater of the mountain. This is of an exact conical figure, and riſes equally on all ſides. It is compoſed ſolely of aſhes and other burnt materials, diſcharged from the mouth of the

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the volcano, which is in its center. This conical mountain is of a very great ſize; its circumference cannot be leſs than ten miles. Here we took a ſecond reſt, as the greateſt part of our fatigue ſtill remained. The mercury had fallen to 20 : $4\frac{1}{2}$.—We found this mountain exceſſively ſteep; and although it had appeared black, yet it was likewiſe covered with ſnow, but the ſurface (luckily for us) was ſpread over with a pretty thick layer of aſhes, thrown out from the crater. Had it not been for this, we never ſhould have been able to get to the top; as the ſnow was every where frozen hard and ſolid, from the piercing cold of the air.

In about an hour's climbing, we arrived at a place where there was no ſnow; and where a warm and comfortable vapour iſſued from the mountain, which induced us to make another halt. Here I found the mercury at 19 : $6\frac{1}{2}$. The thermometer

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meter was fallen three degrees below the point of congelation; and before we left the ſummit of Ætna, it fell two degrees more, viz. to 27.—From this ſpot it was only about 300 yards to the higheſt ſummit of the mountain, where we arrived in full time, to ſee the moſt wonderful and moſt ſublime ſight in nature.

But here deſcription muſt ever fall ſhort; for no imagination has dared to form an idea of ſo glorious and ſo magnificent a ſcene. Neither is there on the ſurface of this globe, any one point that unites ſo many awful and ſublime objects.—The immenſe elevation from the ſurface of the earth, drawn as it were to a ſingle point, without any neighbouring mountain for the ſenſes and imagination to reſt upon; and recover from their aſtoniſhment in their way down to the world. This point or pinnacle, raiſed on the brink of a bottomleſs gulph, as old as the world, often

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diſcharging rivers of fire, and throwing out burning rocks, with a noiſe that ſhakes the whole iſland. Add to this, the unbounded extent of the proſpect, comprehending the greateſt diverſity and the moſt beautiful ſcenery in nature; with the riſing ſun, advancing in the eaſt, to illuminate the wondrous ſcene.

The whole atmoſphere by degrees kindled up, and ſhewed dimly and faintly the boundleſs proſpect around. Both ſea and land looked dark and confuſed, as if only emerging from their original chaos; and light and darkneſs ſeemed ſtill undivided; till the morning by degrees advancing, completed the ſeparation. The ſtars are extinguiſhed, and the ſhades diſappear. The foreſts, which but now ſeemed black and bottomleſs gulphs, from whence no ray was reflected to ſhew their form or colours, appear a new creation riſing to the ſight; catching life and beauty from every

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every increaſing beam. The ſcene ſtill enlarges, and the horizon ſeems to widen and expand itſelf on all ſides; till the ſun, like the great Creator, appears in the eaſt, and with his plaſtic ray completes the mighty ſcene.—All appears enchantment; and it is with difficulty we can believe we are ſtill on earth. The ſenſes, unaccuſtomed to the ſublimity of ſuch a ſcene, are bewildered and confounded; and it is not till after ſome time, that they are capable of ſeparating and judging of the objects that compoſe it.—The body of the ſun is ſeen riſing from the ocean, immenſe tracks both of ſea and land intervening; the iſlands of Lipari, Panari, Alicudi, Strombolo, and Volcano, with their ſmoking ſummits, appear under your feet; and you look down on the whole of Sicily as on a map; and can trace every river through all its windings, from its ſource to its mouth. The view is abſolutely boundleſs on every ſide; nor is there any one object,

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within the circle of viſion, to interrupt it; ſo that the ſight is every where loſt in the immenſity: and I am perſuaded it is only from the imperfection of our organs, that the coaſts of Africa, and even of Greece, are not diſcovered, as they are certainly above the horizon. The circumference of the viſible horizon on the top of Ætna cannot be leſs than 2000 miles: At Malta, which is near 200 miles diſtant, they perceive all the eruptions from the ſecond region; and that iſland is often diſcovered from about one half the elevation of the mountain; ſo that at the whole elevation, the horizon muſt extend to near double that diſtance, or 400 miles, which makes 800 for the diameter of the circle, and 2400 for the circumference. But this is by much too vaſt for our ſenſes, not intended to graſp ſo boundleſs a ſcene. I find, indeed, by ſome of the Sicilian authors, particularly Maſſa, that the African coaſt, as well as that of Naples, with many

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many of its iſlands, have been diſcovered from the top of Ætna. Of this, however, we cannot boaſt, though we can very well believe it. Indeed, if we knew the height of the mountain, it would be eaſy to calculate the extent of its viſible horizon; and *(vice verſa)* if its viſible horizon was exactly aſcertained, it would be an eaſy matter to calculate the height of the mountain.—But the moſt beautiful part of the ſcene is certainly the mountain itſelf; the iſland of Sicily, and the numerous iſlands lying round it. All theſe, by a kind of magic in viſion, that I am at a loſs to account for, ſeem as if they were brought cloſe round the ſkirts of Ætna; the diſtances appearing reduced to nothing.—Perhaps this ſingular effect is produced by the rays of light paſſing from a rarer medium into a denſer; which (from a well known law in optics) to an obſerver in the rare medium, appears to lift up the objects that are at the bottom of the denſe one; as a

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piece of money placed in a baſon appears lifted up as ſoon as the baſon is filled with water.

The *Regione Deſerta*, or the frigid zone of Ætna, is the firſt object that calls your attention. It is marked out by a circle of ſnow and ice, which extends on all ſides to the diſtance of about eight miles. In the center of this circle, the great crater of the mountain rears its burning head, and the regions of intenſe cold and of intenſe heat ſeem for ever to be united in the ſame point. —On the north ſide of the ſnowy region, they aſſure us, there are ſeveral ſmall lakes that are never thawed; and that in many places, the ſnow, mixed with the aſhes and ſalts of the mountain, is accumulated to a vaſt depth: And indeed I ſuppoſe the quantity of ſalts contained in this mountain, is one great reaſon of the preſervation of its ſnows.—The *Regione Deſerta* is immediately

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mediately ſucceeded by the *Sylvoſa*, or the woody region; which forms a circle or girdle of the moſt beautiful green, which ſurrounds the mountain on all ſides, and is certainly one of the moſt delightful ſpots on earth. This preſents a remarkable contraſt with the deſert region. It is not ſmooth and even like the greateſt part of the latter; but is finely variegated by an infinite number of thoſe beautiful little mountains that have been formed by the different eruptions of Ætna. All theſe have now acquired a wonderful degree of fertility, except a very few that are but newly formed; that is, within theſe five or ſix hundred years: For it certainly requires ſome thouſands to bring them to their greateſt degree of perfection. We looked down into the craters of theſe, and attempted, but in vain, to number them.

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The circumference of this zone or great circle on Ætna is not leſs than 70 or 80 miles. It is every where ſucceeded by the vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields that compoſe the *Regione Culta*, or the fertile region. This laſt zone is much broader than the others, and extends on all ſides to the foot of the mountain. Its whole circumference, according to Recupero, is 183 miles. It is likewiſe covered with a number of little conical and ſpherical mountains, and exhibits a wonderful variety of forms and colours, and makes a delightful contraſt with the other two regions. It is bounded by the ſea to the ſouth and ſouth-eaſt, and on all its other ſides by the rivers Semetus and Alcantara, which run almoſt round it. The whole courſe of theſe rivers is ſeen at once, and all their beautiful windings through theſe fertile valleys, looked upon as the favourite poſſeſſion of Ceres herſelf, and the very ſcene of the rape of her daughter Proſerpine.

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Caſt your eyes a little farther, and you embrace the whole iſland, and ſee all its cities, rivers, and mountains, delineated in the great chart of Nature: All the adjacent iſlands, the whole coaſt of Italy, as far as your eye can reach; for it is no where bounded, but every where loſt in the ſpace. On the ſun's firſt riſing, the ſhadow of the mountain extends acroſs the whole iſland, and makes a large track viſible even in the ſea and in the air. By degrees this is ſhortened, and, in a little time, is confined only to the neighbourhood of Ætna.

We now had time to examine a fourth region of this wonderful mountain, very different, indeed, from the others, and productive of very different ſenſations; but which has, undoubtedly, given being to all the reſt; I mean the region of fire.

The preſent crater of this immenſe volcano is a circle of about three miles and a

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half in circumference. It goes ſhelving down on each ſide, and forms a regular hollow like a vaſt amphitheatre. From many places of this ſpace, iſſue volumes of ſulphureous ſmoke, which, being much heavier than the circumambient air, inſtead of riſing in it, as ſmoke generally does, immediately on its getting out of the crater, rolls down the ſide of the mountain like a torrent, till coming to that part of the atmoſphere of the ſame ſpecific gravity with itſelf, it ſhoots off horizontally, and forms a large track in the air, according to the direction of the wind; which, happily for us, carried it exactly to the ſide oppoſite to that where we were placed. The crater is ſo hot, that it is very dangerous, if not impoſſible, to go down into it; beſides, the ſmoke is very incommodious, and, in many places, the ſurface is ſo ſoft, there have been inſtances of people ſinking down in it, and paying for their temerity with their lives. Near the center of

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the crater is the great mouth of the volcano. That tremendous gulph ſo celebrated in all ages, looked upon as the terror and ſcourge both of this and another life; and equally uſeful to ancient poets, or to modern divines, when the Muſe, or when the Spirit inſpires. We beheld it with awe and with horror, and were not ſurpriſed that it had been conſidered as the place of the damned. When we reflect on the immenſity of its depth, the vaſt cells and caverns whence ſo many lavas have iſſued; the force of its internal fire, to raiſe up thoſe lavas to ſo vaſt a height, to ſupport it as it were in the air, and even force it over the very ſummit of the crater, with all the dreadful accompaniments; the boiling of the matter, the ſhaking of the mountain, the exploſions of flaming rocks, *&c.* we muſt allow, that the moſt enthuſiaſtic imagination, in the midſt of all its terrors, hardly ever formed an idea of a hell more dreadful.

It

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It was with a mixture both of pleaſure and pain, that we quitted this awful ſcene. But the wind had riſen very high, and clouds began to gather round the mountain: In a ſhort time they formed like another heaven below us, and we were in hopes of ſeeing a thunder-ſtorm under our feet: A ſcene that is not uncommon in theſe exalted regions, and which I have already ſeen on the top of the high Alps: But the clouds were ſoon diſpelled again by the force of the wind, and we were diſappointed in our expectations.

I had often been told of the great effect produced by diſcharging a gun on the top of high mountains. I tried it here, when we were a good deal ſurpriſed to find, that inſtead of increaſing the ſound, it was almoſt reduced to nothing. The report was not equal to that of a pocket-piſtol: We compared it to the ſtroke of a ſtick on a

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door; and ſurely it is conſiſtent with reaſon, that the thinner the air is, the leſs its impreſſion muſt be on the ear; for in a vacuum there can be no noiſe, or no impreſſion can be made; and the nearer the approach to a vacuum, the impreſſion muſt always be the ſmaller. Where thoſe great effects have been produced, it muſt have been amongſt a number of mountains, where the ſound is reverberated from one to the other.

When we arrived at the foot of the cone, we obſerved ſome rocks of an incredible ſize, that have been diſcharged from the crater. The largeſt that has been obſerved from Veſuvius, is a round one of about twelve feet diameter. Theſe are much greater; indeed almoſt in proportion of the mountains to each other.

On our arrival at the Torre del Filoſofo, we could not help admiring, that the ruins

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ruins of this ſtructure have remained uncovered for ſo many ages, ſo near the top of Ætna, when thouſands of places at a great diſtance from it, have been repeatedly buried by its lavas, in a much ſhorter time. A proof that few eruptions have riſen ſo high in the mountain.

Empedocles was a native of Agrigentum, and is ſuppoſed to have died 400 years before the Chriſtian æra. Perhaps his vanity more than his philoſophy led him to this elevated ſituation; nay, it is ſaid to have carried him ſtill much farther:—That he might be looked upon as a god, and that the people might ſuppoſe he was taken up to heaven, he is recorded to have thrown himſelf headlong into the great gulph of mount Ætna, never ſuppoſing that his death could be diſcovered to mankind; but the treacherous mountain threw out his ſlippers, which were of braſs, and announced to the world the fate of the philoſopher,

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who, by his death, as well as life, wanted only to impoſe upon mankind, and make them believe that he was greater than they.

However, if there is ſuch a thing as philoſophy on earth, this ſurely ought to be its ſeat. The proſpect is little inferior to that from the ſummit; and the mind enjoys a degree of ſerenity here, that even few philoſophers, I believe, could ever boaſt of on that tremendous point.—All Nature lies expanded below your feet, in her gayeſt and moſt luxuriant dreſs, and you ſtill behold united under one point of view, all the ſeaſons of the year, and all the climates of the earth. The meditations are ever elevated in proportion to the grandeur and ſublimity of the objects that ſurround us; and here, where you have all Nature to arouſe your admiration, what mind can remain inactive?

It has likewiſe been obſerved, and from experience I can ſay with truth; that on the

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tops of the higheſt mountains, where the air is ſo pure and refined; and where there is not that immenſe weight of groſs vapours preſſing upon the body; the mind acts with greater freedom, and all the functions both of ſoul and body are performed in a ſuperior manner. It would appear, that in proportion as we are raiſed above the habitations of men, all low and vulgar ſentiments are left behind; and that the ſoul, in approaching the æthereal regions, ſhakes off its earthly affections, and already acquires ſomething of their celeſtial purity.—Here, where you ſtand under a ſerene ſky, and behold, with equal ſerenity, the tempeſt and ſtorm forming below your feet: The lightning, darting from cloud to cloud, and the thunder rolling round the mountain, and threatening with deſtruction the poor wretches below; the mind conſiders the little ſtorms of the human paſſions as equally below her notice.—Surely the ſituation alone, is enough to inſpire philoſophy,

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phy, and Empedocles had good reaſon for chuſing it.

But, alas! how vain are all our reaſonings! In the very midſt of theſe meditations, my philoſophy was at once overſet, and in a moment I found myſelf relapſed into a poor miſerable mortal; was obliged to own, that pain was the greateſt of evils; and would have given the world to have been once more arrived at thoſe humble habitations, which but the moment before, I had looked down upon with ſuch contempt.—In running over the ice, my leg folded under me, and I received ſo violent a ſprain, that in a few minutes it ſwelled to a great degree, and I found myſelf unable to put my foot to the ground. Every muſcle and fibre was at that time chilled and froze by the extreme cold, the thermometer continuing ſtill below the point of congelation. It was this circumſtance, I ſuppoſe, that made the pain ſo violent; for

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for I lay a conſiderable time on the ice in great agony: However, in theſe exalted regions, it was impoſſible to have a horſe, or a carriage of any kind; and your poor philoſopher was obliged to hop on one leg, with two men ſupporting him, for ſeveral miles over the ſnow; and our wags here allege, that he left the greateſt part of his philoſophy behind him, for the uſe of Empedocles's heirs and ſucceſſors.

I was happy to get to my mule, but when I once more found myſelf on our bed of leaves in the Spelonca del Capriole, I thought I was in Paradiſe: So true it is, that a removal of pain is the greateſt of pleaſures. The agony I ſuffered, had thrown me into a profuſe ſweat and a fever; however, in an inſtant I fell faſt aſleep, and in an hour and a half, awaked in perfect health. We had an excellent diſh of tea, the moſt refreſhing and agreeable I ever drank in all my life.

We

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We left the ſummit of the mountain about ſix o'clock, and it was eight at night before we reached Catania.—We obſerved, both with pleaſure and pain, the change of the climate as we deſcended.—From the regions of the moſt rigid winter, we ſoon arrived at thoſe of the moſt delightful ſpring. On firſt entering the foreſts, the trees were ſtill bare as in December, not a ſingle leaf to be ſeen; but after we had deſcended a few miles, we found ourſelves in the mildeſt, and the ſofteſt of climates; the trees in full verdure, and the fields covered with all the flowers of the ſummer; but as ſoon as we got out of the woods, and entered the torrid zone, we found the heats altogether inſupportable, and ſuffered dreadfully from them before we reached the city. On the road I ſaw many mountains which I intended to have viſited, but my ſprain put it out of my power. One of the moſt remarkable is called the *Monte Pelluſe*, the lava of which deſtroyed the great aqueduct of

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of Catania for eighteen miles. It has here and there left a few arches; but nothing of any conſequence.

Not far from this mountain ſtands the *Monte Victoria*, one of the moſt beautiful of all the numerous family of Ætna. It is of a pretty large ſize, and perfectly regular, and ſeems to be in the gayeſt dreſs of any. Many of its trees, which, at a diſtance, we took to be oranges and citrons, appeared to be in full blow. It was the lava of this mountain that is ſaid to have covered up the port of Ulyſſes, which is now three miles diſtant from the ſea; but I ſhould ſuppoſe this eruption to have been much older than either Ulyſſes or Troy.

On our arrival at Catania, we went immediately to bed, being exceedingly oppreſſed by the fatigue of our expedition; but ſtill more by the violent heat of the day: A day, in which, I think, I have enjoyed

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enjoyed a greater degree of pleaſure, and ſuffered a greater degree of pain, than in any other day of my life.

As my leg continues very much ſwelled, I am ſtill confined to my room, and moſtly, indeed, to my bed, from whence I have written you the greateſt part of theſe two epiſtles, the enormous length of which I am aſhamed of. However, as I have ſtill omitted ſeveral articles, that I intended to take notice of, I ſhall add a ſequel to-morrow; and ſo conclude my account of mount Ætna. Had it not been for this abominable ſprain, that holds me faſt by the foot, you probably had not got off ſo eaſily; but I am obliged to drop all farther thoughts of climbing mountains, though there are many things I ſtill wanted to examine. Adieu.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XI.

Catania, May 30th.

WE took care to regulate two barometers at the foot of the mountain. One of which was left with the Canonico Recupero, and the other we carried along with us. The former our friend assures us, had no sensible variation during our absence. We both left it and found it at 29 inches 8 lines and a half, English measure. On our arrival at Catania, the one we carried up with us had risen again exactly to the same point.

I have likewise a good quick-silver thermometer, which I borrowed from the Neapolitan philosopher, the Padre della Torre, who furnished us with letters for this place, and would have accompanied us, could he have

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have obtained leave of the king. It is made by Adams at London, and (as I myſelf proved) exactly graduated from the two points of freezing and boiling water. It is upon Farenheit's ſcale. I ſhall mark the heights in the different regions of Ætna, with the rules for eſtimating the elevation of mountains by the barometer, which, I am ſorry to ſay, have been hitherto ſo very ill aſcertained. Caſſini, Boguer, and the others who have written on the ſubject, to the reproach of ſcience, differing ſo much amongſt themſelves, that it is with difficulty we can come near the truth.

Ætna has been often meaſured, but I believe never with any degree of accuracy; and it is really a ſhame to the ſociety eſtabliſhed in this place, called the Ætnean academy, whoſe original inſtitution was to ſtudy the nature and operations of this wonderful mountain. It was my full intention to have meaſured it geometrically; but

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but I am ſorry to ſay, although this is both the ſeat of an academy and univerſity, yet there was no quadrant to be had. Of all the mountains I have ever ſeen, Ætna would be the eaſieſt to meaſure, and with the greateſt certainty, and perhaps the propereſt place on the globe to eſtabliſh an exact rule of menſuration by the barometer. There is a beach of a vaſt extent, that begins exactly at the foot of the mountain, and runs for a great many miles along the coaſt. The ſea-mark of this beach forms the meridian to the ſummit of the mountain. Here you are ſure of a perfect level, and may make the baſe of your triangle of what length you pleaſe. But unfortunately this menſuration has never been executed, at leaſt with any tolerable degree of preciſion.

Kircher pretends to have meaſured it, and to have found it 4000 French toiſes in

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height; which is more than any of the Andes, or indeed than any mountain upon earth. The Italian mathematicians are ſtill more abſurd. Some of them make it eight miles, ſome ſix, and ſome four. Amici, the laſt, and I believe the beſt who has made the attempt, reduces it to three miles, 264 paces; but even this muſt be exceedingly erroneous; and probably the perpendicular height of Ætna does not exceed 12000 feet, or little more than two miles. I ſhall mark the different methods of determining heights by the barometer; and you may chuſe which you pleaſe. I believe the allowance in all of them, particularly in great elevations, where the air is ſo exceedingly thin and light, is much too ſmall. Mikeli, whoſe menſurations are eſteemed more exact, has ever found it ſo. Caſſini allows, I think, ten French toiſes of elevation, for every line of mercury, adding one foot to the firſt ten, two to the ſecond,

three

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three to the third, and ſo on: But ſurely the weight of the air diminiſhes in a much greater proportion.

Boguer takes the difference of the logarithms of the height of the barometer in lines (ſuppoſing theſe logarithms to conſiſt only of five figures); from this difference he takes away a 30th part, and what remains he ſuppoſes to be the difference of elevation. I do not recollect his reaſon for this ſuppoſition; but the rule ſeems to be ſtill more erroneous than the other, and has been entirely laid aſide. I am told, that accurate experiments have been made at Geneva, to eſtabliſh the menſuration with the barometer; but I have not yet been able to procure them. Mr. de la Hire allows twelve toiſes, four feet for the line of mercury: And Picart, one of the moſt exact of the French academicians, fourteen toiſes, or about ninety Engliſh feet.

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Height of Farenheit's Thermometer.

At Catania, May 26, at mid-day	76
Ditto, May 27, at five in the morning - - - -	72
At Nicoloſi, 12 miles up the mountain, mid-day - - -	73
At the cave, called Spelonca del Capriole, in the ſecond region, where there was ſtill a conſiderable quantity of ſnow, at ſeven at night - - -	61
In the ſame cave at half an hour paſt eleven - - -	52
At the Torre del Filoſofo, in the third region, at three in the morning - - - -	34½
At the foot of the crater of Ætna -	33
About half-way up the crater -	29
On the ſummit of Ætna, a little before ſun-riſe - - -	27

Height

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Height of the barometer in inches and lines.

At the ſea-ſide at Catania - -	29	8½
At the village of Piedmonte, in the firſt region of Ætna - -	27	8
At Nicoloſi, in the ſame region	27	1½
At the Caſtagno de Cento Cavalli, in the ſecond region - -	26	5½
At the Spelonca del Capriole, in the ſecond region - -	24	2
At the Torre del Filoſofo, in the third region - - -	20	5
At the foot of the crater -	20	4½
Within about 300 yards of the ſummit - - -	19	6½
At the ſummit of Ætna (ſuppoſed to be about) - - -	19	4

The wind at the ſummit was ſo violent that I could not make the obſervation with perfect exactneſs; however, I am pretty certain that it was within half a line.

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I own I did not believe we ſhould find Ætna ſo high. I had heard indeed that it was higher than any of the Alps, but I never gave credit to it:—How great then was my aſtoniſhment to find that the mercury fell almoſt two inches lower than I had ever obſerved it on the very higheſt of the acceſſible Alps; at the ſame time I am perſuaded there are many inacceſſible points of the Alps, particularly (Mont Blanc) that are ſtill much higher than Ætna.

I found the magnetical needle greatly agitated near the ſummit of the mountain; (the Padre della Torre told me, he had made the ſame obſervation on Veſuvius) however, it always fixed at the north point, though it took longer time in fixing than below. But what Recupero told me happened to him, was very ſingular.—Soon after the eruption 1755, he placed his compaſs on the lava. The needle, he ſays, to his

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his great aſtoniſhment, was agitated with much violence for ſome conſiderable time, till at laſt it entirely loſt its magnetical power, ſtanding indiſcriminately at every point of the compaſs; and this it never after recovered, till it was again touched with the loadſtone.

The wind, and my unfortunate ſprain together, in a great meaſure prevented our electrical experiments, on which we had built not a little; however, I found that round Nicoloſi, and particularly on the top of Monpelieri, the air was in a very favourable ſtate for electrical operations. Here the little pith balls, when inſolated, were ſenſibly affected, and repelled each other above an inch. I expected this electrical ſtate of the air would have increaſed as we advanced on the mountain; but at the cave where we ſlept, I could obſerve no ſuch effect. Perhaps, it was owing to the exhalations from the trees

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and vegetables, which are there exceedingly luxuriant; whereas about Nicolosi, and round Monpelieri, there is hardly any thing but lava and dry hot sand.—Or perhaps it might be owing to the evening being farther advanced, and the dews beginning to fall. However, I have no doubt, that upon these mountains formed by eruption, where the air is strongly impregnated with sulphureous effluvia, great electrical discoveries might be made. And perhaps, of all the reasons assigned for the wonderful vegetation that is performed on this mountain, there is none that contributes so much towards it, as this constant electrical state of the air: For from a variety of experiments it has been found, that an increase of the electrical matter adds much to the progress of vegetation. It probably acts there in the same manner as on the animal body;—the circulation we know is performed quicker; and the juices are driven through the small vessels with

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with more eaſe and celerity. This has often been proved from the immediate removal of obſtructions by electricity;—and probably the rubbing with dry and warm flannel, eſteemed ſo efficacious in ſuch caſes, is doing nothing more than exciting a greater degree of electricity in the part; but it has likewiſe been demonſtrated, by the common experiment of making water drop through a ſmall capillary ſyphon, which the moment it is electrified runs in a full ſtream.—I have, indeed, very little doubt, that the fertility of our ſeaſons depends as much on this quality in the air, as either on its heat or moiſture.

Electricity will probably ſoon be conſidered as the great vivifying principle of nature, by which ſhe carries on moſt of her operations.—It is a fifth element, diſtinct from, and of a ſuperior nature to the other four, which only compoſe the corporeal parts of matter: But this ſubtile and active

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active fluid is a kind of ſoul that pervades and quickens every particle of it.—When an equal quantity of this is diffuſed through the air, and over the face of the earth, every thing continues calm and quiet; but if by any accident one part of matter has acquired a greater quantity than another, the moſt dreadful conſequences often enſue before the equilibrium can be reſtored.—Nature ſeems to fall into convulſions, and many of her works are deſtroyed:—All the great phænomena are produced; thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and whirlwinds: For, I believe, there is little doubt, that all theſe frequently depend on this ſole cauſe. And again, if we look down from the ſublime of nature to its minutiæ, we ſhall ſtill find the ſame power acting, though perhaps in leſs legible characters; for as the knowledge of its operations is ſtill in its infancy, they are generally miſunderſtood, or aſcribed to ſome other cauſe. However, I have no

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doubt, that in proceſs of time theſe will be properly inveſtigated; when mankind will wonder how much they have been in the dark. It will then poſſibly be found, that what we call ſenſibility of nerves, and many of thoſe diſeaſes that the faculty have as yet only invented names for, are owing to the body's being poſſeſſed of too large or too ſmall a quantity of this ſubtile and active fluid; that very fluid, perhaps, that is the vehicle of all our feelings; and which they have ſo long ſearched for in vain in the nerves: For I have ſometimes been led to think, that this ſenſe was nothing elſe than a ſlighter kind of electric effect, to which the nerves ſerve as conductors; and that it is by the rapid circulation of this penetrating and animating fire that our ſenſations are performed. We all know, that in damp and hazy weather, when it ſeems to be blunted and abſorbed by the humidity; when its activity is loſt, and little or none of it can be collected;

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collected; we ever find our ſpirits more languid, and our ſenſibility leſs acute: but in the Sirocc wind at Naples, when the air ſeems totally deprived of it, the whole ſyſtem is unſtrung, and the nerves ſeem to loſe both their tenſion and elaſticity, till the north or weſt wind awakens the activity of this animating power, which ſoon reſtores the tone, and enlivens all nature, which ſeemed to droop and languiſh during its abſence.

It is likewiſe well known, that there have been inſtances of the human body becoming electric without the mediation of any electric ſubſtance, and even emitting ſparks of fire with a diſagreeable ſenſation, and an extreme degree of nervous ſenſibility.

About ſeven or eight years ago, a lady in Switzerland was affected in this manner, and though I was not able to learn all the particulars of her caſe, yet ſeveral Swiſs gentlemen

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gentlemen have confirmed to me the truth of the ſtory.—She was uncommonly ſenſible of every change of weather, and had her electrical feelings ſtrongeſt in a clear day, or during the paſſage of thunder-clouds, when the air is known to be replete with that fluid. Her caſe, like moſt others which the doctors can make nothing of, was decided to be a *nervous* one; for the real meaning of that term I take to be only, that the phyſician does not underſtand what it is.

Two gentlemen of Geneva had a ſhort experience of the ſame ſort of complaint, though ſtill in a much ſuperior degree.—Profeſſor Sauſſure and young Mr. Jalabert, when travelling over one of the high Alps, were caught amongſt thunder-clouds; and to their utter aſtoniſhment, found their bodies ſo full of electrical fire, that ſpontaneous flaſhes darted from their fingers with a crackling noiſe, and the ſame kind of ſenſation

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ſation as when ſtrongly electrified by art.—This was communicated by Mr. Jalabert to the Academy of Sciences at Paris, I think, in the year 1763; and you will find it recorded in their memoirs.

It ſeems pretty evident, I think, that theſe feelings were owing to the bodies being poſſeſſed of too great a ſhare of electric fire. This is an uncommon caſe; but I do not think it at all improbable, that many of our invalids, particularly the hypochondriac, and thoſe we call *Malades Imaginaires*, owe their diſagreeable feelings to the oppoſite cauſe, or the bodies being poſſeſſed of too ſmall a quantity of this fire; for we find that a diminution of it in the air ſeldom fails to increaſe their uneaſy ſenſations, and *vice verſa*.

Perhaps it might be of ſervice to theſe people to wear ſome electric ſubſtance next their ſkin, to defend the nerves and fibres from

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from the damp, or non-electric air.—I would propoſe a waiſtcoat of the fineſt flannel, which ſhould be kept perfectly clean and dry; for the effluvia of the body, in caſe of any violent perſpiration, will ſoon deſtroy its electric quality: This ſhould be covered by another of the ſame ſize of ſilk. The animal heat, and the friction that exerciſe muſt occaſion betwixt theſe two ſubſtances, produce a powerful electricity; and would form a kind of electric atmoſphere around the body, that might poſſibly be one of the beſt preſervatives againſt the effect of damps.

As for our Swiſs lady, I have little doubt that her complaints were owing in great part, perhaps entirely, to her dreſs; and that a very ſmall alteration, almoſt in any part of it, would effectually have cured her. A lady who has her head ſurrounded with wires, and her hair ſtuck full of metal pins,

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pins, and who at the ſame time ſtands upon dry ſilk, is to all intents and purpoſes an electrical conductor inſolated, and prepared for collecting the fire from the atmoſphere: And it is not at all ſurprizing, that during thunder-ſtorms, or when the air is extremely replete with electrical matter, ſhe ſhould emit ſparks, and exhibit other appearances of electricity.—I imagine a very trifling change of dreſs, which from the conſtant verſatility of their modes may ſome day take place, would render this lady's diſeaſe altogether epidemical amongſt the ſex. —Only let the ſoles of their ſhoes be made of an electric ſubſtance, and let the wires of their caps, and pins of their hair, be ſomewhat lengthened and pointed outwards; and I think there is little doubt, that they will often find themſelves in an electrified ſtate:—But, indeed, if they only wear ſilk, or even worſted ſtockings, it may ſometimes prove ſufficient; for I have often inſolated electrometers as perfectly by pla-

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cing them on a piece of dry ſilk or flannel, as on glaſs.

How little do our ladies imagine, when they ſurround their heads with wire, the moſt powerful of all conductors; and at the ſame time wear ſtockings, ſhoes, and gowns of ſilk, one of the moſt powerful repellents, that they prepare their bodies in the ſame manner, and according to the ſame principles as electricians prepare their conductors for attracting the fire of lightning! If they cannot be brought to relinquiſh their wire caps and their pins, might they not fall upon ſome ſuch preſervative as thoſe which of late years have been applied to objects of leſs conſequence?

Suppoſe that every lady ſhould provide herſelf with a ſmall chain or wire, to be hooked on at pleaſure during thunder-ſtorms. This ſhould paſs from her cap over

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the thickeſt part of her hair, which will prevent the fire from being communicated to her head; and ſo down to the ground. —It is plain this will act in the ſame manner as the conductors on the tops of ſteeples, which from the metal ſpires that are commonly placed there, analogous to the pins and wires, were ſo liable to accidents. You may laugh at all this; but I aſſure you I never was more ſerious in my life. A very amiable lady of my acquaintance, Mrs. Douglas, of Kelſo, had almoſt loſt her life by one of thoſe caps mounted on wire. She was ſtanding at an open window during a thunder-ſtorm: The lightning was attracted by the wire, and the cap was burnt to aſhes; happily her hair was in its natural ſtate, without powder, pomatum, or pins; and prevented the fire from being conducted to her head; for as ſhe felt no kind of ſhock, it is probable that it went off from the wires of the cap to the wall, cloſe to which ſhe then ſtood. If it had found

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found any conductor to carry it to her head or body, in all probability she must have been killed.—A good strong head of hair, if it is kept perfectly clean and dry, is probably one of the best preservatives against the fire of lightning. But so soon as it is stuffed full of powder and pomatum, and bound together with pins, its repellent force is lost, and it becomes a conductor *. —But I beg pardon for these surmises: I throw

* Since the writing of these letters, the author has made some experiments on the electricity of hair; which tend still to convince him the more of what he has advanced. A lady had told him, that on combing her hair in frosty weather, in the dark, she had sometimes observed sparks of fire to issue from it. This made him think of attempting to collect the electrical fire from hair alone, without the assistance of any other electrical apparatus. To this end, he desired a young lady to stand on a cake of bees-wax, and to comb her sister's hair, who was sitting on a chair before her.—Soon after she began to comb, the young lady on the wax was greatly astonished to find her whole body electrified; darting out sparks of fire against

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I throw them in your way only for you to improve upon at your leiſure: For we have it ever in our power to be making experiments in electricity. And although this fluid is the moſt ſubtile and active of any we know, we can command it on all occaſions; and I am now ſo accuſtomed to its operations, that I ſeldom comb my hair, or pull off a ſtocking, without obſerving them under ſome form or other. How ſurpriſing is it then, that mankind ſhould have lived and breathed in it for ſo many

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every object that approached her. The hair was extremely electrical, and affected an electrometer at a very great diſtance: He charged a metal conductor from it with great eaſe; and in the ſpace of a few minutes collected as much fire immediately from the hair, as to kindle common ſpirits; and by means of a ſmall phial gave many ſmart ſhocks to all the company. A full account of theſe experiments was lately read before the Royal Society. They were made during the time of a very hard froſt, and on a ſtrong head of hair, where no powder or pomatum had been uſed for many months.

thouſand

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thouſand years, without almoſt ever ſuppoſing that it exiſted! But to return to our mountain.

Recupero told me he had obſerved the ſame phænomenon here that is common in the eruptions of mount Veſuvius, viz. red forked lightning darting from the ſmoke, without being followed by the noiſe of thunder. The reaſon poſſibly is, that the crater and ſmoke is at that time ſo highly electrical, that like a cylinder or globe, heated by friction, it throws off ſpontaneous flaſhes into the air, without being brought into the attraction of any conductor, or body leſs electric than itſelf; (indeed the ſpontaneous diſcharges from a good electrical globe, often bear a perfect reſemblance to this kind of lightning:) however, if a non-electric cloud were to paſs near the crater at that time, the craſh of thunder would probably be very violent, which indeed is often the caſe when the air is full

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of wet clouds in the time of an eruption; but when this does not happen, the equilibrium is probably reſtored by degrees, and without any ſhock, from the ſurplus of electrical matter being gradually communicated to the earth and ſea all around the mountain; the immenſe lavas that have run from it, ſerving as conductors.

So highly electric is the vapour of volcanos, that it has been obſerved in ſome eruptions both of Ætna and Veſuvius, that the whole track of ſmoke, which ſometimes extended above 100 miles, produced the moſt dreadful effects; killing ſhepherds and flocks on the mountains; blaſting trees, and ſetting fire to houſes; wherever it met with them on an elevated ſituation. Now probably the flying of a kite, with a wire round its ſtring, would ſoon have diſarmed this formidable cloud. Theſe effects, however, only happen when the air is dry and little agitated, but when it is full of moiſt

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moiſt vapour, the great rarefaction from the heat of the lava generally brings it down in violent torrents of rain, which ſoon convey the electrical matter from the clouds to the earth, and reſtores the equilibrium.

As Recupero, who is a facetious and an agreeable companion, was kind enough to ſit a good deal with me during my confinement, I have gathered many remarks from his converſation, that may perhaps be worthy of your attention.

The variety of waters about Ætna, he tells me, is ſurpriſing. I have already mentioned the Fiume Freddo, or the river of Acis: Recupero confirms what I had been told of it. There is a lake on the north of the mountain, of about three miles in circumference, which receives ſeveral conſiderable rivers; yet, although there is no apparent outlet, it never overflows its

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banks. I ſuggeſted the probability of a ſubterraneous communication betwixt this and the Fiume Freddo. He ſaid there was no reſemblance in the quality of their waters; however, I think it is probable, that in a courſe of ſo many miles, through the caverns of Ætna, full of ſalts and minerals, it may acquire both its cold and its vitriolic qualities.

There is another lake on the top of a mountain to the weſt of Ætna, the bottom of which could never be found. It is obſerved never either to riſe or fall, but always to preſerve the ſame level. It is undoubtedly the crater of that mountain (which is all of burnt matter) converted into a lake. The river which ſupplies the baths of Catania is of a very different nature: It never continues the ſame, but is perpetually changing. Its current is for the moſt part confined under ground by the lavas; but ſometimes it burſts out with

ſuch

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ſuch violence that the city has ſuffered greatly from it; and what is ſtill more unfortunate, theſe eruptions are generally followed by ſome epidemical diſtemper. It has now been conſtantly diminiſhing for theſe two years paſt, and is at preſent almoſt reduced to nothing. They are in perpetual dread of its breaking out, and laying waſte their fields, as it has ſo often done before. What is ſingular, it generally burſts out after a long tract of the drieſt and warmeſt weather. The Ætnean academy have never been able to account for this circumſtance. I think it is moſt probable that it ariſes from the melting of the ſnow on Ætna, but I ſhall not pretend to ſay how.—Theſe, perhaps, over-filling the caverns that uſually receive their water, the ſurplus is carried off into this river.

The river of Alcantara certainly takes its riſe from the melting of theſe ſnows. Its waters,

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waters, I obſerved, are of the ſame whitiſh colour as all the rivers are, that run from the Glacieres amongſt the Alps. There are ſeveral periodical ſprings on Ætna, that flow only during the day, and ſtop during the night. Theſe are naturally and eaſily accounted for from the melting of the ſnow; for it melts only during the day, being hard frozen every night, even in the hotteſt ſeaſon. There are likewiſe a variety of poiſonous ſprings, ſome of ſo deadly a quality, that birds and beaſts have been found lying dead on their banks, from having drunk of their water. But (what is perhaps ſtill more ſingular) Recupero told me, that about twenty years ago, a rent opened in the mountain, that for a conſiderable time ſent forth ſo mephitic a vapour, that like the lake Avernus, birds were ſuffocated in flying over it.

There are many caverns where the air is ſo extremely cold, that it is impoſſible to

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ſupport it for any time. Theſe the peaſants make uſe of as reſervoirs for the ſnow; and indeed they make the fineſt ice-houſes in the world, preſerving it hard frozen during the hotteſt ſummers. It would be endleſs to give an account of all the caverns, and other curious appearances about Ætna. Kircher ſpeaks of a cave which he ſaw, capable, he ſays, of containing 30,000 men. Here, he adds, numbers of people have been loſt from their temerity in going too far. One of theſe caverns ſtill retains the name of Proſerpine, from its being ſuppoſed by the ancients, the paſſage by which Pluto conveyed her into his dominions; on this occaſion Ovid deſcribes Ceres, as ſearching for her daughter, with two trees which ſhe had plucked from the mountain, and lighted by way of torches. Theſe he calls Teda, which is ſtill the name of a tree, I have ſeen no where but on mount Ætna. It produces a great quantity of roſin, and was ſurely the moſt proper

tree

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tree Ceres could have pitched upon for her purpoſe. This roſin is called *Catalana*, and is eſteemed a cure for ſores.

I have mentioned the great variety of flowers, trees, &c. on mount Ætna. I have found a long liſt of them in Maſſa; but as I am not acquainted with their Sicilian names, I can make little out of it. I have engaged a perſon here to procure me a collection of their ſeeds in the ſeaſon. I find of the number, the cinnamon, ſarſaparilla, ſaſſafras, rhubarb, and many others that I thought had not been natives of Europe. The Palma Chriſti too, that plant ſo much celebrated of late, from the ſeed of which the caſtor oil is made, grows both here and in many other places of Sicily, in the greateſt abundance. Our botaniſts have called it Ricinus Americanus, ſuppoſing it only to be produced in that part of the world. A Bath phyſician, I remember, has lately written a treatiſe on this plant,

and

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and the virtues of the oil extracted from its ſeed, which he makes a ſort of Catholicon. You may believe we ſhall not leave Sicily without providing ourſelves with a quantity of this precious ſeed.

Mount Ætna, I find, is as much celebrated by the ancients as the moderns, for the variety of its odoriferous productions. Plutarch ſays, their ſmell was ſo ſtrong, that on many places of the mountain it was impoſſible to hunt. I ſhall tranſcribe the paſſage as it is before me in an old tranſlation I have borrowed: "Circum Ætnam "in Sicilia neminem ferunt cum canibus "venatum iri; quia enim multos perpetuo "illic ut in viridario prata, colleſque flores "mittunt a fragrantia, quæ eam oram occu-"pat, obfuſcare ferarum anhelationes, &c." Ariſtotle has likewiſe a paſſage to the very ſame purpoſe; but this may ſuffice.

There

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There were formerly a variety of wild beaſts in the woody regions of Ætna; but notwithſtanding this advantage they had over the dogs and hunters, the number of theſe is now greatly reduced.—They have ſtill however the wild boar, the roebuck, and a kind of wild goat; but the race of ſtags, which was much celebrated, as well as that of bears, is thought to be extinct. Several places of the mountain are ſtill named from thoſe animals.

The horſes and cattle of mount Ætna were eſteemed the beſt in Sicily. The cattle are ſtill of a large ſize, and have horns of ſuch a length, that they are preſerved as curioſities in ſome muſeums. The horſes, I am afraid, have degenerated.

There are ſaid to be quantities of porcupines and land tortoiſes on ſome parts of Ætna; but we had not the good fortune to meet with any of them. Neither did we

ſee

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ſee any eagles or vultures, which are likewiſe ſaid to be inhabitants of this mountain.

The accounts given of mount Ætna by the old Sicilian authors, (ſeveral of whom I have borrowed from Recupero) are very various. Some of them deſcribe the hollow of the crater as being ſeven or eight miles in circumference, ſome make it five, and others only three: And probably all of them are right; for I find, by all their accounts, that generally once in about 100 years, the whole crater has fallen down into the bowels of the mountain: That in proceſs of time, a new crater is ſeen peeping out of the gulph; which, perpetually encreaſing by the matter thrown up, is by degrees raiſed again to its ancient height, till at laſt becoming too heavy for its hollow foundations, it again gives way, and at once ſinks down into the mountain. This happened about 100 years ago, in the

year

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year 1669, as recorded by Borelli, whoſe account of it I have before me. "Univer-
"ſum cacumen, quod ad inſtar ſpeculæ,
"ſeu turris, ad ingentem altitudinem ele-
"vabatur, quod una cum vaſta planitie
"arenoſa depreſſa, atque abſorpta eſt in
"profundam voraginem," &c. The ſame likewiſe happened in the year 1536, as recorded by Fazzello and Filoteo; and in the years 1444, 1329, and 1157. Of all theſe I have read an account; but probably betwixt the two laſt mentioned, there has been another that is not recorded, as the intervals betwixt all the reſt are pretty nearly equal.

Some of them give a dreadful account of it. Folcando, one of their hiſtorians tells us, it ſhook the whole iſland, and reſounded through all its ſhores. And their poet Errico ſays, on the ſame occaſion:

"*S'ode*

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" *S'ode il ſuo gran mugito*
" *Per mille piagge e lidi.*"
" The bellowing dire a thouſand lands reſound,
" Whoſe trembling ſhores return the dreadful
" ſound."

In all probability, this event will very ſoon happen, as the circumference of the crater is no-where recorded to have been reduced to leſs than three miles; and Recupero ſays, it is at preſent only three miles and a half; beſides, 100 years, the common period, has now elapſed ſince its laſt fall.

There are many ſtories of people periſhing by their temerity, in being too curious ſpectators of the eruptions of this mountain; but there are ſtill many more, of thoſe that have been miraculouſly ſaved by the interpoſition of ſome ſaint or the virgin, who are ſuppoſed to be in a perpetual ſtate of warfare with the devils in mount Ætna. That part of the iſland where Ætna ſtands, has ever been named *il Val Demoni*,

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from the frequent apparitions of theſe devils. It makes one third of the iſland. The other two are named the *Val di Noto*, and the *Val di Mazzara*.

There is one ſtory, though a very old one, that is ſtill related at Catania; it is taken notice of by Seneca, Ariſtotle, Strabo, and others. In the time of a great eruption, when the fire was pouring down upon the city, and every one was carrying off his moſt valuable effects; two rich brothers, named *Anſinomus* and *Anapias*, neglecting all their wealth, eſcaped from the conflagration with their aged parents on their backs. Theſe authors add, that the fire, reſpecting ſuch filial piety, ſpared them, whilſt many others that took the ſame road were conſumed.

This action has been wonderfully extolled, and proves, I think, that feats of this kind were by no means common in thoſe

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thoſe days.—Now, pray, don't you think, in the world at preſent, bad as it is ſuppoſed to be, there are few ſons, who would not have acted in the ſame manner? and ſure I am, the reſt of mankind would not have made ſuch a fuſs about it. Humanity and natural affection, I believe, in thoſe ages we are inclined to extol ſo much, were not by many degrees ſo powerful as they are at preſent.—Even the pious Æneas himſelf, one of the moſt renowned of all their heroes, was in effect but a ſavage, notwithſtanding all that Virgil ſays to perſuade us of the contrary; for you find him ſacrificing his weak and captive enemies, at the ſame time that he is canting and preaching up piety and juſtice.

Theſe two brothers were ſo celebrated for this action, that there was a diſpute betwixt Syracuſe and Catania, which of theſe cities had given them birth; and temples were erected in both of them,

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dedicated to Filial Piety, in memory of the event.

In the accounts of the more recent deſtructions of Catania, there occurs no inſtance of this ſort.—We find them only lamenting the loſs of prieſts and nuns, and very much out of humour at their ſaints, for allowing the devils to get the better of them. I have been a good deal entertained with ſome of thoſe authors.—Selvaggio, one of their poets, ſpeaking of the terrible earthquake in the year 1169, that deſtroyed Catania, and buried multitudes of people in the ruins, deſcribes it in the following manner, which may ſerve as a ſpecimen of the poetry of that time:

" Cataneam doleo, dolor eſt miſerabile dictu:
Clara potens antiqua fuit; plebe, milite, clero,
Divitiis, auro, ſpecie, virtute, triumphis.
Heu terræ motu ruit illa potentia rerum!
Morte ruit juvenis, moritur vir ſponſa, maritus.

Unde

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Unde ſuperbit homo? Deus una diruit hora
Turres, ornatus, veſtes, cunctoſque paratus.
In tanto gemitu periit pars maxima gentis,
Proh dolor! et monachi quadraginta quatuor et plus:
Et periit paſtor patriæ, pater ipſe Johannes
Pontificalis honor, lux regni ſic periere."

But another, Guſtanavilla, one of their hiſtorians, gives a very different account of this affair; as it is likewiſe ſomewhat curious in its way, I ſhall copy it for your amuſement: "In omnem terram, et in "fines orbis terræ jam exiit plaga illa, qua "nuper in Sicilia percuſſi ſunt Catanenſes "in vigilia B. Agathæ; cum epiſcopus ille "damnatiſſimus, qui, ſicut ſcitis, ſibi ſumpſit "honorem, non vocatus a Domino, tan-"quam Aaron, et qui ad ſedem illam, non "electione canonica, ſed Giezitică venalita-"te intravit; cum, inquam abominationis "offerret incenſum, intonuit de cœlo Do-"minus, et ecce terræ motus factus eſt "magnus; angelus enim Domini percu-

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" tiens epiſcopum in furore Domini cum " populo, et univerſa civitate ſubvertit."

He adds, that if St. Agatha's veil had not been produced, the angel of the Lord was in ſuch a fury, that he would not have left one ſoul alive.

There is a curious painting of the great eruption 1669, in the cathedral of this place. It is but indifferently painted, but gives a dreadful idea of that event. Borrelli, who was upon the ſpot, deſcribes it.—He ſays, on the 11th of March, ſometime before the lava burſt out, after violent earthquakes and dreadful ſubterraneous bellowing, a rent was opened in the mountain twelve miles long; in ſome places of which, when they threw down ſtones, they could not hear them ſtrike the bottom. He ſays, that burning rocks, ſixty palms in length, were thrown to the diſtance of a mile; and that the giants, ſuppoſed to be buried under

mount

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mount Ætna, ſeemed to have renewed their war againſt heaven: That ſtones of a leſſer ſize were carried upwards of three miles; and that the thunder and lightning from the ſmoke, was ſcarce leſs terrible than the noiſe of the mountain. He adds, that after the moſt violent ſtruggles and ſhaking of the whole iſland, when the lava at laſt burſt through, it ſprung up into the air to the height of ſixty palms.—In ſhort, he deſcribes that event, as well as the univerſal terror and conſternation it occaſioned, in terms full of horror.—For many weeks the ſun did not appear, and the day ſeemed to be changed into night.—Soon after the lava got vent, which was not till four months from the time that the mountain began to labour, all theſe dreadful ſymptoms abated, and it was ſoon after perfectly quiet.

He ſays, this deluge of fire, after deſtroying the fineſt country in Sicily, and

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ſweeping away churches, villages, and convents, broke over the lofty walls of Catania, and covered up five of its baſtions with the intervening curtains. From thence pouring down on the city, it deſtroyed every object it met with, overwhelming and burying all in one promiſcuous ruin.

What he regrets moſt, was ſome precious remains of antiquity; the names, the ſituation, and even the memory of whoſe exiſtence, is now loſt in the place. He mentions an amphitheatre, which he calls *Colliſeo*, the *Circus Maximus*, the *Naumachia*, and ſeveral temples.

An account of this great eruption was ſent to Charles II. by Lord Winchelſea, who was then returning from his embaſſy at Conſtantinople, and ſtopped here on purpoſe to ſee ſo remarkable an event. But his lordſhip has not been at that pains to examine it we could have wiſhed. His curioſity

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curioſity was ſatisfied in one day; and he ſeems to have been contented only to look at the lava at a great diſtance; but did not think of examining its ſource, or aſcending the mountain, although at that time all the moſt formidable circumſtances of the eruption were already over.

I ſhould not finiſh this account of mount Ætna, without ſaying ſomething of the various fables and allegories to which it has given riſe; but it would probably lead me into too vaſt a field, and give this more the air of a diſſertation than a letter or a journal. Theſe you will eaſily recollect. They have afforded ample employment for the muſe, in all ages, and in all languages; and indeed the philoſopher and natural hiſtorian have found, in the real properties of this mountain, as ample a fund of ſpeculation, as the poets have done in the fictitious.—It is ſo often mentioned by the

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ancient writers, that it has been ſaid of Ætna as well as of Greece:

"Nullum eſt ſine nomine ſaxum."

Indeed, I am afraid this ſaying was much more applicable to it formerly than it is at preſent; for we even found ſeveral large mountains that had no name; and it does not at all appear, that the number of philoſophers in Sicily have by any means increaſed in the later ages. Their ambition is now changed; and if they can get a ſaint to keep the devils of Ætna in order, they trouble themſelves very little about the cauſe of its operations; and do not value their iſland half ſo much for having given birth to Archimedes or Empedocles, as to St. Agatha and St. Roſolia.

The ancients, as well as the moderns, ſeem ever to have conſidered Ætna as one of the higheſt mountains on the globe. There

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There are many paſſages in their authors that ſhew this; though, perhaps, none more ſtrongly than their making Deucalion and Pyrrha take refuge on the top of it, to ſave themſelves from the univerſal deluge *.

I ſhall now conclude this long account of mount Ætna with Virgil's celebrated deſcription of it in the third Æneid, which has been ſo much admired. You may compare it with the following deſcription of the famous poet Raitano, held, I aſſure you, in full as high eſtimation by the Sicilians.

" Nel mezzo verſo l'ethere avviccina
Ætna la fronte ſua cinta di orrori,
E con iſpavantevole rovina
Rimbomba, e con orribili fragori.

* Cataclyſmus, quod nos diluvium dicimus, cum factus eſt, omne genus humanum interiit præter Deucalionem et Pyrrham, qui in montem Ætnam qui altiſſimus in Sicilia eſſe dicitur fugerunt, &c. HIGINUS.

Sovente

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Sovente negri nubi al ciel deſtina
Fumanti di atro turbine, e di ardori,
Ergi globbi di fiamma, e ſu lambiſce
Le ſtelle omai con infuocate ſtriſcie ;
Scogli, e divelte viſcere di monte
Erruttando tal volta avido eſtolle ;
E con gemiti vomita, e con onte
Liquifatti macigni, e in fondo bolle."

So ſings the Sicilian muſe ;—you will not however heſitate to give the preference to the Roman one, although the former is evidently ſtolen from her.

" ———Horrificis juxta tonat Ætna ruinis,
Interdumque atram prorumpit ad æthera nubem,
Turbine fumantem piceo et candente favilla,
Attollitque globos flammarum, et ſidera lambit.
Interdumque ſcopulos, avolſaque viſcera montis
Erigit eructans, liquefactaque ſaxa ſub auras
Cum gemitu glomerat, fundoque exæſtuat imo."

But both theſe have been greatly outdone by the wonderful imagination of our great

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great countryman Sir Richard Blackmore; who accounts at once for the whole phænomena of Ætna, by the ſimple idea of giving the mountain a fit of the colic: A thought that had eſcaped all the poets and philoſophers of antiquity, and ſeems for ever to have been reſerved for the profound genius of this great maſter and father of the Bathos.—I have forgot the paſſage; but you will find it, I think, in prince Arthur.

The philoſophical poet, Lucretius, has likewiſe mentioned the eruptions of mount Ætna; but Pindar is the oldeſt poet we know of, that has taken any notice of them. His deſcription is, I think, the moſt ſatisfactory of all, and conveys a clearer idea both of the mountain itſelf, and an eruption of the mountain, than either the Roman or Sicilian poet, though it is not near ſo much laboured, nor worked

up

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up with all that variety of circumſtances, they have found means to introduce. Its greateſt fault is, that Pindar had ſtill kept in view that abſurd idea of the ancients, that Jupiter had buried the giants under mount Ætna; and that their ſtruggling to get looſe, was the cauſe of its eruptions: But even this he touches but ſlightly, as if aſhamed to give ſuch a reaſon. The paſſage is tranſlated into Engliſh by Mr. Weſt.

"Now under ſmoking Cuma's ſulph'rous coaſt
And vaſt Sicilia, lies his tortur'd breaſt.
By ſnowy Ætna, nurſe of endleſs froſt,
The mighty prop of heaven for ever preſt,
Forth from whoſe flaming caverns iſſuing riſe
Tremendous fountains of pure liquid fire,
Which veil in ruddy miſts the noon-day ſkies
While wrapt in ſmoke the eddying flames aſpire;
Or gleaming thro' the night with hideous roar,
Far o'er the red'ning main huge rocky fragments
pour."

This

This paſſage decides what has been much diſputed, that Ætna was in theſe early ages, of as great an elevation as at preſent. It has been alleged, that volcanos always increaſe in height till they are extinguiſhed, when they are ſuppoſed to moulder down, and by degrees ſink into the caverns that are below them, like the aſtruni, and the ſolfaterra at Naples: However we find that Ætna was at that time as now, covered with eternal ſnows, and was ſuppoſed, like Atlas, to be one of the great props of heaven. But what pleaſes me the moſt in this deſcription is, that it proves beyond the poſſibility of a doubt, that in theſe very remote eruptions, it was common for the lavas of Ætna to run a great way out to ſea.—The concluſion, I think, is fully as juſt, and perhaps not leſs ſublime, than the "avolſaque viſcera montis erigit eructans" of Virgil, which, I muſt own, I think rather

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ther comes too near Sir Richard's fit of the colic.

Thucydides ſpeaks of three eruptions of this mountain; but is not ſo particular as we could have wiſhed. He does not mention the date of the firſt; but ſays, it was the earlieſt after the arrival of the Greeks in Sicily. The ſecond happened about the time of the 77th Olympiad, and the laſt in that of the 88th, which was nearly about the period when Pindar wrote; ſo that we cannot doubt that his deſcription is taken from the accounts he had heard of ſome of thoſe eruptions, the circumſtances of which, no doubt, at that time, had afforded matter of converſation all over Greece.

I think we may now try to take leave of Ætna, though I am afraid, during the remainder of our expedition, we ſhall meet with

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with nothing worthy to ſucceed it.—We ſhall ſail from hence to-morrow morning; and expect to ſleep at Syracuſe, as it is only about fifty miles diſtant. I ſhall write you again from the ruins of that celebrated city. Farewell.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XII.

Syracuſe, June 1ſt.

ON the 31ſt of May we embarked on board a felucca, and ſet ſail for the mighty Syracuſe.—The wind was favourable, and for ſome time we went at a great rate. The view of mount Ætna, for the whole of this little voyage, is wonderfully fine, and the bold black coaſt formed for near thirty miles, of the lava of that immenſe volcano, gives the moſt awful idea of its eruptions. There is no part of this coaſt nearer than thirty miles to its ſummit; and yet there has hardly been any great eruption, where the lava has not reached the ſea, and driven back its waters to a great diſtance, leaving high rocks and promontories, that for ever ſet its waves at defiance, and preſcribe their utmoſt

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utmoſt limits. What a tremendous ſcene muſt the meeting betwixt theſe adverſe elements have formed!

We may eaſily conceive the variety of changes this coaſt has undergone in the ſpace of ſome thouſands of years, as every great eruption muſt have made a conſiderable difference.—Virgil is wonderfully minute and exact in his geography of Sicily; and this is the only part of the iſland that ſeems to be materially altered ſince his time. He ſays there was a very large port at the foot of Ætna, where ſhips were ſecure from every wind;

"Portus ab acceſſu ventorum immotus et
"ingens;"

of which, at preſent, there are not the leaſt remains. It is probably the ſame that was called by the Sicilians the port of Ulyſſes; which is often mentioned by their writers. —The place of its exiſtence is ſtill ſhewn

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betwixt three and four miles up the country, amongſt the lavas of Ætna. However, I can ſee no ſort of reaſon why they have called this the port of Ulyſſes: For ſurely Homer does not bring his hero near the precincts of mount Ætna. Indeed I think it is evident, that this volcano did not burn during the time of Homer, nor for ſome ages preceding it, otherwiſe it is not poſſible, that he would have ſaid ſo much of Sicily, without taking any notice of ſo great and capital an object, which, of all others, the daring and ſublime imagination of Homer would have been the moſt eager to graſp at.—It is evident, from his account, that Ulyſſes landed at the weſt end of Sicily, oppoſite to the iſland of Lachaea, now Favignana, almoſt two hundred miles diſtant from this port.

Virgil, with more judgment, lands his hero at the foot of Ætna, which gives him an opportunity of introducing ſome

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of the fineſt deſcription in the Æneid. But it is ſomewhat odd, that here he makes Æneas find one of Ulyſſes's companions, who had eſcaped the rage of Polyphemus, and had lived for ſeveral months in the woods and caverns of this mountain.—Virgil muſt have been aware of this impropriety, as he well knew that Homer had landed Ulyſſes, and placed the cave of Polyphemus at the moſt diſtant point of the iſland. But he could not prevail on himſelf to paſs mount Ætna. He was ſo thoroughly convinced, that this was the moſt proper landing-place for an epic hero, as well as the moſt proper habitation for the Cyclops, that, by a bold poetical licence, he has fairly taken it for granted, that Homer really made it ſo. Indeed, in this paſſage, the pleaſure he affords to the imagination of his reader, makes an ample amends for his having impoſed on his judgment. But to return to our voyage.

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The view of the mountain from the ſea is more complete and ſatisfactory than any where on the iſland. The eye takes in a greater portion of the circle, and you obſerve, with more diſtinctneſs, how it riſes equally on all ſides, from its immenſe baſe, overſpread with the beautiful little mountains I have mentioned; and at once can trace the progreſs of vegetation from its utmoſt luxuriance, to where it is checked by the two extremes of heat and of cold.—The different regions of the mountain are diſtinctly marked out, by their different colours, and different productions; expoſing at once to the raviſhed eye every climate, and every ſeaſon, with all their variety;

"Where bloſſoms, fruits, and flowers together riſe,
"And the whole year in gay confuſion lies."

The firſt region exhibits every object that characteriſes ſummer and autumn; the ſecond, thoſe of the moſt delightful ſpring; the third, an eternal and unrelenting winter;

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ter; and the fourth, to complete the contraſt, the regions of unextinguiſhable fire.

The circumference of the great baſe of Ætna, Recupero told me, he had been at a good deal of pains to aſcertain; as it had generally been computed only at a hundred miles, or little more, although the radii of that circle had ever been eſteemed at thirty of thoſe miles; an abſurdity in computation that had put him upon making this enquiry. The reſult was, that taking the ſuppoſed diſtances of one place from another, all the way round, the ſum of the whole amounted to one hundred and eighty-three miles: an immenſe circle ſurely, and which is ſtill enlarged by every conſiderable eruption. The whole of this circle is formed of lava and burnt matter; and I have obſerved, that near the very outermoſt borders of it, there have been many little eruptions that have pierced through ſome of the thickeſt lavas of Ætna. Theſe ſmall

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eruptions, at ſo vaſt a diſtance from the great furnace of the mountain, are probably occaſioned by the intenſe heat of the lava, which continues for many years rarifying the air, in the caverns it has run over, which burſting forth from its priſon, the lava ſinks down, and kindling the ſulphur and nitre with which theſe caverns are filled, exhibits in miniature the phænomena of a great eruption.

There is a large ſandy beach that extends from the mouth of the river Simetus, a great way to the ſouth of Catania, and was probably continued the whole way to the foot of the mountain of Taurominum, (where there are ſtill ſome remains of the eaſt end of it) till it was broken in upon, many thouſand years ago, by the lavas of Ætna; which, from a flat ſandy ſhore, have now converted it into a high, bold, black iron coaſt. What is a ſtrong proof of this; —in many places where they have ſunk deep

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deep wells; after piercing through the lava, they have at laſt come to beds of ſhells and ſea ſand.

There is nothing elſe very intereſting in the voyage from Catania to Syracuſe. If you will read the concluſion of the third book of the Æneid, you will find a much better deſcription of it than any I can give you. The coaſt lies low, and, except Ætna, there are no very ſtriking objects.

We paſſed the mouths of ſeveral rivers: The firſt and moſt conſiderable is the Giarretta, or river of St. Paul, formerly the Simetus; and under that name celebrated by the poets. The nymph, Thalia, after her amour with Jupiter, is ſuppoſed to have been changed into this ſtream; and, to avoid the reſentment of Juno, ſunk under ground near mount Ætna, and continued her ſubterraneous courſe to the ſea. This river was navigable in the time

of

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of the Romans, and Maſſa ſays, the only one in the iſland that was ſo.—It takes its riſe on the north ſide of Ætna, and ſurrounding the weſt ſkirts of the mountain, falls into the ſea near the ruins of the antient Morgantio. It no longer ſinks under ground as it did formerly; but it is now celebrated for a quality it does not appear to have poſſeſſed in the times of antiquity, as none of the old writers take notice of it. It throws up near its mouth great quantities of fine amber: This is carefully gathered by the peaſants in the neighbourhood, and brought to Catania, where it is manufactured into the form of croſſes, beads, ſaints, &c. and is ſold at high prices to the ſuperſtitious people on the continent. We bought ſeveral of theſe reſpectable figures, and found them electrical in a high degree; powerfully attracting feathers, ſtraws, and other light bodies; ſomewhat emblematical, you will ſay, of what they repreſent.—Some pieces of this amber contain

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tain flies and other insects curiously preserved in its substance; and we were not a little entertained with the ingenuity of one of the artists, who has left a large blue-bottle-fly, with its wings expanded, exactly over the head of a saint, to represent, he told us, *lo spirito santo* descending upon him. I have got some fine pieces of this amber, more electric, I think, and emitting a stronger smell, than that which comes from the Baltic. The generation of this substance has long been a controverted point amongst naturalists; nor do I believe it is as yet ascertained, whether it is a sea or a land production. It is generally supposed to be a kind of gum or bitumen, that issues from the earth in a liquid state, at which time the flies and other insects that light upon it are caught, and by their struggles to get loose, soon work themselves into its substance, which hardening round them, they are for ever preserved in the greatest perfection. Large fine pieces are constantly found

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found at the mouth of the Simetus, ſuppoſed to have been brought down by the river; but it is ſingular, that none of it is ever found any where but on the ſea-ſhore: They have likewiſe here a kind of artificial amber, made, I am told, from copal; but it is very different from the natural.

Not far from the mouth of this river there are two of the largeſt lakes in Sicily; the Beviere, and the Pantana; the firſt of which is ſuppoſed to have been made by Hercules; in conſequence of which it was held ſacred by the antients. They are full of a variety of fiſh; one ſpecies of which, called Molletti, is much eſteemed: the ſalting and exportation of theſe makes a conſiderable branch of commerce at Leontini, which is in that neighbourhood: that city is one of the moſt antient in the iſland, and is ſuppoſed to have been the habitation of the Leſtrigons.

The

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The Leontine fields have been much famed for their fertility: Both Diodorus and Pliny aſſert that they yielded wheat an hundred-fold, and that grain grew ſpontaneouſly here without culture: But this was only during the reign of Ceres, and is not now the caſe.

In a few hours ſailing we came in ſight of the city of Auguſta, which is beautifully ſituated in a ſmall iſland that was formerly a peninſula: It was therefore called by the Greeks Cherſoneſus. Both the city and fortifications ſeem conſiderable, and are ſaid to contain about 9000 inhabitants. The ruins of the Little Hybla, ſo celebrated for its honey, lie within a few miles of this place.

Some time before our arrival at Syracuſe, it fell a dead calm, and we ſpied a fine turtle faſt aſleep on the ſurface of the water. Our pilot ordered a profound ſilence, and only

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only two oars to row very gently, that if poſſible we might ſurpriſe him.—Every thing was put in order, and two men were placed ready at the prow to ſecure the prize.—We were all attention and expectation, and durſt hardly breathe for fear of diſturbing him.

We moved ſlowly on, and the turtle lay ſtone-ſtill; the two men bent down their bodies, and had their arms already in the water to ſeize him.—No alderman, with all deference be it ſpoken, ever beheld his turtle upon the table with more pleaſure and ſecurity; nor feaſted his imagination more luſciouſly upon the banquet.—He was already our own in idea, and we were only thinking of the various ways in which he ſhould be dreſſed:—When—how vain and tranſitory all human poſſeſſions! the turtle made a plunge, ſlipped through their fingers, and diſappeared in a moment, and with him all our hopes.—We looked very

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fooliſh at each other; without uttering a word, till Fullarton aſked me in the moſt provoking manner in the world, whether I would chuſe a little of the callipaſh or the callipee.—The two men ſhrugged up their ſhoulders, and ſaid *Pazienza*; but Glover told them in a rage, that all the pazienza on earth was not equal to a good turtle.

Soon after this, the remains of the great Syracuſe appeared; the remembrance of whoſe glory, magnificence, and illuſtrious deeds both in arts and arms, made us for ſome time even forget our turtle. But alas! how are the mighty fallen! This proud city, that vied with Rome itſelf, is now reduced to a heap of rubbiſh; for what remains of it deſerves not the name of a city. We rowed round the greateſt part of its walls without ſeeing a human creature; thoſe very walls that were the terror of the Roman arms; from

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from whence Archimedes battered their fleets, and with his engines lifted their veſſels out of the ſea, and daſhed them againſt the rocks. We found the interior part of the city agreed but too well with its external appearance. There was not an inn to be found; and after viſiting all the monaſteries and religious fraternities in ſearch of beds, we found the whole of them ſo wretchedly mean and dirty, that we preferred at laſt to ſleep on ſtraw; but even that we could not have clean, but are eat up with vermin of every kind.

We had letters for the Count Gaetano, who made an apology that he could not lodge us, but in other reſpects ſhewed us many civilities; particularly in giving us the uſe of his carriage, in explaining the ruins, in pointing out every thing that was worthy of our attention; and likewiſe in giving us letters of recommendation for Malta. He is a gentleman of good ſenſe,

and

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and has written ſeveral treatiſes on the antiquities of Sicily.

Of the four cities that compoſed the ancient Syracuſe, there remains only Ortigia, by much the ſmalleſt, ſituated in the iſland of that name. It is about two miles round, and ſuppoſed to contain about 14000 inhabitants. The ruins of the other three, Tycha, Acradina, and Neapoli, are computed at twenty-two miles in circumference, but almoſt the whole of this ſpace is now converted into rich vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields; the walls of theſe are indeed every where built with broken marbles full of engravings and inſcriptions, but moſt of them defaced and ſpoiled. The principal remains of antiquity are a theatre and amphitheatre; many ſepulchres, the Latomie, the Catacombs, and the famous ear of Dionyſius, which it was impoſſible to deſtroy.—The Latomie now make a no-

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ble ſubterraneous garden, and is indeed one of the moſt beautiful and romantic ſpots I ever beheld. Moſt of it is about one hundred feet below the level of the earth, and of an incredible extent. The whole is hewn out of a rock as hard as marble, compoſed of a concretion of ſhells, gravel, and other marine bodies. The bottom of this immenſe quarry, from whence probably the greateſt part of Syracuſe was built, is now covered with an exceeding rich ſoil; and as no wind from any point of the compaſs can touch it, it is filled with a great variety of the fineſt ſhrubs and fruit-trees, which bear with vaſt luxuriance, and are never blaſted. The oranges, citrons, bergamots, pomegranates, figs, &c. are all of a remarkable ſize and fine quality. Some of theſe trees, but more particularly the olives, grow out of the hard rock; where there is no viſible ſoil; and exhibit a very uncommon and pleaſing appearance.

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There is a variety of wild and romantic ſcenes in this curious garden; in the midſt of which we were ſurpriſed by the appearance of a figure under one of the caverns, that added greatly to the dignity and ſolemnity of the place.—It was that of an aged man, with a long flowing white beard that reached down to his middle. His old wrinkled face and ſcanty grey locks pronounced him a member of ſome former age as well as of this. His hands, which were ſhook by the palſy, held a ſort of pilgrim's ſtaff; and about his neck there was a ſtring of large beads with a crucifix hanging to its end.—Had it not been for theſe marks of his later exiſtence, I don't know but I ſhould have aſked him, whether, in his youth, he had not been acquainted with Theocritus and Archimedes, and if he did not remember the reign of Dionyſius the tyrant. But he ſaved us the trouble, by telling us he was the hermit of the place, and belonged to a convent of

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Capuchins on the rock above; that he had now bid adieu to the upper world, and was determined to ſpend the reſt of his life in this ſolitude, in prayer for the wretched mortals that inhabit it.

This figure, together with the ſcene in which it appears, are indeed admirably well adapted, and reflect a mutual dignity upon each other. We left ſome money upon the rock:—For the Capuchins, who are the greateſt beggars on earth, never touch money, but ſave their too tender conſciences, and preſerve their vows unbroken, by the ſimple device of lifting it with a pair of pincers, and carrying it to market in their ſack or cowl. This I have ſeen more than once.—We were much delighted with the Latomie, and left it with regret: It is the very ſame that has been ſo much celebrated by Cicero about 1800 years ago: "Opus "eſt ingens (ſays he) magnificum regum, "ac tyrannorun. Totum ex ſaxo in mi-

"randam

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"randam altitudinem depreſſo," &c. A little to the weſt of it is ſuppoſed to have ſtood the country-houſe, the ſale of which you will remember he gives ſo lively and pleaſant an account of; by which a gold-ſmith (I have forgot his name) cheated a Roman nobleman in a very ingenious manner.

The ear of Dionyſius is no leſs a monument of the ingenuity and magnificence, than of the cruelty of that tyrant. It is a huge cavern cut out of the hard rock, in the form of the human ear. The perpendicular height of it is about 80 feet, and the length of this enormous ear is not leſs than 250. The cavern was ſaid to be ſo contrived, that every ſound made in it, was collected and united into one point, as into a focus; this was called the Tympanum; and exactly oppoſite to it the tyrant had made a ſmall hole, which communicated with a little apartment where he uſed to

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conceal himſelf. He applied his own ear to this hole, and is ſaid to have heard diſtinctly every word that was ſpoken in the cavern below. This apartment was no ſooner finiſhed, and a proof of it made, than he put to death all the workmen that had been employed in it. He then confined all that he ſuſpected were his enemies; and by overhearing their converſation, judged of their guilt, and condemned and acquitted accordingly.

As this chamber of Dionyſius is very high in the rock, and now totally inacceſſible, we had it not in our power to make proof of this curious experiment, which our guides told us had been done ſome years ago by the captain of an Engliſh ſhip.

The echo in the ear is prodigious; much ſuperior to any other cavern I have ſeen. The holes in the rock, to which the priſoners were chained, ſtill remain, and even the

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the lead and iron in ſeveral of them. We ſurpriſed a poor young porcupine who had come here to drink, of whom our guides made lawful prize.—Near to this there are caverns of a great extent, where they carry on a manufactory of nitre, which is found in vaſt abundance on the ſides of theſe caves.

The amphitheatre is in the form of a very excentric ellipſe, and is much ruined; but the theatre is ſo entire, that moſt of the gradini or ſeats ſtill remain. Both theſe are in that part of the city that was called Neapoli, or the New City. "Quarta au-" tem eſt urbs (ſays Cicero) quæ quia poſ-" trema ædificata eſt, Neapolis nominatur, " quam ad ſummam theatrum eſt maxi-" mum, &c." However, it is but a ſmall theatre in compariſon of that of Taurominum. We ſearched amongſt the ſepulchres, ſeveral of which are very elegant, for that of Archimedes; but could ſee no-

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thing reſembling it.—At his own deſire it was adorned with the figure of a ſphere inſcribed in a cylinder, but had been loſt by his ungrateful countrymen, even before the time that Cicero was quæſtor of Sicily. It is pleaſant to obſerve, with what eagerneſs this great man undertakes the ſearch of it, and with what exultation he deſcribes his triumph on the diſcovery. "Ego autem cum omnia colluſtrarem ocu-
"lis (eſt enim ad portas Agragianas magna
"frequentia ſepulchrorum) animadverti
"columnellam non multum e dumis emi-
"nentem, in qua inerat ſphæræ figura et
"cylindri. Atque ego ſtatim Syracuſanis
"(erant autem principes mecum) dixi, me
"illud ipſum arbitrari eſſe quod quærerem.
"Immiſſi cum falcibus multi purgarunt, et
"aperuerunt locum; quo cum patefactus
"eſſet aditus ad adverſam baſim acceſſimus;
"apparebat epigramma exeſis poſterioribus
"partibus verſiculorum dimidiatis fere; Ita
"nobiliſſima Græciæ civitas, quondam vero
"etiam

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" etiam doctiſſima ſui civis unius acutiſſimi " monumentum ignoraſſet, niſi ab homine " Arpinate didiciſſet, &c."

The Catacombs are a great work; little inferior either to thoſe of Rome or Naples, and in the ſame ſtile. There are many remains of temples. The Duke of Montalbano, who has written on the antiquities of Syracuſe, reckons near twenty; but there is hardly any of theſe that are now diſtinguiſhable. A few fine columns of that of Jupiter Olympus ſtill remain; and the temple of Minerva (now converted into the cathedral of the city, and dedicated to the Virgin) is almoſt entire. They have lately built a new façade to it; but I am afraid they have not improved on the ſimplicity of the antique. It is full of broken pediments, and I think in a bad ſtile.

Ortigia, the only remaining part of Syracuſe, was antiently an iſland; it is often denominated

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denominated ſuch by Virgil, Cicero, and many of the Greek and Latin hiſtorians. In latter ages, and probably by the ruins of this mighty city, the ſtrait that ſeparated it from the continent, was filled up; and it had how been a peninſula for many ages; till the preſent king of Spain, at a vaſt expence, cut through the neck of land that joined it to Sicily, and has again reduced it to its primitive ſtate.

Here he has raiſed a noble fortification, which appears to be almoſt impregnable. There are four ſtrong gates, one within the other, with each a glacis, covered way, ſcarp and counterſcarp, and a broad deep ditch filled with ſea-water, and defended by an immenſe number of—embraſures;—but not ſo much as one ſingle piece of artillery. This you will no doubt think ridiculous enough, but the ridicule is ſtill heightened, when I aſſure you there is not a cannon of any kind belonging to this noble

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noble fortreſs, but one ſmall battery of ſix pounders for ſaluting ſhips that go in and out of the port. If you are at a loſs to account for this, you will pleaſe remember that it is a work of the king of Spain. However, the ditches are very uſeful; they are perpetually covered with fiſhing boats; and they can uſe their nets and lines here with the greateſt ſucceſs, even in the moſt ſtormy weather; though I dare ſay this was none of the motives that induced his majeſty to make them. The nobility of the place have likewiſe barges here, for their amuſement.

As the celebrated fountain of Arethuſa has ever been looked upon as one of the greateſt curioſities of Syracuſe, you may believe we were not a little impatient to examine it: And indeed only by obſerving Cicero's account of it *, we ſoon found it out.

* In hac inſula extrema eſt fons aquæ dulcis, cui nomen Arethuſa eſt, incredibili magnitudine pleniſſimus

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out.—It ſtill exactly anſwers the deſcription he gives, except with regard to the great quantities of fiſh it contained, which ſeem now to have abandoned it.

The fountain of Arethuſa was dedicated to Diana, who had a magnificent temple near it, where great feſtivals were annually celebrated in honour of the goddeſs. We found a number of nymphs, up to the knees in the fountain, buſy waſhing their garments, and we dreaded the fate of Actæon and Alpheus: But if theſe were of Diana's train, they are by no means ſo coy as they were of old; and a man would hardly chuſe to run the riſk of being changed either into a ſtag or a river for the beſt of them.

It is indeed an aſtoniſhing fountain; and riſes at once out of the earth, to the ſize

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ſimus piſcium, qui fluctu totus operiretur, niſi munitione, ac mole lapidum a mari disjunctus eſſet, &c. Cic.

of

of a river.—The poetical fictions concerning it are too well known to require that I ſhould enumerate them. Many of the people here believe to this day, that it is the identical river Arethuſa, that ſinks under ground near Olympia in Greece, and continuing its courſe for five or ſix hundred miles below the ocean, riſes again in this ſpot.

It is truly aſtoniſhing that ſuch a ſtory as this ſhould have gained ſuch credit amongſt the antients, for it is not only their poets, but natural hiſtorians and philoſophers too, that take notice of it. Pliny mentions it more than once; and there are few or none of the Latin poets that it has eſcaped.

This ſtrange belief has been communicated to the Sicilian authors, and, what is amazing, there is hardly any of them that doubts of it.—Pomponius Mela, Pauſanias, Maſſa, and Fazzello, are all of the ſame

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ſentiments; to ſupport which they tell you the old ſtory of the golden cup won at the Olympic games, which was thrown into the Grecian Arethuſa, and was ſoon after caſt up again by the Sicilian one.

They likewiſe add, that it had always been obſerved that after the great ſacrifices at Olympia, the blood of which fell into that river, the waters of Arethuſa roſe for ſeveral days, tinged with blood.

This, like many modern miracles, was probably a trick of the prieſts.—Thoſe of Diana had the charge of the fountain of Arethuſa, and no doubt were much intereſted to ſupport the credit of the ſtory; for it was that goddeſs that converted the nymph Arethuſa into a river, and conducted her by ſubterraneous paſſages from Greece to Sicily, to avoid the purſuit of Alpheus, who underwent the ſame fate.

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At a little diſtance from the fountain of Arethuſa, there is a very large ſpring of freſh water, that boils up in the ſea. It is called *Occhio di Zilica*, and by ſome Alpheus, who is ſuppoſed by the poets to have purſued Arethuſa below the ſea all the way to Sicily.

As this ſpring is not taken notice of by any of the great number of the antients that ſpeak of Arethuſa, it is moſt probable that it did not then exiſt; and is a part of that fountain that has ſince burſt out before its arrival at the iſland of Ortigia. Had it been viſible in the time of the Greeks, there is no doubt that they would have made uſe of this, as a ſtrong argument to prove the ſubmarine journey of Arethuſa; as it in fact riſes at ſome diſtance in the ſea, and pretty much in the ſame direction that Greece lies from Ortigia. It ſometimes boils up ſo ſtrongly, that after piercing

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piercing the ſalt water, I am told it can be taken up very little affected by it.

Syracuſe has two harbours; the largeſt of which, on the ſouth weſt ſide of Ortigia, is reckoned ſix miles round, and was eſteemed one of the beſt in the Mediterranean. It is ſaid by Diodorus to have run almoſt into the heart of the city, and was called Marmoreo, becauſe entirely ſurrounded with buildings of marble; the entry into this harbour was ſtrongly fortified, and the Roman fleets could never penetrate into it.

The ſmall port is on the north eaſt of Ortigia, and is likewiſe recorded to have been highly ornamented. Fazzello ſays, there is ſtill the remains of a ſubmarine aqueduct, that runs through the middle of it, which was intended to convey the water from the fountain of Arethuſa to the other parts of the city.

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Near this port, they ſhew the ſpot where Archimedes' houſe ſtood; and likewiſe the tower from whence he is ſaid to have ſet fire to the Roman galleys with his burning glaſſes; a ſtory which is related by ſeveral authors, but which is now almoſt univerſally exploded, from the difficulty to conceive a burning-glaſs, or a concave ſpeculum, with a focus of ſuch an immenſe length as this muſt have required.

However, I ſhould be apt to imagine if this be not entirely a fiction (of which there is ſome probability) that it was neither performed by refracting burning-glaſſes nor ſpeculums, but only by means of common looking-glaſſes, or very clear plates of metal. Indeed, from the ſituation of the place it muſt have been done by reflection; for Archimedes' tower ſtood on the north of the little port where the Roman fleet are ſaid to have been moored; ſo that their

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veſſels lay in a right line betwixt him and the ſun at noon; and at a very ſmall diſtance from the wall of the city where this tower ſtood. But if you will ſuppoſe this to have been performed by common burning-glaſſes, or by thoſe of the parabolical kind, it will be neceſſary to raiſe a tower of a moſt enormous height on the iſland of Ortigia, in order to interpoſe theſe glaſſes betwixt the ſun and the Roman galleys; and even this could not have been done till late in the afternoon, when his rays are exceedingly weak. But I have very little doubt that common looking-glaſſes would be found all-ſufficient to perform theſe effects.

Let us ſuppoſe that a thouſand of theſe were made to reflect the rays to the ſame point: The heat, in all probability, muſt be increaſed to a greater degree than in the focus of moſt burning-glaſſes; and abun-

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abundantly capable of ſetting fire to every combuſtible ſubſtance.—This experiment might be eaſily made by means of a battalion of men, arming each with a looking-glaſs inſtead of a firelock; and ſetting up a board at two or three hundred yards diſtance for them to fire at. I ſuppoſe it would take a conſiderable time before they were expert at this exerciſe; but, by practice, I have no doubt that they might all be brought to hit the mark inſtantaneouſly at the word of command; like the lark-catchers in ſome countries, who are ſo dextrous at this manœuvre, that with a ſmall mirrour they throw the rays of light on the lark, let her be ever ſo high in the air; which, by a kind of faſcination, brings down the poor animal to the ſnare.

You may laugh at all this; but I don't think it is impoſſible that a looking-glaſs may one day be thought as neceſſary an implement for a ſoldier as at preſent it is

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for a beau. I am very apprehenſive the French will get the ſtart of us in this ſignal invention; as I have been aſſured long ago, that few of their men ever go to the field, without firſt providing themſelves with one of theſe little warlike engines, the true uſe of which, happily for us, they are as yet unacquainted with.—You will eaſily perceive, that if this experiment ſucceeds, it muſt alter the whole ſyſtem of fortification, as well as of attack and defence; for every part of the city that is expoſed to the view of the beſiegers, may be eaſily ſet in a flame; and the beſieged would have the ſame advantage over the camp of the beſieging army *.

* Since the writing of theſe letters, the author has been informed, that Mr. Buffon actually made this experiment.—He conſtructed a kind of frame, in which were fixed four hundred ſmall mirrours, diſpoſed in ſuch a manner, that the rays reflected from each of them fell exactly on the ſame point. By means of this, he melted lead at the diſtance of 120 feet, and ſet fire to a hayſtack at a much greater diſtance.

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We are already completely tired of Syracuſe, which of all the wretched places we have yet met with, is by many degrees the moſt wretched: For beſides that its inhabitants are ſo extremely poor and beggarly, many of them are ſo over-run with the itch, that we are under perpetual apprehenſions, and begin to be extremely well ſatisfied that we could not procure beds.—It is truly melancholy to think of the diſmal contraſt that its former magnificence makes with its preſent meanneſs. The mighty Syracuſe, the moſt opulent and powerful of all the Grecian cities, which, by its own proper ſtrength alone, was able, at different times, to contend againſt all the power of Carthage and of Rome: —Which is recorded (what the force of united nations is now incapable of) to have repulſed fleets of two thouſand ſail, and armies of two hundred thouſand men; and contained within its own walls, what

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no city ever did before or ſince, fleets and armies that were the terror of the world. This haughty and magnificent city, reduced even below the conſequence of the moſt inſignificant burgh!—" Sic tranſit gloria " mundi."—I have not even been able to procure a table to write upon, but by way of ſuccedaneum am obliged to lay a form over the back of two chairs.—We have got into the moſt wretched hovel you can conceive, and the moſt dirty; but what is ſtill worſt of all, we can find nothing to eat; and if we had not brought ſome cold fowls along with us, we might have ſtarved.

The heat has been conſiderably greater here than at Catania. The thermometer is juſt now at 78.—There is an old remark made on the climate of this place by ſome of the antients; which is ſtill ſaid to hold good; That at no ſeaſon, the ſun has ever been

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been inviſible during a whole day at Syracuſe. I find it mentioned by ſeveral Sicilian authors, but ſhall not vouch for the truth of it.—Adieu.—My next will probably be from Malta; for we ſhall ſail to-morrow if it be poſſible to procure a veſſel.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XIII.

Capo Paſſero, June 3.

AS we found the mighty city of Syracuſe ſo reduced, that it could not afford beds and lodging to three weary travellers, we agreed to abridge our ſtay in it; and accordingly hired a Malteſe Sparonaro to carry us to that iſland: This is a ſmall ſix-oar'd boat, made entirely for ſpeed, to avoid the African pirates, and other Barbareſque veſſels, with which theſe ſeas are infeſted; but ſo flat and ſo narrow, that they are not able to bear any ſea, and of conſequence keep always as near the coaſt as poſſible.

On the 2d of June, by day-break, we left the Marmoreo, or great port of Syracuſe; and although the wind was exactly contrary

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contrary and pretty ſtrong, by the force of their oars, which they manage with great dexterity, we got on at the rate of four miles an hour. They do not pull their oars as we do, but puſh them like the Venetian Gondoliers; always fronting the prow of the boat, and ſeldom or never ſit down while they row; allowing the whole weight of their bodies to be exerted every ſtroke of the oar. This gives a prodigious momentum, and is certainly much more forcible than a ſimple exertion of the muſcles of the arm.

About ten o'clock the wind became favourable, when we went indeed at an immenſe rate. At twelve it blew a hurricane, and with ſome difficulty we got under ſhore, but the wind was ſo exceedingly violent, that even there we had like to have been overſet, and we were obliged to run aground to ſave us from that diſaſter. Here we were a good deal annoyed by the ſand carried about

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about by the wind; however, the hurricane was ſoon over, and we again put to ſea with a favourable gale, which in a few hours carried us to Capo Paſſero.

In this little ſtorm we were a good deal amuſed with the behaviour of our Sicilian ſervant, who at land is a fellow of undaunted courage, of which we have had many proofs; but here (I don't know why) it entirely forſook him, although there was in fact no real danger, for we never were more than 100 yards from the ſhore. He gave himſelf up to deſpair, and called upon all his ſaints for protection: And never again recovered his confidence all the reſt of this little voyage; perpetually wiſhing himſelf back at Naples, and ſwearing that no earthly temptation ſhould ever induce him to go to ſea again. The ſame fellow, but a few days ago, mounted a moſt vicious horſe, and without the leaſt fear or concern galloped along the ſide of a precipice, where every

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every moment we expected to ſee him daſhed to pieces; ſo ſingular and various are the different modes of fear and of courage.

Capo Paſſero, antiently called Pachinus, is the remoteſt and moſt ſoutherly point of Sicily. It is not a peninſula, as repreſented in all the maps, but a wretched barren iſland, of about a mile round; with a fort and a ſmall garriſon to protect the neighbouring country from the incurſions of the Barbary corſairs, who are often very troubleſome on this part of the coaſt. This little iſland and fort lie about a mile and a half diſtant from the ſmall creek of which we have taken poſſeſſion, and are ſeparated from the reſt of Sicily by a ſtrait of about half a mile broad.

Our pilot told us that we muſt not think of Malta, which is almoſt 100 miles off, till there were more ſettled appearances of good weather.

As

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As there is no habitation here of any kind, we ſearched about, till at laſt we found a ſmall cavern, where we made a very confortable dinner. We then ſallied forth to examine the face of the country, as well as to try if we could ſhoot ſomething for our ſupper.—We found that we had now got into a very different world from any thing we had yet ſeen. The country here is exceedingly barren, and to a conſiderable diſtance produces neither corn nor wine: But the fields are adorned with an infinite variety of flowers and of flowering ſhrubs, and the rocks are every where entirely covered with capers, which are juſt now fit for gathering. If we had vinegar, we could ſoon have pickled hogſheads of them.

We found here, in the greateſt perfection, that beautiful ſhrub called the Palmeta, reſembling a ſmall palm-tree, with an elegant fine flower: But, to our great mortification,

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tion, the ſeed is not yet ripe. We likewiſe found great quantities of a blue everlaſting flower, which I don't remember to have ſeen in Miller, or any of our botanical books. The ſtem riſes about a foot high, and is crowned with a large cluſter of ſmall blue flowers, the leaves of which are of a dry ſubſtance like the Elychryſum, or globe Amaranthus. Some of theſe are of a purple colour, but moſt of them blue. I have gathered a pretty large quantity for the ſpeculation of the botaniſts on our return.

We found a good ſwimming-place, which is always one of the firſt things we look out for, as this exerciſe conſtitutes one of the principal pleaſures of our expedition.

As ſoon as it was dark, we got on board our little boat, and rowed about a hundred yards out to ſea, where we caſt anchor; our pilot aſſuring us that this was abſolutely neceſſary, as the people in this part of the country

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country are little better than ſavages; and, were we to ſtay at land, might very poſſibly come down during the night, and rob and murder us.

He likewiſe told us, that the Turks had made frequent invaſions upon this point of the iſland, which, of all others, lay moſt expoſed to their depredations; that lately three of their chebecks ran into a ſmall harbour a few miles from this, and carried off ſix merchant-ſhips; and that very often, ſome of their light veſſels were ſeen hovering off the coaſt; that the only way to be in perfect ſecurity from theſe two enemies by ſea and land, was to chuſe a place on the coaſt ſo deep, that the banditti by land could not wade in to us; and at the ſame time ſo ſhallow, as to be equally inacceſſible to the banditti by ſea.

When we found ourſelves thus in ſecurity on both hands, we wrapt ourſelves up

in

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in our cloaks, and fell aſleep: however, we had but a very uncomfortable night; the wind roſe, and the motion of our little bark was exceeding diſagreeable, and made us heartily ſick. As ſoon as day began to appear, we made them pull into ſhore; when we were immediately cured of our ſickneſs; and as the weather continues ſtill unfavourable, we have fallen upon a variety of amuſements to paſs the time.

We have been thrice in the water, which is warm and pleaſant; and in the intervals, I have writ you this letter on the top of a large baſket, in which we carry our ſea-ſtore. We have likewiſe gathered ſhells, pieces of coral, of ſpunge, and ſeveral beautiful kinds of ſea-weed. The rocks here are all of ſand and gravel run together, and become as hard as granite. There are many ſhells and other marine ſubſtances mixed in their compoſition, which renders them objects of curioſity in the eye of a naturaliſt.

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This morning we made a kind of tent of a ſail, drawn over the point of a rock, and fixed with an oar, by way of pole. Here we breakfaſted moſt luxurioufly on excellent tea and honey of Hybla.

I was interrupted in this part of my letter, by an officer from the fort of Capo Paſſero. He tells us, that we may give over all thoughts of getting farther for theſe ſix days.—What do you think is his reaſon?—I own I was in ſome pain till he mentioned it.—This wind ſet in exactly as the moon entered her ſecond quarter, and it will certainly continue till ſhe is full. There is a raſcal for you!—If he be telling truth, I ſhall certainly ſtudy aſtrology. He likewiſe told us, that two galliots had been ſeen off the coaſt; and deſired us to be upon our guard; but I own, the moon, together with other circumſtances, has conſiderably weakened his evidence with me.

We

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We have learned from his converſation, that the fort of Capo Paſſero is made uſe of as a place of exile for the delinquents in the army; of which number I have not the leaſt doubt that he is one. He told us there were two near relations of the viceroy, that had been lately ſent there for miſdemeanors; that for his part, he belonged to a very agreeable garriſon; but as he loved retirement, he choſe to accompany them. However, his countenance told a very different ſtory; and ſaid, in ſtrong language, that he was a *tres mauvais ſujet*. Beſides, he is a ſtupid fellow, and has tired me. I could learn nothing from him.

It muſt be owned, this is an excellent place of exile for a young rake, who wants to ſhow away in the beau monde. It is not within many miles of any town or village; ſo that the gentlemen may enjoy retirement in its utmoſt perfection.

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We were ſurpriſed to find on this coaſt quantities of the true pumice-ſtone, which at firſt we ſuppoſed to have been brought by the ſea from Ætna, till we likewiſe diſcovered many large pieces of lava, which makes us imagine there muſt have been ſome eruption of fire in this part of the iſland; yet I ſee no conical mountain, or any other indication of it.

If our officer's prognoſtications prove true, and we are detained here any longer, I ſhall examine the country to a much greater diſtance. The wind continues directly contrary; the ſea is very high in the canal of Malta, and our Sicilian ſervant is in a ſad trepidation.—But I ſee Glover and Fullarton coming for their dinner; ſo I ſhall be obliged to give up the baſket.—This ſea-air gives one a monſtrous appetite; and, it is with grief I mention it, we are already brought to ſhort allowance:—Only one cold fowl amongſt three

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of us; all three pretty ſharp ſet, I aſſure you.—Thoſe infamous raſcals to loſe our turtle!—They have ſpied a fiſhing-boat, and are haling her as loud as they can roar, —but, alas! ſhe is too far off to hear them.—They have juſt fired a gun to bring her to, and happily ſhe obeys the ſignal, ſo there is ſtill hopes; otherwiſe we ſhall ſoon be reduced to bread and water. Our tea and ſugar too are juſt upon a cloſe, which is the cruelleſt article of all; but we have plenty of good bread and Hybla honey; ſo we are in no danger of ſtarving.

We have likewiſe made an admirable and a very comfortable diſpoſition for our night's lodging. The Sparonaro is ſo very narrow, that it is impoſſible for us all to lie in it; beſides, we are eat up with vermin, and have nothing but the hard boards to lie on: All theſe conſiderations, added to the curſed ſwinging of the boat, and the horrid ſickneſs it occaſions, have

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determined us rather to truſt ourſelves to the mercy of the banditti, than to lie another night at ſea: Beſides, we have made the happieſt diſcovery in the world; a great quantity of fine, ſoft, dry ſea-weed, lying under the ſhelter of a rock, and ſeems intended by Providence for our bed: Over this we are going to ſtretch a ſail, and expect to ſleep moſt luxurioufly; but to prevent all danger from a ſurprize, we have agreed to ſtand ſentry by turns, with Fullarton's double barrelled gun, well primed and loaded for the reception of the enemy; at the firſt diſcharge of which, and not before, the whole guard is to turn out, with all the remaining part of our artillery and ſmall arms; and as our ſituation is a very advantageous one, I think we ſhall be able to make a ſtout defence.

As we are ſix in number, three maſters and three ſervants, the duty, you ſee, will be but trifling; and five of us will always ſleep

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ſleep in ſecurity. Our guard, to be ſure, might have been ſtronger; but our Sparonaro-men have abſolutely refuſed to be of the party; having much more confidence in their own element; however, they have promiſed, in caſe of an attack, immediately to come to our aſſiſtance. I think the diſpoſition is far from being a bad one, and we are not a little vain of our generalſhip.

The fiſhing-boat is now arrived, and they have bought ſome excellent little fiſhes, which are already on the fire. Adieu. Theſe fellows are roaring for their cold fowl, and I can command the baſket no longer.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XIV.

Malta, June 4th.

IN ſpite of appearances, and our officer's wiſe prognoſtications, the wind changed in the afternoon, and we got under ſail by ſix o'clock: We paſſed the Straits, and coaſted along till eight, when we landed to cook ſome macaroni we had purchaſed of our ſailors, and try if we could ſhoot ſomething for ſea-ſtore, as we have ſtill a long voyage before us.

We came to the ſide of a ſulphureous lake, the ſmell of which was ſo ſtrong, that we perceived it upwards of a mile diſtant. We found the water boiling up with violence in many places, though the heat at the banks of the lake is very inconſiderable. However, this, added to the pumice and lava we found near Capo Paſſero, tends greatly to confirm us in the opinion, that this

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this part of the iſland, as well as about Ætna, has, in former ages, been ſubject to eruptions of fire.

I think it is more than probable, that this is the celebrated Camerina, which Æneas ſaw immediately after his paſſing Pachynus, (or Capo Paſſero) which, Virgil ſays, the Fates had decreed ſhould never be drained:

" Hinc altas cautes projectaque ſaxa Pachyni
" Radimus; et fatis nunquam conceſſa moveri
" Adparet Camarina procul."

Virgil had good reaſon to ſay ſo; for the level of the lake or marſh, (it being ſomething betwixt the two) is at leaſt as low as that of the ſea, and conſequently never could be drained.

It is ſurrounded with a variety of fine evergreens and flowering ſhrubs, of which the palmeta, and the arbutus or ſtrawberry tree, are the moſt beautiful. We ſaw a great many wild-fowl; but, what ſurpriſed

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me, in ſo unfrequented a place, they were ſo ſhy, that there was no getting near them: There was one kind, in particular, that attracted our attention; it was of the ſize and form of a grey plover, and flew in the ſame manner; but had a tail of a great length, which ſeemed to be compoſed only of two ſmall flexible feathers, that made a very uncommon appearance in the air. After uſing all our art to ſhoot one of them, we were obliged to give up the attempt.

Here we killed a ſmall black ſnake, which, I think, anſwers the deſcription I have ſeen of the aſp. We diſſected out its tongue, the end of which appears ſharp like a ſting, and I ſuppoſe is one, as it darted it out with violence againſt our ſticks, when we preſented them to it. Now as all animals, when attacked, make uſe of thoſe weapons that Nature has armed them with for their defence, it appeared evident to us, (ſuppoſing this rule a juſt one) that this animal

was

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was conſcious of a power of hurting in its tongue; and we have been more fully convinced of it from diſſection. The ſting appears conſiderably larger than that of a bee. We found a little bag at the other end of the tongue, and probably, if we had had a microſcope, ſhould have found the tongue perforated. This ſnake had no teeth; but very hard gums. I have taken care to preſerve the tongue for your inſpection.

As I think it has always been ſuppoſed, that ſerpents hurt only with their teeth, I thought this might be worthy of your notice. It is true, that the darting out of the tongue is a trick of the whole ſerpent tribe; but this animal ſeemed to do it with peculiar ferocity, and to ſtrike it with violence againſt our ſticks. It was this that put us upon the examination.

I don't recollect that this ſingularity is mentioned in any book of natural hiſtory, but

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but poſſibly I may be miſtaken; nor indeed do I remember either to have ſeen or heard of any animal armed in this manner:—Unleſs you will ſuppoſe me to adopt the ſentiments of poor Mr. S——, who, ever ſince his marriage, alleges that the tongues of many females, are formed after this ſingular manner; and remarks one peculiarity, that the ſting ſeldom or never appears till after matrimony.—He is very learned on this ſubject, and thinks it may poſſibly have proceeded from their original connection with the ſerpent.—Let this be as it may, I ſincerely hope that you and I ſhall never have ſuch good reaſon for adopting that opinion.

A little after nine we embarked. The night was delightful; but the wind had died away about ſun-ſet, and we were obliged to ply our oars to get into the canal of Malta. The coaſt of Sicily began to recede; and in a ſhort time, we found our-

ſelves

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ſelves in the ocean. There was a profound ſilence, except the noiſe of the waves breaking on the diſtant ſhore, which only ſerved to render it more ſolemn. It was a dead calm, and the moon ſhone bright on the waters: The waves, from the late ſtorm, were ſtill high; but ſmooth and even, and followed one another with a ſlow and equal pace.—The ſcene had naturally ſunk us into meditation; we had remained near an hour without ſpeaking a word, when our ſailors began their midnight hymn to the Virgin. The muſic was ſimple, ſolemn, and melancholy, and in perfect harmony with the ſcene, and with all our feelings. They beat exact time with their oars, and obſerved the harmony and the cadence with the utmoſt preciſion. We liſtened with infinite pleaſure to this melancholy concert, and felt the vanity of operas and oratorios. There is often a ſolemnity and a pathetic in the modulation of theſe ſimple productions, that cauſes a much ſtronger effect, than the

compoſition

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compoſition of the greateſt maſters, aſſiſted by all the boaſted rules of counter-point.

At laſt they ſung us aſleep, and we awoke forty miles diſtant from Sicily. We were now on the main ocean, and ſaw no land but mount Ætna; which is the perpetual polar ſtar of theſe ſeas. We had a fine breeze, and about two o'clock we diſcovered the iſland of Malta; and in leſs than three hours more, we reached the city of Valletta. The approach of the iſland is very fine, although the ſhore is rather low and rocky. It is every where made inacceſſible to an enemy, by an infinite number of fortifications. The rock, in many places, has been ſloped into the form of a glacis, with ſtrong parapets and intrenchments running behind it.

The entry into the port is very narrow, and is commanded by a ſtrong caſtle on either ſide. We were haled from each of theſe,

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theſe, and obliged to give a ſtrict account of ourſelves; and on our arrival at the ſide of the key, we were viſited by an officer from the health-office, and obliged to give oath with regard to the circumſtances of our voyage.—He behaved in the civileſt manner, and immediately ſent us Mr. Rutter, the Engliſh conſul, for whom we had letters of recommendation.

On getting on ſhore, we found ourſelves in a new world indeed.—The ſtreets crowded with well-dreſſed people, who have all the appearance of health and affluence; whereas at Syracuſe, there was ſcarce a creature to be ſeen; and even thoſe few had the appearance of diſeaſe and wretchedneſs.—Mr. Rutter immediately conducted us to an inn, which had more the appearance of a palace. We have had an excellent ſupper, and good Burgundy; and as this is the king's birth-day, we have almoſt got tipſey to his health. We are now going into clean,

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clean, comfortable beds, in expectation of the ſweeteſt ſlumbers.—Think of the luxury of this, after being five long days without throwing off our cloaths.—Good night. I would not loſe a moment of it for the world.—People may ſay what they pleaſe, but there is no enjoyment in living in perpetual eaſe and affluence, and the true luxury is only to be attained by undergoing a few hardſhips.—But this is no time to philoſophiſe. So adieu.

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LETTER XV.

Malta, June 5th.

OUR banker, Mr. Pouſilach, was here before we were up, inviting us to dine with him at his country-houſe, from whence we are juſt now returned. He gave us a noble entertainment, ſerved on plate, with an elegant deſert, and a great variety of wines.

After dinner we went to viſit the principal villas of the iſland; particularly thoſe of the grand maſter, and the general of the galleys, which lie contiguous to each other. Theſe are nothing great or magnificent; but they are admirably contrived for a hot climate, where, of all things, ſhade is the moſt deſirable. The orange groves are indeed very fine, and the fruit they bear are

ſuperior

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ſuperior to any thing you have ſeen either in Spain or Portugal.

The aſpect of the country is far from being pleaſing: the whole iſland is a great rock of very white free-ſtone, and the ſoil that covers this rock, in moſt places, is not more than five or ſix inches deep; yet, what is ſingular, we found their crop in general was exceedingly abundant. They account for it from the copious dews that fall during the ſpring and ſummer months; and pretend likewiſe, that there is a moiſture in the rock below the ſoil, that is of great advantage to the corn and cotton, keeping its roots perpetually moiſt and cool; without which ſingular quality, they ſay, they could have no crops at all, the heat of the ſun is ſo exceedingly violent.

Their barley harveſt has been over ſome time ago; and they are juſt now finiſhing that of the wheat. The whole iſland pro-

duces

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duces corn only ſufficient to ſupport its inhabitants for five months, or little more; but the crop they moſt depend upon is the cotton. They began ſowing it about three weeks ago, and it will be finiſhed in a week more. The time of reaping it is in the month of October and beginning of November.

They pretend that the cotton produced from this plant, which is ſown and reaped in four months, is of a much ſuperior quality to that of the cotton-tree. I compared them, but I cannot ſay I found it ſo; this is indeed the fineſt, but that of the cotton-tree is by much the ſtrongeſt texture. The plant riſes to the height of a foot and a half, and is covered with a number of nuts or pods full of cotton: Theſe, when ripe, they are at great pains to cut off, every morning before ſun-riſe; for the heat of the ſun immediately turns the cotton yellow; which, indeed, we ſaw from thoſe pods they ſave for ſeed.

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They manufacture their cotton into a great variety of ſtuffs. Their ſtockings are exceedingly fine. Some of them, they aſſured us, had been ſold for ten ſequins a pair. Their coverlits and blankets are eſteemed all over Europe. Of theſe the principal manufactures are eſtabliſhed in the little iſland of Gozzo, where the people are ſaid to be more induſtrious than thoſe of Malta, as they are more excluded from the world, and have fewer inducements to idleneſs. Here the ſugar-cane is ſtill cultivated with ſucceſs, though not in any conſiderable quantity.

The Malteſe oranges certainly deſerve the character they have, of being the fineſt in the world. The ſeaſon continues for upwards of ſeven months; from November till the middle of June; during which time, thoſe beautiful trees are always covered with abundance of this delicious fruit. Many of them are of the red kind, much

ſuperior,

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ſuperior, in my opinion, to the others, which are rather too luſcious. They are produced, I am told, from the common orange-bud, engrafted on the pomegranate ſtock. The juice of this fruit is red as blood, and of a fine flavour. The greateſt part of their crop is ſent in preſents to the different courts of Europe, and to the relations of the chevaliers. It was not without a good deal of difficulty that we procured a few cheſts for our friends at Naples.

The induſtry of the Malteſe in cultivating their little iſland is inconceivable. There is not an inch of ground loſt in any part of it; and where there was not ſoil enough, they have brought over ſhips and boats loaded with it from Sicily, where there is plenty and to ſpare. The whole iſland is full of incloſures of free-ſtone, which gives the country a very uncouth and a very barren aſpect; and, in ſummer, reflects ſuch a light and heat, that it is ex-

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ceedingly diſagreeable and offenſive to the eyes. The incloſures are very ſmall and irregular, according to the inclination of the ground. This, they ſay, they are obliged to obſerve, notwithſtanding the deformity it occaſions; otherwiſe the floods, to which they are ſubject, would ſoon carry off their ſoil.

The iſland is covered over with country houſes and villages, beſides ſeven cities, for ſo they term them; but there are only two, the Valetta and the Citta Vecchia, that by any means deſerve that appellation. Every little village has a noble church, elegantly finiſhed and adorned with ſtatues of marble, rich tapeſtry, and a large quantity of ſilver plate. They are by much the handſomeſt country churches I have ever ſeen.—But I am interrupted in my writing, by the beginning (I am told) of a very fine ſhew. If it be ſo, I ſhall give you ſome account of it by and by.

Eleven

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Eleven at night. The ſhew is now finiſhed, and has afforded us great entertainment. It was the departure of a Malteſe ſquadron to aſſiſt the French againſt the Bey of Tunis, who, it ſeems, has fallen under the diſpleaſure of the grand monarque, becauſe he refuſed to deliver up without ranſom, the Corſican ſlaves that were taken before the French were in poſſeſſion of that iſland. The ſquadron conſiſted of three gallies; the largeſt with nine hundred men, each of the others with ſeven hundred; three galliots, and ſeveral *ſcampavias*, ſo called from their exceeding ſwiftneſs. Theſe immenſe bodies were all worked by oars, and moved with great regularity. The admiral went firſt, and the reſt in order, according to their dignity. The ſea was crowded with boats, and the ramparts and fortifications were filled with company. The port reſounded on all ſides with the diſcharge of heavy artillery, which was anſwered by the gallies and galliots as they

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left the harbour. As the echo is here uncommonly great, it produced a very noble effect.

There were about thirty knights in each galley, making ſignals all the way to their miſtreſſes, who were weeping for their departure upon the baſtions; for theſe gentlemen pay almoſt as little regard to their vows of chaſtity, as the prieſts and confeſſors do. After viewing the ſhew from the ramparts, we took a boat and followed the ſquadron for ſome time, and did not return till long after ſun-ſet.

We have been admiring the wonderful ſtrength of this place, both by nature and art.—It is certainly the happieſt ſituation that can be imagined. The city ſtands upon a peninſula, betwixt two of the fineſt ports in the world, which are defended by almoſt impregnable fortifications. That on the ſouth-eaſt ſide of the city is the

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largeſt. It runs about two miles into the heart of the iſland, and is ſo very deep, and ſurrounded by ſuch high grounds and fortifications, that they aſſured us, the largeſt ſhips of war might ride here in the moſt ſtormy weather, almoſt without a cable.

This beautiful baſon is divided into five diſtinct harbours, all equally ſafe, and each capable of containing an immenſe number of ſhipping. The mouth of the harbour is ſcarcely a quarter of a mile broad, and is commanded on each ſide by batteries that would tear the ſtrongeſt ſhip to pieces before ſhe could enter. Beſides this, it is fronted by a quadruple battery, one above the other, the largeſt of which is a *fleur d'eau*, or on a level with the water. Theſe are mounted with about 80 of their heavieſt artillery; ſo that this harbour, I think, may really be conſidered as impregnable; and indeed the Turks have ever found it ſo, and I believe ever will.

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The harbour on the north ſide of the city, although they only uſe it for fiſhing, and as a place of quarantine, would, in any other part of the world, be conſidered as ineſtimable. It is likewiſe defended by very ſtrong works; and in the center of the baſon there is an iſland on which they have built a caſtle and a lazaret.

The fortifications of Malta are indeed a moſt ſtupendous work. All the boaſted catacombs of Rome and Naples are a trifle to the immenſe excavations that have been made in this little iſland. The ditches, of a vaſt ſize, are all cut out of the ſolid rock. Theſe extend for a great many miles; and raiſe our aſtoniſhment to think that ſo ſmall a ſtate has ever been able to make them.

One ſide of the iſland is ſo completely fortified by nature, that there was nothing left for art. The rock is of a great height,

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and abſolutely perpendicular from the ſea for ſeveral miles. It is very ſingular, that on this ſide there are ſtill the veſtiges of ſeveral antient roads, with the tracks of carriages worn deep in the rocks: Theſe roads are now terminated by the precipice, with the ſea beneath; and ſhew to a demonſtration, that this iſland has in former ages been of a much larger ſize than it is at preſent; but the convulſion that occaſioned its diminution is probably much beyond the reach of any hiſtory or tradition. It has often been obſerved, notwithſtanding the very great diſtance of mount Ætna, that this iſland has generally been more or leſs affected by its eruptions, and they think it probable, that on ſome of thoſe occaſions a part of it may have been ſhaken into the ſea.

We have now an opportunity of obſerving that one half of mount Ætna is clearly diſcovered

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diſcovered from Malta. They reckon the diſtance near 200 Italian miles. And the people here aſſure us, that in the great eruptions of that mountain, their whole iſland is illuminated; and from the reflection in the water, there appears a great track of fire in the ſea all the way from Malta to Sicily. The thundering of the mountain is likewiſe diſtinctly heard.—Good night.—I am fatigued with this day's expedition, and ſhall finiſh my letter to-morrow.

June 6th. As the city of Valetta is built upon a hill, none of the ſtreets except the key are level. They are all paved with white free-ſtone, which not only creates a great duſt, but from its colour is likewiſe ſo offenſive to the eyes, that moſt of the people here are remarkably weak-ſighted. The principal buildings are the palace of the grand maſter, the infirmary, the arſe-

nal,

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nal, the inns or hotels of the Seven Tongues, and the great church of St. John. The palace is a noble though a plain ſtructure, and the grand maſter (who ſtudies conveniency more than magnificence) is more comfortably and commodiouſly lodged than any prince in Europe, the king of Sardinia perhaps only excepted. The great ſtair is the eaſieſt and the beſt I ever ſaw.

St. John's is a magnificent church. The pavement, in particular, is reckoned the richeſt in the world. It is entirely compoſed of ſepulchral monuments of the fineſt marbles, porphyry, lapis lazuli, and a variety of other valuable ſtones, admirably joined together, and at an incredible expence; repreſenting in a kind of Moſaic, the arms, inſignia, &c. of the perſons whoſe names they are intended to commemorate. In the magnificence of theſe monuments, the heirs of the grand maſters

and

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and commanders have long vied with each other.

We went this day to ſee the celebration of their church ſervice. It ſeems to be more overcharged with parade and ceremony than what I have ever obſerved even in any other catholic country. The number of genuflections before the altar, the kiſſing of the prior's hand, the holding up of his robes by the ſubaltern prieſts, the ceremony of throwing incenſe upon all the knights of the great croſs, and neglecting the poorer knights, with many other articles, appeared to us highly ridiculous; and moſt eſſentially different indeed from that purity and ſimplicity of worſhip that conſtitutes the very eſſence of true chriſtianity; and of which the great pattern they pretend to copy, ſet ſo very noble an example.

This

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This day (the 6th of June) is held as a thankſgiving for their deliverance from a terrible conſpiracy that was formed about twenty-one years ago, by the Turkiſh ſlaves; at one ſtroke to put an end to the whole order of Malta. All the fountains of the place were to be poiſoned; and every ſlave had taken a ſolemn oath to put his maſter to death.

It was diſcovered by a Jew, who kept a coffee-houſe. He underſtood the Turkiſh language, and overheard ſome diſcourſe that he thought ſuſpicious. He went immediately and informed the grand maſter. The ſuſpected perſons were inſtantly ſeized and put to the torture, and ſoon confeſſed the whole plot. The executions were ſhocking. One hundred and twenty-five were put to death by various torments. Some were burned alive, ſome were broken on the wheel, and ſome were torn to pieces by

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by the four galleys rowing different ways, and each bringing off its limb. Since that time, the ſlaves have been much more ſtrictly watched, and have leſs liberty than formerly. Adieu. I ſhall write you again before we leave Malta.

Your's, &c.

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LETTER XVI.

Malta, June 7th.

THIS day we made an expedition thro' the iſland in coaches drawn by one mule each; the only kind of vehicle the place affords. Our conductors could ſpeak nothing but Arabic, which is ſtill the language of the common people of Malta; ſo that you may believe we did not reap much benefit from their converſation. We went firſt to the ancient city of Melita, which is near the center of the iſland, and commands a view of the whole; and in clear weather, they pretend, of part of Barbary, and of Sicily. The city is ſtrongly fortified, and is governed by an officer called the Hahem. He received us very politely, and ſhewed us the old palace, which is not indeed much worth the ſeeing. The cathedral is a very fine church; and although

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of an exceeding large ſize, is at preſent entirely hung with crimſon damaſk richly laced with gold.

The catacombs, not far from this city, are a great work. They are ſaid to extend for fifteen miles under ground; however, this you are obliged to take on the credit of your guides, as it would rather be riſking too much to put it to the trial. Many people, they aſſure us, have been loſt from advancing too far in them; the prodigious number of branches making it next to impoſſible to find the way out again.

From this we went to ſee the Boſquetta, where the grand maſter has his country palace; by the accounts we had of it at Valetta, we expected to find a foreſt ſtored with deer and every kind of game, as they talked much of the great hunts that were made every year in theſe woods.—We were not a little ſurpriſed to find only a few

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few ſcattered trees, and about half a dozen deer; but as this is the only thing like a wood in the iſland, it is eſteemed a very great curioſity. The palace is as little worth ſeeing as the foreſt; though indeed the proſpect from the top of it is very fine. The furniture is three or four hundred years old, and in the moſt Gothick taſte that can be imagined: But indeed the grand maſter ſeldom or never reſides here.

The great ſource of water that ſupplies the city of Valetta, takes its riſe near to this place; and there is an aqueduct compoſed of ſome thouſand arches, that conveys it from thence to the city. The whole of this immenſe work was finiſhed at the private expence of one of the grand maſters.

Not far from the old city there is a ſmall church, dedicated to St. Paul; and juſt by the church, a miraculous ſtatue of the ſaint with a viper on his hand; ſuppoſed to be

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placed on the very ſpot on which the houſe ſtood where he was received after his ſhipwreck on this iſland, and where he ſhook the viper off his hand into the fire without being hurt by it: At which time the Malteſe aſſure us the ſaint curſed all the venomous animals of the iſland, and baniſhed them for ever; juſt as St. Patrick treated thoſe of his favourite iſle. Whether this be the cauſe of it or not, we ſhall leave to divines to determine, (though if it had, I think St. Luke would have mentioned it in the Acts of the Apoſtles) but the fact is certain, that there are no venomous animals in Malta. They aſſured us that vipers had been brought from Sicily, and died almoſt immediately on their arrival.

Adjoining to the church there is the celebrated grotto in which the ſaint was impriſoned. It is looked upon with the utmoſt reverence and veneration; and if the ſtories they tell of it be true, it is well intitled

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intitled to it all. It is exceedingly damp, and produces (I believe by a kind of petrifaction from the water) a whitiſh kind of ſtone, which they aſſure us, when reduced to powder, is a ſovereign remedy in many diſeaſes, and ſaves the lives of thouſands every year. There is not a houſe in the iſland that is not provided with it: And they tell us there are many boxes of it ſent annually not only to Sicily and Italy, but likewiſe to the Levant and the Eaſt-Indies: and (what is conſidered as a daily ſtanding miracle) notwithſtanding this perpetual conſumption, it has never been exhauſted, nor even ſenſibly diminiſhed; the ſaint always taking care to ſupply them with a freſh quantity the day following.

You may be ſure we did not fail to ſtuff our pockets with this wonderful ſtone; I ſuſpected they would have prevented us, as I did not ſuppoſe the ſaint would have worked for heretics; however, neither he nor

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the prieſts had any objection, and we gave them a few Pauls * more for their civility. I taſted ſome of it, and believe it is a very harmleſs thing. It taſtes like exceeding bad Magneſia, and I believe has pretty much the ſame effects. They give about a tea-ſpoonful of it to children in the ſmall-pox and in fevers. It produces a copious ſweat about an hour after, and, they ſay, never fails to be of ſervice. It is likewiſe eſteemed a certain remedy againſt the bite of all venomous animals. There is a very fine ſtatue of St. Paul in the middle of this grotto, to which they aſcribe great powers.

We were delighted, on our way back to the city, with the beauty of the ſetting-ſun; much ſuperior, I think, to what I have ever obſerved it in Italy. The whole of the weſtern part of the heavens, for half an hour after ſun-ſet, was of a fine deep

* A ſmall ſilver coin.

purple,

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purple, and made a beautiful appearance: This the Malteſe tell us is generally the caſe every evening, at this ſeaſon of the year.

I forgot to ſay any thing of our preſentation to the grand maſter, for which I aſk pardon both of you and him.—His name is Pinto, and of a Portugueſe family. He has now been at the head of this ſingular little ſtate for upwards of thirty years. He received us with great politeneſs, and was highly pleaſed to find that ſome of us had been in Portugal. He mentioned the intimate commercial connections that had ſo long ſubſiſted betwixt our nations, and expreſſed his deſire of being of ſervice to us, and of rendering our ſtay in his iſland as agreeable as poſſible. He is a clear-headed, ſenſible, little old man; which, at ſo advanced a period of life, is very uncommon. Although he is conſiderably upwards of ninety, he retains all the faculties of his

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mind in perfection. He has no miniſter, but manages every thing himſelf; and has immediate information of the moſt minute occurrences. He walks up and down ſtairs, and even to church, without aſſiſtance; and has the appearance as if he would ſtill live for many years. His houſhold attendance and court are all very princely; and as grand maſter of Malta, he is more abſolute, and poſſeſſes more power than moſt ſovereign princes. His titles are Serene Highneſs and Eminence; and as he has the diſpoſal of all lucrative offices, he makes of his councils what he pleaſes; beſides, in all the councils that compoſe the juriſdiction of this little nation, he himſelf preſides, and has two votes. Since he was choſen grand maſter, he has already given away 126 commanderies, ſome of them worth upwards of 2000 l. a year; beſides priories and other offices of profit.—He has the diſpoſal of twenty-one commanderies and one priory every

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five years; and as there are always a number of expectants, he is very much courted.

He is choſen by a committee of twenty-one; which committee is nominated by the ſeven nations, three out of each nation. The election muſt be over within three days after the death of the former grand maſter; and during theſe three days, there is ſcarce a ſoul that ſleeps at Malta: All is cabal and intrigue; and moſt of the knights are maſked, to prevent their particular attachments and connections from being known: the moment the election is over, every thing returns again to its former channel.

The land force of Malta is equal to the number of men in the iſland fit to bear arms. They have about 500 regulars belonging to the ſhips of war; and 150 compoſe the guard of the prince. The two iſlands of Malta and Gozzo contain about

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150,000 inhabitants. The men are exceeding robuſt and hardy. I have ſeen them row for ten or twelve hours without intermiſſion, and without even appearing to be fatigued.

Their ſea force conſiſts of four galleys, three galliots, four ſhips of ſixty guns, and a frigate of thirty-ſix, beſides a number of the quick-ſailing little veſſels called Scampavias (literally, Runaways.) Their ſhips, galleys, and fortifications, are not only well ſupplied with excellent artillery, but they have likewiſe invented a kind of ordnance of their own, unknown to all the world beſides. For we found, to our no ſmall amazement, that the rocks were not only cut into fortifications but likewiſe into artillery to defend theſe fortifications; being hollowed out in many places into the form of immenſe mortars. The charge is ſaid to be about a barrel of gunpowder, over which they place a large piece of wood,

made

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made exactly to fit the mouth of the chamber. On this they heap a great quantity of cannon balls, ſhells, or other deadly materials; and when an enemy's ſhip approaches the harbour, they fire the whole into the air; and they pretend it produces a very great effect, making a ſhower for two or three hundred yards round that would ſink any veſſel.

Notwithſtanding the ſuppoſed bigotry of the Malteſe, the ſpirit of toleration is ſo ſtrong, that a moſque has lately been built for their ſworn enemies the Turks. Here the poor ſlaves are allowed to enjoy their religion in peace. It happened lately that ſome idle boys diſturbed them during their ſervice; they were immediately ſent to priſon, and ſeverely puniſhed. The police indeed is much better regulated than in the neighbouring countries, and aſſaſſinations and robberies are very uncommon; the laſt of which crimes the grand maſter puniſhes

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puniſhes with the utmoſt ſeverity. But he is ſaid, perhaps in compliance with the prejudice of his nation, to be much more relax with regard to the firſt.

Perhaps Malta is the only country in the world where duelling is permitted by law.—As their whole eſtabliſhment is originally founded on the wild and romantic principles of chivalry, they have ever found it too inconſiſtent with thoſe principles to aboliſh duelling; but they have laid it under ſuch reſtrictions as greatly to leſſen its danger. Theſe are curious enough.—The duelliſts are obliged to decide their quarrel in one particular ſtreet of the city; and if they preſume to fight any where elſe, they are liable to the rigour of the law. But what is not leſs ſingular, and much more in their favour, they are obliged under the moſt ſevere penalties to put up their ſword, when ordered ſo to do, by a *woman*, a *prieſt*, or a *knight*.

Under

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Under theſe limitations, in the midſt of a great city, one would imagine it almoſt impoſſible that a duel could ever end in blood; however, this is not the caſe:—A croſs is always painted on the wall oppoſite to the ſpot where a knight has been killed, in commemoration of his fall.—We counted about twenty of theſe croſſes.

About three months ago, two knights had a diſpute at a billiard table.—One of them, after giving a great deal of abuſive language, added a blow; but to the aſtoniſhment of all Malta (in whoſe annals there is not a ſimilar inſtance) after ſo great a provocation, he abſolutely refuſed to fight his antagoniſt.—The challenge was repeated, and he had time to reflect on the conſequences, but ſtill he refuſed to enter the liſts.—He was condemned to make *amende honorable* in the great church of St. John for forty-five days ſucceſſively; then to be confined in a dungeon without light

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light for five years, after which he is to remain a priſoner in the caſtle for life. The unfortunate young man who received the blow is likewiſe in diſgrace, as he has not had an opportunity of wiping it out in the blood of his adverſary.

This has been looked upon as a very ſingular affair, and is ſtill one of the principal topics of converſation. The firſt part of the ſentence has already been executed, and the poor wretch is now in his dungeon. Nor is it thought, that any abatement will be made in what remains.

If the legiſlature in other countries puniſhed with equal rigour thoſe that do fight, as it does in this thoſe that do not; I believe we ſhould ſoon have an end of duelling: But I ſhould imagine the puniſhment for fighting ought never to be a capital one, (but rather ſomething ignominious;) and the puniſhment for not fighting ſhould always

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be ſo, or at leaſt ſome ſevere corporal puniſhment; for ignominy will have as little effect on the perſon who is willing to ſubmit to the appellation of a coward, as the fear of death on one who makes it his glory to deſpiſe it.

The Malteſe ſtill talk with horror of a ſtorm that happened here on the 29th of October, 1757, which as it was of a very ſingular nature, I ſhall tranſlate you ſome account of it from a little book they have given me, written on that ſubject.

About three quarters of an hour after midnight, there appeared to the ſouth-weſt of the city a great black cloud, which, as it approached, changed its colour, till at laſt it became like a flame of fire mixed with black ſmoke. A dreadful noiſe was heard on its approach, that alarmed the whole city. It paſſed over part of the port, and came firſt upon an Engliſh ſhip, which in an inſtant was torn to pieces, and nothing

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thing left but the hulk; part of the maſts, ſails, and cordage were carried along with the cloud to a conſiderable diſtance. The ſmall boats and fellouques that fell in its way were all broken to pieces, and ſunk. The noiſe increaſed and became more frightful. A ſentinel, terrified at its approach, run into his box: Both he and it were lifted up and carried into the ſea, where he periſhed. It then traverſed a conſiderable part of the city, and laid in ruins almoſt every thing that ſtood in its way. Several houſes were laid level with the ground, and it did not leave one ſteeple in its paſſage. The bells of ſome of them, together with the ſpires, were carried to a conſiderable diſtance. The roofs of the churches were demoliſhed and beat down, which, if it had happened in the day-time, muſt have had dreadful conſequences, as all the world would immediately have run to the churches.

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It went off at the north-eaſt-point of the city; and demoliſhing the light-houſe, is ſaid to have mounted up into the air, with a frightful noiſe; and paſſed over the ſea to Sicily, where it tore up ſome trees, and did other damage, but nothing conſiderable; as its fury had been moſtly ſpent upon Malta. The number of killed and wounded amounted to near 200; and the loſs of ſhipping, houſes, and churches, was very conſiderable.

Several treatiſes have been written to account for this ſingular hurricane, but I have found nothing at all ſatisfactory. The ſentiments of the people are conciſe and poſitive. They declare, with one voice, that it was a legion of devils let looſe to puniſh them for their ſins. There are a thouſand people in Malta that will take their oath they ſaw them within the cloud, all as black as pitch, and breathing out fire and brimſtone. They add, that if there

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had not been a few godly people amongſt them, their whole city would certainly have been involved in one univerſal deſtruction.

The horſe-races of Malta are of a very uncommon kind. They are performed without either ſaddle, bridle, whip, or ſpur; and yet the horſes are ſaid to run full ſpeed, and to afford a great deal of diverſion. They are accuſtomed to the ground for ſome weeks before; and although it is entirely over rock and pavement, there are very ſeldom any accidents. They have races of aſſes and mules performed in the ſame manner, four times every year. The rider is only furniſhed with a machine like a ſhoemaker's awl, to prick on his courſer if he is lazy.

As Malta is an epitome of all Europe, and an aſſemblage of the younger brothers, who are commonly the beſt, of its firſt families,

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milies, it is probably one of the beſt academies for politeneſs in this part of the globe; beſides, where every one is entitled by law as well as cuſtom, to demand ſatisfaction for the leaſt breach of it, people are under a neceſſity of being very exact and circumſpect, both with regard to their words and actions.

All the knights and commanders have much the appearance of gentlemen, and men of the world. We met with no character in extreme. The ridicules and prejudices of every particular nation, are by degrees ſoftened and wore off, by the familiar intercourſe and colliſion with each other. It is curious to obſerve the effect it produces upon the various people that compoſe this little medley. The French ſkip, the German ſtrut, and the Spaniſh ſtalk, are all mingled together in ſuch ſmall proportions, that none of them are ſtriking;

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yet every one of theſe nations ſtill retain ſomething of their original characteriſtic: It is only the exuberance of it that is wore off; and it is ſtill eaſy to diſtinguiſh the inhabitants of the ſouth and north ſide of the Pyrenees, as well as thoſe of the eaſt and weſt ſide of the Rhine; for though the Pariſian has, in a great meaſure, loſt his aſſuming air, the Spaniard his taciturnity and ſolemnity, the German his formality and his pride; yet ſtill you ſee the German, the Frenchman, and the Spaniard: It is only the caricature, that formerly made them ridiculous, that has diſappeared.

This inſtitution, which is a ſtrange compound of the military and eccleſiaſtic, has now ſubſiſted for near ſeven hundred years; and though, I believe, one of the firſt-born, has long ſurvived every other child of chivalry. It poſſeſſes great riches in

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in moſt of the catholic countries of Europe; and did ſo in England too, before the time of Henry VIII. but that capricious tyrant did not chuſe that any inſtitution, however antient or reſpected, ſhould remain in his dominions, that had any doubt of his ſupremacy and infallibility; he therefore ſeized on all their poſſeſſions, at the ſame time that he enriched himſelf by the plunder of the church. It was in vain for them to plead that they were rather a military than an eccleſiaſtic order, and by their valour had been of great ſervice to Europe, in their wars againſt the infidels: It was not agreeable to his ſyſtem ever to hear a reaſon for any thing; and no perſon could poſſibly be right, that was capable of ſuppoſing that the king could be wrong.

Malta, as well as Sicily, was long under the tyranny of the Saracens; from which

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they were both delivered about the middle of the eleventh century, by the valour of the Normans: After which time, the fate of Malta commonly depended on that of Sicily, till the emperor Charles V. about the year 1530, gave it, together with the iſland of Gozzo, to the knights of St. John of Jeruſalem, who at that time had loſt the iſland of Rhodes. In teſtimony of this conceſſion, the grand maſter is ſtill obliged, every year, to ſend a falcon to the king of Sicily, or his viceroy; and on every new ſucceſſion, to ſwear allegiance, and to receive, from the hands of the Sicilian monarch, the inveſtiture of theſe two iſlands.

Ever ſince our arrival here, the weather has been perfectly clear and ſerene, without a cloud in the ſky; and for ſome time after ſun-ſet, the heavens exhibit a moſt beautiful appearance, which I don't recollect to

have

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have obſerved any where elſe. The eaſtern part of the hemiſphere appears of a rich deep purple, and the weſtern is the true yellow glow of Claud Lorrain, that you uſed to admire ſo much. The weather, however, is not intolerably hot; the thermometer ſtands commonly betwixt 75 and 76. Adieu. We are now preparing for a long voyage, and it is not eaſy to ſay from whence I ſhall write you next.

Ever your's.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

In page 356. line 19. for *weſtern*, read *eaſtern*.

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SICILY AND MALTA.

VOL. II.

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SICILY AND MALTA.

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.

OF SOMERLY IN SUFFOLK;

FROM

P. BRYDONE, F.R.S.

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. STRAHAN; AND

T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

MDCCLXXIV.

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LETTER XVII.

DEAR BECKFORD, Agrigentum, June 11th.

WE left the port of Malta in a ſparonaro which we hired to convey us to this city.

We coaſted along the iſland, and went to take a view of the north-port, its fortifications and lazaretto. All theſe are very great, and more like the works of a mighty and powerful people, than of ſo ſmall a

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ſtate. The mortars cut out of the rock are a tremendous invention. There are about fifty of them, near the different creeks and landing-places round the iſland. They are directed at the moſt probable ſpots where boats would attempt a landing. The mouths of ſome of theſe mortars are about ſix feet wide, and they are ſaid to throw a hundred cantars of cannon-ball or ſtones. A cantar is, I think, about a hundred pound weight; ſo that if they do take place, they muſt make a dreadful havoc amongſt a debarkation of boats.

The diſtance of Malta from Gozzo is not above four or five miles, and the ſmall iſland of Commino lies betwixt them. The coaſts of all the three are bare and barren, but covered over with towers, redoubts, and fortifications of various kinds.

As Gozzo is ſuppoſed to be the celebrated iſland of Calypſo, you may believe we expected

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pected ſomething very fine; but we were diſappointed. It muſt either be greatly fallen off ſince the time ſhe inhabited it, or the archbiſhop of Cambray, as well as Homer, muſt have flattered greatly in their painting. We looked, as we went along the coaſt, for the grotto of the goddeſs, but could ſee nothing that reſembled it. Neither could we obſerve thoſe verdant banks eternally covered with flowers; nor thoſe lofty trees for ever in bloſſom, that loſt their heads in the clouds, and afforded a ſhade to the ſacred baths of her and her nymphs. We ſaw, indeed, ſome nymphs; but as neither Calypſo nor Eucharis ſeemed to be of the number, we paid little attention to them, and I was in no apprehenſion about my Telemachus: Indeed, it would have required an imagination as ſtrong as Don Quixote's, to have brought about the metamorphoſis.

Finding our hopes fruſtrated, we ordered our ſailors to pull out to ſea, and bid adieu

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to the iſland of Calypſo, concluding, either that our intelligence was falſe, or that both the iſland and its inhabitants were greatly changed. We ſoon found ourſelves once more at the mercy of the waves: Night came on, and our rowers began their evening ſong to the Virgin, and beat time with their oars. Their offering was acceptable; for we had the moſt delightful weather. We wrapt ourſelves up in our cloaks, and ſlept moſt comfortably, having provided mattraſſes at Malta. By a little after day-break, we found we had got without ſight of all the iſlands, and ſaw only a part of mount Ætna ſmoking above the waters. The wind ſprung up fair, and by ten o'clock we had ſight of the coaſt of Sicily.

On conſidering the ſmallneſs of our boat, and the great breadth of this paſſage, we could not help admiring the temerity of theſe people, who, at all ſeaſons of the year, venture to Sicily in theſe diminutive veſſels;

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veſſels; yet it is very ſeldom that any accident happens; they are ſo perfectly acquainted with the weather, foretelling, almoſt to a certainty, every ſtorm, many hours before it comes on. The ſailors look upon this paſſage as one of the moſt ſtormy and dangerous in the Mediterranean. It is called the canal of Malta, and is much dreaded by the Levant ſhips; but indeed, at this ſeaſon, there is no danger.

We arrived at Sicily a little before ſunſet, and landed oppoſite to Raguſa, and not far from the ruins of the little Hybla; the third town of that name in the iſland, diſtinguiſhed by the epithets of the Great, (near mount Ætna) the Leſſer, (near Auguſta) and the Little (juſt by Raguſa). Here we found a fine ſandy beach, and and whilſt the ſervants were employed in dreſſing ſupper, we amuſed ourſelves with bathing and gathering ſhells, of which there is a conſiderable variety. We were

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in expectation of finding the nautilus, for which this iſland is famous; but in this we did not ſucceed. However, we picked up ſome handſome ſhells, though not equal to thoſe that are brought from the Indies.

After ſupper, we again launched our bark, and went to ſea. The wind was favourable as we could wiſh. We had our nightly ſerenade as uſual, and the next day, by twelve o'clock, we reached the celebrated port of Agrigentum.

The captain of the port gave us a polite reception, and inſiſted on accompanying us to the city, which ſtands near the top of a mountain, four miles diſtant from the harbour, and about eleven hundred feet above the level of the ſea. The road on each ſide is bordered by a row of exceeding large American aloes; upwards of one-third of them being at preſent in full blow, and making the moſt beautiful appearance

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pearance that can be imagined. The flower-ſtems of this noble plant are in general betwixt twenty and thirty feet high, (ſome of them more) and are covered with flowers from top to bottom; which taper regularly, and form a beautiful kind of pyramid, the baſe or pedeſtal of which is the fine ſpreading leaves of the plant. As this is eſteemed in northern countries, one of the greateſt curioſities of the vegetable tribe, we were happy at ſeeing it in ſo great perfection; much greater, I think, than I had ever ſeen it before.

With us, I think, it is vulgarly reckoned, (though I believe falſely) that they only flower once in a hundred years. Here I was informed, that, at the lateſt, they always blow the ſixth year; but for the moſt part the fifth.—As the whole ſubſtance of the plant is carried into the ſtem and the flowers, the leaves begin to decay as ſoon as the blow is completed, and

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a numerous offspring of young plants are produced round the root of the old one; theſe are ſlip'd off, and formed into new plantations, either for hedges or for avenues to their country-houſes.

The city of Agrigentum, now called *Girgenti*, is irregular and ugly; though from a few miles diſtance at ſea, it makes a noble appearance, little inferior to that of Genoa.—As it lies on the ſlope of the mountain, the houſes do not hide one another; but every part of the city is ſeen.

On our arrival, we found a great falling off indeed; the houſes are mean, the ſtreets dirty, crooked, and narrow.—It ſtill contains near twenty thouſand people; a ſad reduction from its antient grandeur, when it was ſaid to conſiſt of no leſs than eight hundred thouſand, being the next city to Syracuſe for numbers.

The

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The Canonico Spoto, from Mr. Hamilton's letter, and from our former acquaintance with him at Naples, gave us a kind, and a hoſpitable reception. He inſiſted on our being his gueſts; and we are now in his houſe, comfortably lodged, and elegantly entertained, which, after our crowded little apartment in the ſparonaro, is by no means a diſagreeable change.—Farewell.—I ſhall write you again ſoon.

Ever yours.

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LETTER XVIII.

Agrigentum, June 12th,

WE are juſt now returned from examining the antiquities of Agrigentum, the moſt conſiderable, perhaps, of any in Sicily.

The ruins of the antient city lie about a ſhort mile from the modern one. Theſe, like the ruins of Syracuſe, are moſtly converted into corn-fields, vineyards, and orchards; but the remains of the temples here, are much more conſpicuous than thoſe of Syracuſe. Four of theſe have ſtood pretty much in a right line, near the ſouth wall of the city. The firſt they call the temple of Venus; almoſt one half of which ſtill remains. The ſecond is that of Concord: It may be conſidered as entire, not one column having as yet fallen. It is

preciſely

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preciſely of the ſame dimenſions and ſame architecture as that of Venus, which had probably ſerved as the model for it. By the following inſcription, found on a large piece of marble, it appears to have been built at the expence of the Lilibitani; probably after having been defeated by the people of Agrigentum.

CONCORDIÆ AGRIGENTINORUM SACRUM,
RESPUBLICA LILIBITANORUM,
DEDICANTIBUS M. ATTERIO CANDIDO
PROCOS. ET L. CORNELIO MAR-
CELLO. Q. P. R. P. R.

Theſe temples are ſupported by thirteen large fluted Doric columns on each ſide; and ſix at each end. All their baſes, capitals, entablatures, &c. ſtill remain entire; and as the architecture is perfectly ſimple, without any thing affected or ſtudied, the whole ſtrikes the eye at once, and pleaſes very much. The columns are, indeed, ſhorter than the common Doric proportions;

and

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and they certainly are not ſo elegant as ſome of the antient temples near Rome, and in other places in Italy.

The third temple is that of Hercules, altogether in ruins; but appears to have been of a much greater ſize than the former two. We meaſured ſome of the broken columns, near ſeven feet in diameter. It was here that the famous ſtatue of Hercules ſtood, ſo much celebrated by Cicero; which the people of Agrigentum defended with ſuch bravery, againſt Verres, who attempted to ſeize it. You will find the whole ſtory in his pleadings againſt that infamous prætor.

There was likewiſe in this temple a famous picture by Zeuxis. Hercules was repreſented in his cradle killing the two ſerpents: Alcmena and Amphitrion having juſt entered the apartment, were painted with every mark of terror and aſtoniſhment.

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ment. Pliny ſays, the painter looked upon this piece as invaluable; and therefore could never be prevailed on to put a price upon it, but gave it as a preſent to Agrigentum, to be placed in the temple of Hercules. Theſe two great maſter-pieces have been loſt. We thought of them with regret, whilſt we trod on theſe venerable ruins.

Near to this lie ruins of the temple of Jupiter Olympus, ſuppoſed, by the Sicilian authors, to have been the largeſt in the heathen world. It is now called *il tempio de' giganti*, or the Giants Temple, as the people cannot conceive that ſuch maſſes of rock could ever be put together by the hands of ordinary men. The fragments of columns are indeed enormous, and give us a vaſt idea of this fabric. It is ſaid to have ſtood till the year 1100; but is now a perfect ruin. Our Cicerones aſſured us, it was exactly the ſame dimenſions with

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the church of St. Peter at Rome: But in this they are egregiouſly miſtaken.—St. Peter's being much greater than any thing that ever the heathen world produced.

There are the remains of many more temples, and other great works; but theſe, I think, are the moſt conſpicuous. They ſhew you that of Vulcan, of Proſerpine, of Caſtor and Pollux, and a very remarkable one of Juno. This too was enriched by one of the moſt famous pictures of antiquity; which is celebrated by many of the antient writers.—Zeuxis was determined to excel every thing that had gone before him, and to form a model of human perfection. To this end, he prevailed on all the fineſt women of Agrigentum, who were even ambitious of the honour, to appear naked before him. Of theſe he choſe five for his models, and moulding all the perfections of theſe beauties into one, he compoſed the picture of the goddeſs. This was ever looked upon

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on as his maſter-piece; but was unfortunately burnt when the Carthaginians took Agrigentum.—Many of the citizens retired into this temple as to a place of ſafety; but as ſoon as they found the gates attacked by the enemy, they agreed to ſet fire to it, and choſe rather to periſh in the flames, than ſubmit to the power of the conquerors. However, neither the deſtruction of the temple, nor the loſs of their lives, has been ſo much regretted by poſterity, as the loſs of this picture.

The temple of Æſculapius (the ruins of which are ſtill to be ſeen) was not leſs celebrated for a ſtatue of Apollo. It was taken from them by the Carthaginians, at the ſame time that the temple of Juno was burnt. It was carried off by the conquerors, and continued the greateſt ornament of Carthage for many years, and was at laſt reſtored by Scipio, at the final deſtruction of that city. Some of the Sicilians allege,

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allege, I believe without any ground, that it was afterwards carried to Rome, and ſtill remains there, the wonder of all ages; known to the whole world under the name of the Apollo of Belvidere; and allowed to be the perfection of human art.

I ſhould be very tedious, were I to give you a minute deſcription of every piece of antiquity. Indeed, little or nothing is to be learned from the greateſt part of them. The antient walls of the city are moſtly cut out of the rock; the catacombs and ſepulchres are all very great: One of theſe is worthy of particular notice, becauſe it is mentioned by Polybius, as being oppoſite to the temple of Hercules, and to have been ſtruck by lightning even in his time. It remains almoſt entire, and anſwers the deſcription he gives of it: The inſcriptions are ſo defaced, that we could make nothing of them.

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This is the monument of Tero king of Agrigentum, one of the firſt of the Sicilian tyrants. The great antiquity of it may be gathered from this, that Tero is not only mentioned by Diodorus, Polybius, and the later of the antient hiſtorians; but likewiſe by Herodotus, and Pindar, who dedicates two of his Olympic odes to him: So that this monument muſt be more than two thouſand years old. It is a kind of pyramid, probably one of the moſt durable forms.

All theſe mighty ruins of Agrigentum, and the whole mountain on which it ſtands, are compoſed of a concretion of ſea-ſhells, run together, and cemented by a kind of ſand or gravel, and now become as hard, and perhaps more durable than even marble itſelf. This ſtone is white before it has been expoſed to the air; but in the temples and other ruins, it is become of a dark brown. I ſhall bring home ſome

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pieces of it for the inſpection of the curious. I found theſe ſhells on the very ſummit of the mountain, at leaſt fourteen or fifteen hundred feet above the level of the ſea. They are of the commoneſt kinds, cockles, muſſels, oyſters, &c.

" The things we know are neither rich nor rare;
" But wonder how the devil they got there."
POPE.

By what means they have been lifted up to this vaſt height, and ſo intimately mixed with the ſubſtance of the rock, I leave to you and your philoſophical friends to determine.—This old battered globe of ours, has probably ſuffered many convulſions not recorded in any hiſtory.—You have heard of the vaſt Stratum of bones lately diſcovered in Iſtria and Oſſero;—part of it runs below rocks of marble, upwards of forty feet in thickneſs, and they have not yet been able to aſcertain its extent: Something of the ſame kind has been found in Dalmatia,

in

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in the islands of the Archipelago; and, lately, I am told, in the rock of Gibraltar.—Now, the deluge recorded in Scripture, will hardly account for all the appearances of this sort to be met with, almost in every country in the world.—But I am interrupted by visitors;—which is a lucky circumstance, both for you and me; for I was just going to be very philosophical, and consequently very dull.—Adieu.

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LETTER XIX.

Agrigentum, June 13th.

THE interruption in my laſt, was a deputation from the biſhop, to invite us to a great dinner to-morrow at the port; ſo that we ſhall know whether this place ſtill deſerves the character of luxury, it always held amongſt the antients: We have great reaſon to think, from the politeneſs and attention we have met with, that it has never loſt its antient hoſpitality, for which it was likewiſe ſo much celebrated.

Plato, when he viſited Sicily, was ſo much ſtruck with the luxury of Agrigentum, both in their houſes and their tables, that a ſaying of his is ſtill recorded: That they built as if they were never to die, and eat as if they had not an hour to live.

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It is preſerved by Ælian, and is juſt now before me.

He tells a ſtory by way of illuſtration, which ſhews a much greater conformity of manners than one could have expected, betwixt the young nobility amongſt the antients, and our own at this day.

He ſays, that after a great feaſt, where there was a number of young people of the firſt faſhion, they got all ſo much intoxicated, that from their reeling and tumbling upon one another, they imagined they were at ſea in a ſtorm, and began to think themſelves in the moſt imminent danger; at laſt they agreed, that the only way to ſave their lives was to lighten the ſhip, and with one accord began to throw the rich furniture out of the windows, to the great edification of the mob below; and did not ſtop till they had entirely cleared the houſe of it, which, from this exploit,

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was ever after denominated the *triremes*, or the ſhip. He ſays it was one of the principal palaces of the city, and retained this name for ever after. In Dublin, I have been told, there are more than one triremes; and that this frolic, which they call throwing the houſe out of the window, is by no means uncommon.

At the ſame time that Agrigentum is abuſed by the antient authors for its drunkenneſs, it is as much celebrated for its hoſpitality; and I believe, it will be found, that this virtue, and this vice, have ever had a ſort of ſneaking kindneſs for each other, and have generally gone hand in hand, both in antient and in modern times. The Swiſs, the Scotch, and the Iriſh, who are at preſent the moſt drunken people in Europe, are likewiſe, in all probability, the moſt hoſpitable; whereas, in the very ſober countries, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, hoſpitality is a virtue very little known, or indeed

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indeed any other virtue, except ſobriety; which has been produced, probably a good deal from the tyranny of their government, and their dread of the inquiſition; for where every perſon is in fear, leſt his real ſentiments ſhould appear, it would be very dangerous to unlock his heart; but in countries where there are neither civil nor eccleſiaſtical tyrants to lay an embargo on our thoughts, people are under no apprehenſion leſt they ſhould be known.

However, theſe are not the only reaſons. The moral virtues and vices may ſometimes depend on natural cauſes.—The very elevated ſituation of this city, where the air is exceedingly thin and cold, has perhaps been one reaſon why its inhabitants are fonder of wine than their neighbours in the valleys.

The ſame may be ſaid of the three nations I have mentioned; the greateſt

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part of their countries lying amongſt hills and mountains, where the climate renders ſtrong liquors more neceſſary; or, at leaſt, leſs pernicious, than in low places.—It is not ſurpriſing, that this practice, probably begun amongſt the mountains, where the air is ſo keen, has by degrees crept down into the valleys, and has at laſt become almoſt epidemical in thoſe countries.

Fazzello, after railing at Agrigentum for its drunkenneſs, adds, that there was no town in the iſland ſo celebrated for its hoſpitality. He ſays that many of the nobles had ſervants placed at the gates of the city, to invite all ſtrangers to their houſes. It is in reference to this probably, that Empedocles ſays, that even the gates of the city proclaimed a welcome to every ſtranger. From our experience we are well intitled to ſay, that the people of Agrigentum ſtill retain this antiquated virtue, ſo little known in polite countries. To-morrow we ſhall have

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have a better opportunity of judging whether it is ſtill accompanied by its ſiſter vice.

The accounts that the old authors give of the magnificence of Agrigentum are amazing; though indeed there are none of them that proclaim it in ſtronger terms than the monuments that ſtill remain.—Diodorus ſays, the great veſſels for holding water were commonly of ſilver, and the litters and carriages for the moſt part were of ivory richly adorned. He mentions a pond made at an immenſe expence, full of fiſh and of water-fowl, that in his time was the great reſort of the inhabitants, on their feſtivals; but he ſays, that even then (in the age of Auguſtus) it was going to ruin, requiring too great an expence to keep it up. There is not now the ſmalleſt veſtige of it: But there is ſtill to be ſeen a curious ſpring of water that throws up a kind of oil on its ſurface, which

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which is made uſe of by the poor people in many diſeaſes. This is ſuppoſed to mark out the place of the celebrated pond; which is recorded by Pliny and Solinus to have abounded with this oil.

Diodorus, ſpeaking of the riches of Agrigentum, mentions one of its citizens returning victorious from the Olympic games, and entering his city, attended by three hundred chariots, each drawn by four white horſes, richly capariſoned; and gives many other inſtances of their vaſt profuſion and luxury.

Thoſe horſes, according to that author, were eſteemed all over Greece, for their beauty and ſwiftneſs; and their race is celebrated by many of the antient writers.

"Arduus inde Agragas oſtentat maxima longe
"Moenia, magnanimum quondam generator
"equorum,"

ſays

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ſays Virgil in the third Æneid; and Pliny acquaints us, that thoſe which had been often victorious at the games were not only honoured with burial rites, but had magnificent monuments erected to eternize their memory. This Timeus confirms: He tells us, that he ſaw at Agrigentum ſeveral pyramids built as ſepulchral monuments to celebrated horſes; he adds that when thoſe animals became old and unfit for ſervice, they were always taken care of, and ſpent the remainder of their lives in eaſe and plenty.—I could wiſh that our countrymen would imitate the gratitude and humanity of the Sicilians in this article; at leaſt, the latter part of it. I don't know that our nation can ſo juſtly be taxed with cruelty or ingratitude in any other article as in their treatment of horſes, the animal that of all others is the moſt intitled to our care. How piteous a thing it is, on many of your great roads, to ſee the fineſt old hunters, that were once the

glory

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glory of the chace, condemned, in the decline of life, to the tyranny of the moſt cruel oppreſſors; in whoſe hands they ſuffer the moſt extreme miſery, till they at laſt ſink under the taſk that is aſſigned them. I am called away to ſee ſome more antiques, but ſhall finiſh this letter to-night, as the poſt goes off for Italy to-morrow morning.

13th; Afternoon. We have ſeen a great many old walls and vaults that little or nothing can be made of. They give them names, and pretend to tell you what they were, but as they bear no reſemblance to thoſe things now, it would be no leſs idle to trouble you with their nonſenſe than to believe it. We have indeed ſeen one thing that has amply repaid us for the trouble we have taken. It is the repreſentation of a boar-hunting in alto relievo, on white marble; and is at leaſt equal, if not ſuperior, to any thing of the kind I have met

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with in Italy. It conſiſts of four different parts, which form the hiſtory of this remarkable chace and its conſequences.

The firſt is the preparation for the hunt. There are twelve hunters, with each his lance, and a ſhort hanger under his left arm of a very ſingular form. The dogs reſemble thoſe we call lurchers. The horſes are done with great fire and ſpirit, and are perhaps a better proof of the excellence of the race, than even the teſtimony of their authors; for the artiſt that formed theſe muſt certainly have been accuſtomed to ſee very fine horſes.

The ſecond piece repreſents the chace.—The third, the death of the king, by a fall from his horſe.—And the fourth, the deſpair of the queen and her attendants, on receiving the news. She is repreſented as falling down in a ſwoon, and ſupported by her women, who are all in tears.

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It is executed in the moſt maſterly ſtile, and is indeed one of the fineſt remains of antiquity. It is preſerved in the great church, which is noted through all Sicily for a remarkable echo; ſomething in the manner of our whiſpering gallery at St. Paul's, though more difficult to be accounted for.

If one perſon ſtands at the weſt gate, and another places himſelf on the cornice, at the moſt diſtant point of the church, exactly behind the great altar, they can hold a converſation in very low whiſpers.

For many years this ſingularity was little known; and ſeveral of the confeſſing chairs being placed near the great altar, the wags, who were in the ſecret, uſed to take their ſtation at the door of the cathedral; and by this means heard diſtinctly every word that paſſed betwixt the confeſſor and his penitent; of which, you may believe, they did

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did not fail to make their own uſe when occaſion offered.—The moſt ſecret intrigues were diſcovered; and every woman in Agrigentum changed either her gallant or her confeſſor. Yet ſtill it was the ſame.—At laſt, however, the cauſe was found out; the chairs were removed, and other precautions were taken, to prevent the diſcovery of theſe ſacred myſteries; and a mutual amneſty paſſed amongſt all the offended parties.

Agrigentum, like Syracuſe, was long ſubject to the yoke of tyrants. Fazzello gives ſome account of their cruelty, but I have no intention of repeating it: One ſtory, however pleaſed me; it is a well known one, but as it is ſhort, you ſhall have it.

Perillo, a goldſmith, by way of paying court to Phalaris the tyrant, made him a preſent of a brazen bull, of admirable work-

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manſhip; hollow within, and ſo contrived that the voice of a perſon ſhut up in it, ſounded exactly like the bellowing of a real bull. The artiſt pointed out to the tyrant what an admirable effect this muſt produce, were he only to ſhut up a few criminals in it, and make a fire under them.

Phalaris, ſtruck with ſo horrid an idea, and perhaps curious to try the experiment, told the goldſmith that he himſelf was the only perſon worthy of animating his bull: that he muſt have ſtudied the note that made it roar to the greateſt advantage, and that it would be unjuſt to deprive him of any part of the honour of his invention. Upon which he ordered the goldſmith to be ſhut up, and made a great fire around the bull; which immediately began to roar, to the admiration and delight of all Agrigentum. Cicero ſays this bull was carried to Carthage at the taking of Agrigentum; and

was

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was reſtored again by Scipio, after the deſtruction of that city.

Fazzello adds another ſtory, which is ſtill more to the honour of Phalaris. Two friends, Melanippus and Cariton, had conſpired his death. Cariton, in hopes of ſaving his friend from the danger of the enterprize, determined to execute it alone. However, in his attempt to poignard the tyrant, he was ſeized by the guards, and immediately put to the torture, to make him confeſs his accomplice: this he bore with the utmoſt fortitude, refuſing to make the diſcovery; 'till Melanippus, informed of the ſituation of his friend, ran to the tyrant, aſſuring him that he alone was the guilty perſon; that it was entirely by his inſtigation that Cariton had acted; and begged that he might be put on the rack in the place of his friend. Phalaris, ſtruck with ſuch heroiſm, pardoned them both.

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Notwithſtanding this generous action, he was in many reſpects a barbarous tyrant. Fazzello gives the following account of his death, with which I ſhall conclude this letter, for I am monſtrouſly tired, and, I dare ſay, ſo are you. Zeno, the philoſopher, came to Agrigentum, and being admitted into the preſence of the tyrant, adviſed him, for his own comfort, as well as that of his ſubjects, to reſign his power, and to lead a private life. Phalaris did not reliſh theſe philoſophical ſentiments; and ſuſpecting Zeno to be in a conſpiracy with ſome of his ſubjects, ordered him to be put to the torture in preſence of the citizens of Agrigentum.

Zeno immediately began to reproach them with cowardice and puſilanimity in ſubmitting tamely to the yoke of ſo worthleſs a tyrant; and in a ſhort time raiſed ſuch a flame that they defeated the guards, and ſtoned Phalaris to death.—I dare ſay you

are

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are glad they did it ſo quickly.—Well, I ſhall not write ſuch long letters for the future; for I aſſure you it is at leaſt as troubleſome to the writer as the reader. Adieu. We ſhall ſail to-morrow or next morning for Trapani, from whence you may expect to hear from me. We are now going out to examine more antique walls, but I ſhall not trouble you with them.

Farewell.

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LETTER XX.

June 16th.

WHEN I have nothing elſe to do, I generally take up the pen. We are now on the top of a high mountain, about half way betwixt Agrigentum and Palermo. Our ſea expedition by Trapani has failed, and we are determined to put no more confidence in that element, happy beyond meaſure to find ourſelves at a diſtance from it, though in the moſt wretched of villages. We have travelled all night on mules; and arrived here about ten o'clock, overcome with ſleep and fatigue. We have juſt had an excellent diſh of tea, which never fails to cure me of both; and I am now as freſh as when we ſet out. It has not had the ſame effect on my companions: they have thrown themſelves down on a vile ſtraw-

bed

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bed in the corner of the hovel; and, in ſpite of a parcel of ſtarved chickens, that are fluttering about and picking the ſtraws all round them, they are already faſt aſleep.

I ſhall ſeize that time to recapitulate what has happened ſince my laſt.

The day after I wrote you, we made ſome little excurſions round Agrigentum. The country is delightful; producing corn, wine, and oil, in the greateſt abundance: the fields are, at the ſame time, covered with a variety of the fineſt fruits; oranges, lemons, pomegranates, almonds, piſtachio-nuts, *&c.* Theſe afforded us almoſt as agreeable an entertainment as the conſideration of the ruins from whence they ſpring.

We dined with the biſhop, according to agreement, and roſe from table, convinced that the antient Agrigentini could not poſ-

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ſibly underſtand the true luxury of eating better than their deſcendants, to whom they have tranſmitted a very competent portion both of their ſocial virtues and vices. I beg their pardon for calling them vices, I wiſh I had a ſofter name for it; it looks like ingratitude for their hoſpitality, for which we owe them ſo much.

We were juſt thirty at table, but, upon my word, I do not think we had leſs than an hundred diſhes of meat. Theſe were dreſſed with the richeſt and moſt delicate ſauces; and convinced us that the old Roman proverb of "Siculus coquus et Sicula menſa," was not more applicable in their time, than it is at preſent. Nothing was wanting that could be invented to ſtimulate and to flatter the palate; and to create a falſe appetite as well as to ſatisfy it. Some of the very diſhes ſo much reliſhed by the Roman epicures made a part of the feaſt; particularly the morene, which

is

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is ſo often mentioned by their authors: it is a ſpecies of eel, found only in this part of the Mediterranean, and ſent from hence to ſeveral of the courts of Europe. It is not ſo fat and luſcious as other eels, ſo that you can eat a good deal more of it: its fleſh is as white as ſnow, and is indeed a very great delicacy. But a modern refinement in luxury has, I think, ſtill produced a greater: By a particular kind of management they make the livers of their fowls grow to a large ſize, and at the ſame time acquire a high and rich flavour. It is indeed a moſt incomparable diſh; but the means of procuring it is ſo cruel, that I will not even truſt it with you. Perhaps, without any bad intention, you might mention it to ſome of your friends, they to others, till at laſt it might come into the hands of thoſe that would be glad to try the experiment; and the whole race of poultry might ever have reaſon to curſe me: let it ſuffice to ſay, that it occaſions a pain-

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ful and lingering death to the poor animal: that I know is enough to make you wiſh never to taſte of it, whatever effect it may have upon others.

The Sicilians eat of every thing, and attempted to make us do the ſame. The company was remarkably merry, and did by no means belie their antient character, for moſt of them were more than half ſeas over, long before we roſe from table; and I was ſomewhat apprehenſive of a ſecond edition of the Triremes ſcene, as they were beginning to reel exceedingly. By the bye, I do not doubt but that phraſe of *Half ſeas over*, may have taken its origin from ſome ſuch ſtory. They begged us to make a bowl of punch, a liquor they had often heard of, but had never ſeen. The materials were immediately found, and we ſucceeded ſo well, that they preferred it to all the wines on the table, of which they had a great variety. We were obliged to

repleniſh

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repleniſh the bowl ſo often, that I really expected to ſee moſt of them under the table. They called it Pontio, and ſpoke loudly in its praiſe; declaring, that Pontio (alluding to Pontius Pilate) was a much better fellow than they had ever taken him for. However, after dinner, one of them, a reverend canon, grew exceſſively ſick, and while he was throwing up, he turned to me with a rueful countenance, and ſhaking his head, he groaned out, "Ah, Signor Capitano, ſapeva ſempre che Pontio era un grande traditore."—"I always knew that Pontius was a great traitor." Another of them overhearing him, exclaimed—"Aſpettatevi Signor Canonico."—"Not ſo faſt (ſaid he) my good Canon."—"Niente al pregiudizio di Signor Pontio, vi prego.—Recordate, che Pontio v'ha fatto un canonico;—et Pontio ha fatto ſua eccellenza uno Veſcovo—Non ſcordatevi mai di voſtri amici."

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Now what do you think of theſe reverend fathers of the church? their merit, you will eaſily perceive, does not conſiſt in faſting and prayer.—Their creed, they ſay, they have a good deal modernized, and is much ſimpler than that of Athanaſius.—One of them told me, that if we would but ſtay with them for ſome little time, we ſhould ſoon be convinced that they were the happieſt fellows on earth. "We have exploded (ſaid he) from our ſyſtem every thing that is diſmal or melancholy; and are perſuaded, that of all the roads in the univerſe, the road to heaven muſt be the pleaſanteſt and leaſt gloomy: If it be not ſo, (added he) God have mercy upon us, for I am afraid we ſhall never get there." I told him I could not flatter him; "That if laughing was really a ſin, as ſome people taught, they were certainly the greateſt of all ſinners." "Well (ſaid he) we ſhall at leaſt endeavour to be happy here; and that, I am perſuaded, is the beſt of all preparations

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rations for happineſs hereafter. Abſtinence (continued he) from all innocent and lawful pleaſures, we reckon one of the greateſt ſins, and guard againſt it with the utmoſt care: and I am pretty ſure it is a ſin that none of us here will ever be damned for." —He concluded by repeating two lines, which he told me was their favourite maxim; the meaning of which was exactly thoſe of Mr. Pope,

" For God is paid when man receives,
" To enjoy is to obey."

This is not the firſt time I have met with this libertine ſpirit amongſt the Roman Catholic clergy. There is ſo much nonſenſe and mummery in their worſhip, that they are afraid leſt ſtrangers ſhould believe they are ſerious; and perhaps too often fly to the oppoſite extreme.

We were, however, much pleaſed with the biſhop; he is greatly and deſervedly reſpected,

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ſpected, yet his preſence did no wiſe diminiſh, but rather increaſed, the jollity of the company. He entered into every joke, joined in the repartee, at which he is a great proficient, and entirely laid aſide his epiſcopal dignity; which, however, I am told, he knows very well how to aſſume when it is neceſſary. He placed us next to himſelf, and behaved indeed, in every reſpect, with the greateſt eaſe and politeneſs. He is of one of the firſt families of the iſland, and brother to the Prince of ——. I had his whole pedigree pat, but now I have loſt it; no matter: he is an honeſt, pleaſant, little fellow, and that is of much more conſequence. He is not yet forty; and ſo high a promotion in ſo early a period of life, is reckoned very extraordinary, this being the richeſt biſhoprick in the kingdom. He is a good ſcholar, and very deeply read, both in ancient and modern learning; and his genius is in no degree inferior to his erudition. The ſimi-

larity

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larity of character and circumſtances ſtruck me ſo ſtrongly, that I could ſcarce help thinking I had got beſide our worthy and reſpectable friend, the b——p of D——y, which, I aſſure you, ſtill added greatly to the pleaſure I had in his company. I told the biſhop of this; adding, that he was brother to l—d B——l: he ſeemed much pleaſed, and ſaid, he had often heard of the family, both when lord B—— was ambaſſador in Spain, and his other brother commander in the Mediterranean.

We found in this company a number of Free Maſons, who were delighted beyond meaſure, when they diſcovered that we were their brethren. They preſſed us to ſpend a few more days amongſt them, and offered us letters to Palermo, and every other town we ſhould think of viſiting; but the heats are increaſing ſo violently, that we were afraid of prolonging our expedition, leſt we ſhould be caught by the

Sirocc

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Sirocc winds, ſuppoſed to blow from the burning deſarts of Africa, and ſometimes attended with dangerous conſequences to thoſe that travel over Sicily.

But I find I have omitted ſeveral circumſtances of our dinner. I ſhould have told you, that it was an annual feaſt given by the nobility of Agrigentum to the biſhop. It was ſerved in an immenſe granary, half full of wheat, on the ſea ſhore, choſen on purpoſe to avoid the heat. The whole was on plate: and what appeared ſingular to us, but I believe is a much better method than ours; great part of the fruit was ſerved up with the ſecond courſe, the firſt diſh of which that went round was ſtrawberries. The Sicilians were a good deal ſurpriſed to ſee us eat them with cream and ſugar, yet upon trial they did not at all diſlike the compoſition.

The deſert conſiſted of a great variety of fruits, and ſtill a greater of ices: theſe were

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were ſo diſguiſed in the ſhapes of peaches, figs, oranges, nuts, &c. that a perſon unaccuſtomed to ices might very eaſily have been taken in, as an honeſt ſea officer was lately at the houſe of a certain miniſter of your acquaintance, not leſs diſtinguiſhed for the elegance of his table, than the exact formality and ſubordination to be obſerved at it. After the ſecond courſe was removed; and the ices, in the ſhape of various fruits and ſweetmeats, advanced by way of rear-guard; one of the ſervants carried the figure of a fine large peach to the captain, who, unacquainted with deceit of any kind, never doubted that it was a real one; and cutting it through the middle, in a moment had one large half of it in his mouth; at firſt he only looked grave, and blew up his cheeks to give it more room; but the violence of the cold ſoon getting the better of his patience, he began to tumble it about from ſide to ſide in his mouth, his eyes ruſhing out of water, till at laſt, able to hold

no

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no longer, he ſpit it out upon his plate, exclaiming with a horrid oath, "A painted ſnowball, by G—!" and wiping away his tears with his napkin, he turned in a rage to the Italian ſervant that had helped him, with a "d—n your maccaroni eyes, you ſon of a b—, what did you mean by that?" —The fellow, who did not underſtand a word of it, could not forbear ſmiling, which ſtill convinced the captain the more that it was a trick; and he was juſt going to throw the reſt of the ſnowball in his face, but was prevented by one of the company; when recovering from his paſſion, and thinking the object unworthy of it, he only added in a ſofter tone, "Very well, neighbour, I only wiſh I had you on board ſhip for half an hour, you ſhould have a dozen before you could ſay Jack Robiſon, for all your painted cheeks."

I aſk pardon for this digreſſion, but as it is a good laughable ſtory, I know you will

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will excuſe it. About ſix o'clock, we took a cordial leave of our jolly friends at Agrigentum; and embarked on board our Sparonaro at the new port. I ſhould have told you, that this harbour has lately been made at a very great expence; this city having always been one of the principal ports of the iſland, for the exportation of grain. The biſhop and his company went into a large barge, and ſailed round the harbour, we ſaluted them as we went out; they returned the compliment, and we took a ſecond leave. The evening was fine, and we coaſted along for a good many miles; we paſſed ſeveral points and little promontories, that were exceedingly beautiful and pictureſque, many of them were covered with noble large aloes in full blow. In one place, I counted upwards of 200 of thoſe fine majeſtic plants all in flower; a ſight which I imagined was hardly to be met with in the world.—After ſun-ſet,—alas, fain would I conceal what happened

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after ſun-ſet!—but life you know is chequered with good and evil, and it would have been great preſumption to receive ſo much of the one, without expecting a little daſh of the other too.—Beſides, a ſea expedition is nothing without a ſtorm. Our journal would never have been readable, had it not been for this.—Well I aſſure you, we had it. It was not indeed ſo violent as the great one off Louiſburgh, or perhaps even that deſcribed by Virgil; the reading of which is ſaid to have made people ſea-ſick; but it was rather too much for our little bark.—I was going to tell you that after ſun-ſet the ſky began to overcaſt, and in a ſhort time, the whole atmoſphere appeared firey and threatening. We attempted to get into ſome creek, but could find none. The wind grew loud, and we found it was in vain to proceed; but as the night was dark and hazy, we were dubious about the poſſibility of reaching the port of Agrigentum.

How-

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However, this was all we had for it, as there were none other within many miles. Accordingly we tacked about, and plying both oars and ſail, with great care not to come amongſt the rocks and breakers, in about two hours we ſpied the light-houſe; by which we directed our courſe, and got ſafely into port, betwixt one and two in the morning: we lay down on our mattraſs, and ſlept ſound till ten, when finding the falſity of our hypotheſis, that there could be no bad weather in the Mediterranean at this ſeaſon, we unanimouſly agreed to have nothing more to do with Sparonaros, and ſent immediately to engage mules to carry us over the mountains to Palermo. The ſtorm continued with violence the whole day, and made us often thank heaven that we had got ſafely back. It was not till five in the afternoon that we had mules, guides, and guards provided us; when we ſet off, pretty much in the ſame order, and in the ſame equipage as we had done about three

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weeks ago from Meſſina. Our guards attempted to fill us with the moſt dreadful apprehenſions of this road, ſhewing us every mile, where ſuch a one was robbed, ſuch another was murdered; and entertained us with ſuch melancholy ditties the greateſt part of the way. Indeed, if one half of their ſtories be true, it is certainly the moſt dangerous road in the world; but I looked upon moſt of them as fictions, invented only to increaſe their own conſequence, and to procure a little more money. There is, indeed, ſome foundation for theſe ſtories; as there are numbers of gibbets erected on the road *in terrorem*; and every little baron has the power of life and death in his own domain. Our biſhop's brother, whoſe name I have forgot, ſeized lately four and twenty of thoſe deſperate banditti, after a ſtout reſiſtance, where ſeveral were killed on both ſides; and notwithſtanding that ſome of them were under the protection of the nobility, and in their

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ſervice, they were all hanged. However, this has by no means rooted them out. Our guards in the ſuſpicious places went with their pieces cock'd, and kept a cloſe look-out to either ſide of them; but we ſaw nothing to alarm us, except the moſt dreadful roads in the world; in many places worſe than any thing I ever met with amongſt the Alps.

After travelling about twenty miles, we arrived by two in the morning at the moſt wretched—I don't know what to call it—there was not any one thing to be had but a little ſtraw for the mules. However, after a good deal of difficulty, we at laſt got fire enough to boil our tea-kettle, and having brought bread from Agrigentum, we made an excellent meal. Our tea-table was a round ſtone in the field, and as the moon ſhone bright, we had no occaſion for any other luminary. You may believe our ſtay here was as ſhort as poſſible; the

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houſe was too dreadfully naſty to enter it, and the ſtable was full of poor wretches ſleeping on the bare ground. In ſhort, I never ſaw in any country ſo miſerable an Inn, for ſo it is ſtiled. We mounted our cavalry with all expedition, and in a very ſhort time got into the woods, where we we were ſerenaded by the nightingale as we went along, who made us a full apology and atonement for the bad cheer we had met with. In a ſhort time it was day, and then we had entertainment enough from the varied ſcenes of the moſt beautiful, wild and romantic country in the world.—The fertility of many of the plains is truly aſtoniſhing, without incloſures, without manure, and almoſt without culture. It is with reaſon, that this Iſland was ſtiled " Romani imperii horreum," the granary of the Roman empire. Were it cultivated, it would ſtill be the great granary of Europe. Pliny ſays it yielded a hundred after one; and Diodorus, who was a native of the iſland,

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iſland, and wrote on the ſpot, aſſures us that it produced wheat and other grain ſpontaneouſly; and Homer advances the ſame fact in the Odyſſey:

The ſoil untill'd a ready harveſt yields,
With wheat and barley wave the golden fields;
Spontaneous wines from weighty cluſters pour,
And Jove deſcends in each prolific ſhower.
POPE.

Many of the mountains ſeem to be formed by ſubterraneous fire; ſeveral of them retain their conical figure and their craters, but not ſo exact as thoſe on Mount Ætna, as they are probably much older. I likewiſe obſerved many pieces of lava on the road, and in the beds of the torrents; and a good deal of the ſtone called tufa, which is certainly the production of a volcano; ſo that I have no doubt, that a great part of this iſland, as well as the neighbouring ones of Lipari, &c. has been originally formed by ſubterraneous fire: we likewiſe

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wiſe paſſed ſome quarries of a kind of talc; and alſo of a coarſe alabaſter; of this they make a ſort of ſtucco or plaiſter, reſembling that of Paris; but what I much regretted, we miſſed ſeeing the famous ſalt of Agrigentum; found in the earth, about four or five miles from that city. It has this remarkable property different from all other ſalt, that in the fire it preſently melts; but in the water it cracks and ſplits but never diſſolves. It is celebrated by Pliny, Ariſtotle, and others of the antient, as well as modern naturaliſts. Fazzello, whom I have brought along with me to read by the road, ſays, he has often experienced this; he adds from the authority of theſe antient authors, that they formerly had mines of this ſalt, ſo pure and ſolid, that the ſtatuaries and ſculptors preferred it to marble, and made various works of it.

The poor people of the village have found us out, and with looks full of miſery have

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have ſurrounded our door.—Accurſed tyranny,—what deſpicable objects we become in thy hands!—Is it not inconceivable, how any government ſhould be able to render poor and wretched, a country which produces almoſt ſpontaneouſly, every thing that even luxury can deſire? But alas! poverty and wretchedneſs have ever attended the Spaniſh yoke, both on this, and on t'other ſide of the globe.—They make it their boaſt, that the ſun never ſets on their dominions, but forget that ſince they became ſuch, they have left him nothing to ſee in his courſe but deſerted fields, barren wilderneſſes, oppreſſed peaſants, and lazy, lying, lecherous monks.—Such are the fruits of their boaſted conqueſts.—They ought rather to be aſhamed that ever the ſun ſhould ſee them at all.—The ſight of theſe poor people has filled me with indignation. This village is ſurrounded by the fineſt country in the world, yet there was neither bread nor wine to be found in it,

and

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and the poor inhabitants appear more than half ſtarved.

"'Mongſt Ceres' richeſt gifts with want oppreſs'd,
"And 'midſt the flowing vineyard, die of thirſt.

I ſhall now think of concluding, as I do not recollect that I have much more to ſay to you. Beſides, I find myſelf exceeding ſleepy. I ſincerely wiſh it may not be the ſame caſe with you, before you have read thus far. We have ordered our mules to be ready by five o'clock, and ſhall again travel all night;—the heats are too great to allow of it by day; adieu.—Theſe two fellows are ſtill found aſleep. In a few minutes I ſhall be ſo too, for the pen is almoſt dropping out of my hand. Farewell.

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LETTER XXI.

Palermo, June 19.

WE are now arrived at the great capital of Sicily, which in our opinion in beauty and elegance is greatly ſuperior to Naples. It is not, indeed, ſo large, but the regularity, the uniformity and neatneſs of its ſtreets and buildings, render it much more pleaſing; it is full of people, who have moſtly an air of affluence and gaiety. And indeed we ſeem to have got into a new world.—But ſtop—not ſo faſt.—I had forgot that you have ſtill 50 miles to travel on a curſed ſtubborn mule, over rocks and precipices; for I can ſee no reaſon, why we ſhould bring you at once into all the ſweets of Palermo, without bearing at leaſt ſome little part in the

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the fatigues of the journey. Come, we ſhall make them as ſhort as poſſible.

We left you, I think, in a little village on the top of a high mountain. We ſhould indeed uſe you very ill, were we to leave you there any longer; for I own it is the very worſt country quarter, that ever fell to my lot. However, we got a good comfortable ſleep in it, the only one thing it afforded us; and the fleas, the bugs, and chickens, did all that lay in their power even to deprive us of that, but we defied them. Our two leaders came to awake us before five, apoſtrophying their entry with a detail of the horrid robberies and murders that had been committed in the neighbourhood; all of them, you may be ſure, on the very road that we were to go.

Our whole ſquadron was drawn out, and we were ranged in order of battle, by five

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five o'clock, when we began our march, attended by the whole village, man, woman, and child. We ſoon got down amongſt the woods, and endeavoured to forget the objects of miſery we had left behind us. The beauty and richneſs of the country increaſed in proportion as we advanced. The mountains, although of a great height (that we have left is near 4000 feet, the mercury ſtanding at 26 inches 2 lines) are covered to the very ſummit with the richeſt paſture. The graſs in the valleys is already burnt up, ſo that the flocks are all upon the mountains. The gradual ſeparation of heat and cold, is very viſible in taking a view of them. The valleys are brown and ſcorched, and ſo are the mountains to a conſiderable height; they then begin to take a ſhade of green, which grows deeper and deeper, and covers the whole upper region; however, on the ſummit, the graſs and corn are by no means ſo luxuriant as about the middle.

We

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We were amazed at the richneſs of the crops, far ſuperior to any thing I had ever ſeen either in England or Flanders, where the happy ſoil is aſſiſted by all the arts of cultivation; whilſt here, the wretched huſbandman can hardly afford to give it a furrow; and gathers in with a heavy heart, the moſt luxuriant harveſt. To what purpoſe is it given him? only to lie a dead weight upon his hand, ſometimes till it is entirely loſt; exportation being prohibited to all ſuch as cannot pay exorbitantly for it to the ſovereign.—What a contraſt is there betwixt this, and the little uncouth country of Switzerland!—to be ſure, the dreadful conſequences of oppreſſion can never be ſet in a more ſtriking oppoſition to the bleſſings and charms of liberty. Switzerland, the very excreſcence of Europe, where nature ſeems to have thrown out all her cold and ſtagnating humours; full of lakes, marſhes, and woods, and ſurrounded by immenſe rocks,

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and everlaſting mountains of ice, the barren, but ſacred, ramparts of liberty. Switzerland, enjoying every bleſſing, where every bleſſing ſeems to have been denied; whilſt Sicily, covered by the moſt luxuriant hand of Nature; where Heaven ſeems to have ſhowered down its richeſt bleſſings with the utmoſt prodigality; groans under the moſt abject poverty, and with a pale and wan viſage, ſtarves in the midſt of plenty.—It is liberty alone that works this ſtanding miracle.—Under her plaſtic hands the mountains ſink, the lakes are drained; and theſe rocks, theſe marſhes, theſe woods, become ſo many ſources of wealth and of pleaſure.—But what has temperance to do with wealth?

" Here reigns Content,
" And Nature's child Simplicity; long ſince
" Exil'd from poliſhed realms."

" 'Tis Induſtry ſupplies
" The little Temperance wants; and roſy Health
" Sits ſmiling at the board."

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You will begin to think I am in danger of turning poetical in theſe claſſic fields;—I am ſure I neither ſuſpected any of the mountains we have paſſed to be Parnaſſus; nor did I believe any one of the nine fooliſh enough to inhabit them, except Melpomenè perhaps, as ſhe is ſo fond of tragical faces: however, I ſhall now get you out of them as ſoon as poſſible, and bring you once more into the gay world. I aſſure you, I have often wiſhed that you could have lent me your muſe, on this expedition; my letters would then have been more worth the reading; but you muſt take the will for the deed.

After travelling till about midnight, we arrived at another miſerable village, where we ſlept for ſome hours on ſtraw, and continued our journey again by day-break. We had the pleaſure of ſeeing the riſing ſun from the top of a pretty high mountain, and were delighted with the proſpect

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of Strombolo, and the other Lipari Iſlands, at a great diſtance from us. On our deſcent from this mountain, we found ourſelves on the banks of the ſea, and took that road, preferable to an inland one, although ſeveral miles nearer. We ſoon lighted from our mules, and plunged into the water, which has ever made one of our greateſt pleaſures in this expedition: nobody that has not tried it, can conceive the delight of this; after the fatigue of ſuch a journey, and paſſing three days without undreſſing. Your friend Fullarton, though only ſeventeen, but whoſe mind and body now equally deſpiſe every fatigue, found himſelf ſtrong as a lion, and fit to begin ſuch another march. We boiled our tea-kettle under a fig-tree, and eat a breakfaſt that might have ſerved a company of ſtrolling players.

The approach to Palermo is fine. The alleys are planted with fruit-trees, and large American aloes in full blow.—Near

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the city we paſſed a place of execution, where the quarters of a number of robbers were hung up upon hooks, like ſo many hams; ſome of them appeared newly executed, and made a very unſightly figure. On our arrival, we learned that a prieſt and three others had been taken a few days ago, after an obſtinate defence, in which ſeveral were killed on both ſides; the prieſt, rather than ſubmit to his conquerors, plunged his hanger into his breaſt, and died on the ſpot: the reſt ſubmitted and were executed.

As there is but one inn in Palermo, we were obliged to agree to their own terms (five ducats a day). We are but indifferently lodged; however, it is the only inn we have yet ſeen in Sicily, and indeed, may be ſaid to be the only one in the iſland. It is kept by a noiſy troubleſome Frenchwoman, who I find will plague us; there is no keeping her out of our rooms, and

ſhe

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ſhe never comes in without telling us of ſuch a prince and ſuch a duke, that were ſo ſuperlatively happy at being lodged in her houſe: we can eaſily learn that they were all deſperately in love with her; and indeed ſhe ſeems to take it very much amiſs, that we are not inclined to be of the ſame ſentiments. I have already been obliged to tell her, that we are very retired ſort of people, and do not like company; I find ſhe does not eſteem us the better for it; and this morning, (as I paſſed through the kitchen, without ſpeaking to her) I overheard her exclaim, "Ah mon Dieu! comme ces Anglois ſont "ſauvages." I believe we muſt take more notice of her, otherwiſe we ſhall certainly have our rent raiſed; but ſhe is as fat as a pig, and as ugly as a devil, and lays on a quantity of paint on each of her ſwelled cheeks, that looks like a great plaiſter of red Morocco. Her picture is hanging in the room where I am now writing, as

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well as that of her huſband, who, by the bye, is a ninny: they are no leſs vile curioſities than the originals.—He is drawn with his ſnuff-box open in one hand, and a diſh of coffee in the other; and at the ſame time, *fait l'aimable à Madame*. I took notice of this triple occupation, which ſeemed to imply ſomething particular. She told me that the thought was her's; that her huſband was exceedingly fond of ſnuff and of coffee, and wanted by this to ſhew that he was ſtill more occupied with her than with either of them.—I could not help applauding the ingenuity of the conceit. Madame is painted with an immenſe bouquet in her breaſt, and an orange in her right-hand, emblematic of her ſweetneſs and purity; and has the prettieſt little ſmirk on her face you can imagine. She told me that ſhe inſiſted on the painter drawing her *avec le ſouris ſur le viſage*, but as he had not *eſprit* enough to make her ſmile naturally, ſhe was obliged to force

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force one, " qui n'etoit pas tout a fait " ſi jolie que le naturel, mais qui vaudroit " toujours mieux que de parroitre ſombre." I agreed with her perfectly; and aſſured her it became her very much, " parceque " les dames graſſes ſont toujours de bonne " humeur."—I found, however, that ſhe would willingly have excuſed me the latter part of the compliment, which more than loſt all that I had gained by the former. " Il eſt vrai" (ſaid ſhe, a good deal piqued) " j'ai un peu de l'em bon point, mais pas " tant graſſe pourtant." I pretended to excuſe myſelf, from not underſtanding all the fineſſe of the language; and aſſured her, that *de l'em bon point* was the very phraſe I meant to make uſe of. She accepted the apology, and we are again reconciled; for, to give the devil his due, they are good-humoured. She made me a curtſey, and repeated, " Oui, Monſieur, " pour parler comme il faut, il faut dire

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"*de l'em bon point.*—On ne dit pas graſſe." I aſſured her, bowing to the ground, that the word ſhould for ever be razed from my vocabulary. She left me with a gracious ſmile, and a curtſey much lower than the firſt; adding, "Je ſçavois bien que Mon-"ſieur etoit un homme comme il faut;" at the ſame time tripping off on her tip-toes, as light as a feather, to ſhew me how much I had been miſtaken. This woman made me recollect (what I have always obſerved) how little the manners of the French are to be changed by their connection with other nations; allowing none to be in any degree worthy of imitation but their own. Although ſhe has now been here theſe twenty years, ſhe is ſtill as perfectly French, as if ſhe had never been without the gates of Paris; and looks upon every woman in Palermo with the utmoſt contempt, becauſe they have never ſeen that capital, nor heard

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the ſublime muſick of its opera. She is likewiſe (allowing for the difference of rank) an admirable epitome of all French women, whoſe univerſal paſſion has ever been the deſire of admiration, and of appearing young; and ever would be, I believe, were they to live to the age of a thouſand. Any perſon that will take a look of the withered death's heads in their publick places, covered over with a thick maſk of paint, will be convinced of this.—Now, our old ladies, when they get to the wrong ſide of ſixty, generally take a jump up to the borders of fourſcore, and appear no leſs vain of their years, than ever they were of their youth. I know ſome of them, that I am ſure are not leſs happy, nor leſs contented, nor (I might almoſt add) leſs admired with their wrinkles, than ever they were with their dimples. I do not know whether a cheerful old woman, who is willing to appear ſo, is more reſpectable,

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or more eſtimable; or a withered witch, who fills up every wrinkle with varniſh, and at fourſcore attempts to give herſelf the bloom of four-and-twenty, is ridiculous and contemptible:—but as dinner is on the table, I ſhall leave it to you to determine. Adieu.

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LETTER XXII.

Palermo, June 23d.

I SHALL have a great deal to write you about this city; we are every day more delighted with it, and ſhall leave it with much regret. We have now delivered our letters, in conſequence of which we are loaded with civilities, and have got into a very agreeable ſet of acquaintance.—But I ſhall firſt attempt to give you ſome little idea of the town, and then ſpeak of its inhabitants. It is by much the moſt regular I have ſeen, and is built upon that plan, which I think all large cities ought to follow. The two great ſtreets interſect each other in the center of the city, where they form a handſome ſquare, called the Ottangolo, adorned with elegant uniform buildings. From the center of this

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ſquare, you ſee the whole of theſe noble ſtreets, and the four great gates of the city which terminate them; the ſymmetry and beauty of which produce a fine effect. The whole of theſe are to be magnificently illuminated ſome time next month, and muſt certainly be the fineſt ſight in the world. The four gates are each at the diſtance of about half a mile, (the diameter of the city being no more than a mile:) theſe are elegant pieces of architecture richly adorned; particularly the *Porta Nova* and *Porta Felice*, terminating the great ſtreet called the *Corſo*, that runs ſouth weſt and north eaſt. The leſſer ſtreets in general run parallel to theſe great ones; ſo that from every part of the city, in a few minutes walking, you are ſure to arrive at one of the capital ſtreets. The *Porta Felice* (by much the handſomeſt of the gates) opens to the *Marino*, a delightful walk, which conſtitutes one of the great pleaſures of the nobility of Palermo.

It

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It is bounded on one ſide by the wall of the city, and on the other by the ſea, from whence, even at this ſcorching ſeaſon, there is always an agreeable breeze. In the center of the Marino they have lately erected an elegant kind of temple, which, during the ſummer months, is made uſe of as an orcheſtra for muſick; and as in this ſeaſon they are obliged to convert the night into day, the concert does not begin till the clock ſtrikes midnight, which is the ſignal for the ſymphony to ſtrike up: at that time the walk is crowded with carriages and people on foot; and the better to favour pleaſure and intrigue, there is an order, that no perſon, of whatever quality, ſhall preſume to carry a light with him. The flambeaux are extinguiſhed at the Porta Felice, where the ſervants wait for the return of the carriages; and the company generally continue an hour or two together in utter darkneſs; except when the intruding moon, with her horns

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and her chaſtity, comes to diſturb them. The concert finiſhes about two in the morning, when, for the moſt part, every huſband goes home to his own wife. This is an admirable inſtitution, and never produces any ſcandal: no huſband is ſuch a brute as to deny his wife the Marino; and the ladies are ſo cautious and circumſpect on their ſide, that the more to avoid giving offence, they very often put on maſques.

Their other amuſements conſiſt chiefly in their *Converſaziones*, of which they have a variety every night. There is one general one, ſupported by the ſubſcription of the nobility, which is open every evening at ſun-ſet, and continues till midnight, when the Marino begins. It better deſerves the name of a converſation than any I have ſeen in Italy; for here the people really come to converſe, whereas in Italy, they only go to play at cards and eat ices. I

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have obſerved, that ſeldom or never one half of the company is engaged in play, nor do they either play long or deep. There are a number of apartments belonging to this converſation, illuminated with wax lights, and kept exceedingly cool and agreeable; and it is indeed altogether one of the moſt ſenſible and comfortable inſtitutions I have ſeen: beſides this, there are generally a number of particular converſations every night, and what will a good deal ſurprize you, theſe are always held in the apartments of the lying-in ladies; for in this happy climate, child-bearing is diveſted of all its terrors, and is only conſidered as a party of pleaſure. This circumſtance we were ignorant of till t'other morning. The duke of Verdura, who does us the honours of the place, with great attention and politeneſs, came to tell us, we had a viſit to make, that was indiſpenſable. "The Princeſs Paterno

"(ſaid

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" (ſaid he) was brought to bed laſt night; " and it is abſolutely incumbent on you " to pay your reſpects to her this even- " ing." At firſt I thought he was in joke, but he aſſured me he was ſerious, and that it would be looked upon as a great unpoliteneſs to neglect it.—Accordingly we went about ſun-ſet, and found the princeſs ſitting up in her bed, in an elegant undreſs, with a number of her friends around her. She talked as uſual, and ſeemed to be perfectly well. This converſation is repeated every night during her convaleſcence, which generally laſts for about eleven or twelve days. This cuſtom is univerſal, and as the ladies here are very prolific, there are for the moſt part three or four of theſe aſſemblies going on in the city at the ſame time; poſſibly the Marino may not a little contribute towards them.

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The Sicilian ladies marry at thirteen or fourteen, and are ſometimes grandmothers before they are thirty.—The Count Stetela preſented us a few days ago to his couſin, the Princeſs Partana, who he told us had a great number of children, the eldeſt of which was a very fine girl of fifteen. We talked to the princeſs for half an hour, not in the leaſt doubting all the time that ſhe was the daughter, till at laſt the young lady came in; and even then, it was not eaſy to ſay which appeared the handſomeſt or the youngeſt. This lady has had twelve children, and is ſtill in her bloom; ſhe aſſured me that ſhe never enjoyed more perfect health than when ſhe was in child-bed;—that during the time of her pregnancy ſhe was often indiſpoſed, but that immediately on delivery ſhe was cured of all her complaints, and was capable of enjoying the company of her friends even more than at any other time. I expreſſed my ſurpriſe at this very ſingular happineſs of their cli-

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mate or conſtitutions; but ſhe appeared ſtill more ſurpriſed when I told her that we loſt many of our fineſt women in childbed, and that even the moſt fortunate and eaſy deliveries were attended with violent pain and anguiſh.—She lamented the fate of our ladies, and thanked Heaven that ſhe was born a Sicilian.

What this ſingularity is owing to, let the learned determine; but it is ſurely one of the capital bleſſings of theſe climates, where the curſe that was laid upon mother Eve ſeems to be entirely taken off: I don't know how the ladies here have deſerved this exemption, as they have at leaſt as much both of Eve and the ſerpent as ours have, and ſtill retain their appetite, as ſtrong as ever, for forbidden fruit.—It ſeems hard, that in our own country, and in Switzerland, where the women in general are the chaſteſt in Europe, that this curſe ſhould fall the heavieſt: it is probably owing to the

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the climate:—In cold, but more particularly in mountainous countries, births are difficult and dangerous; in warm and low places they are more eaſy; the air of the firſt hardens and contracts the fibres, that of the ſecond ſoftens and relaxes them. In ſome places in Switzerland, and amongſt the Alps, they loſe almoſt one half of their women in childbed, and thoſe that can afford it, often go down to the low countries ſome weeks before they lie in, and find their deliveries much eaſier. One may eaſily conceive what a change it muſt make upon the whole frame, to add the preſſure of a column of air of two or three thouſand feet more than it is accuſtomed to: and if muſcular motion is performed by the preſſure of the atmoſphere, as ſome have alleged, how much muſt this add to the action of every muſcle!—However, if this hypotheſis were true, our ſtrength ſhould have been diminiſhed one third on the top of Ætna, which did not appear to be the

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caſe; as we had paſſed through one third of the quantity of air of the whole atmoſphere. I have often thought that phyſicians pay too little attention to theſe conſiderations; and that in ſkilful hands they might be turned to great account, in the cure of many diſeaſes: they only ſend their patients to ſuch a degree of latitude, but never think of the degree of altitude in the atmoſphere. Thus, people with the ſame complaints are ſent to Aix and to Marſeilles, although the air in theſe two places muſt be eſſentially different. Marſeilles is on the level of the ſea, and Aix (as I myſelf meaſured it) is near 600 feet above it.—Now I am perſuaded, that in ſuch a country as Switzerland, or on ſuch a mountain as Ætna, where it is eaſy at all times to take off a preſſure from the human body of many thouſand pounds weight, that an ingenious phyſician might make great diſcoveries; nor indeed would theſe diſcoveries be confined to the changing of the quantity

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of air that preſſes on the body, but would likewiſe be extended to the changing of the quality of the air we breathe; which, on the ſide of Ætna, or any very high mountain, is more varied than in travelling through fifty degrees of latitude. I beg pardon for this digreſſion; the only amends I can make, is to put it out of my power to trouble you with any more, and thus abruptly aſſure you how much, &c.

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LETTER XXIII.

Palermo, June 26th.

OUR fondneſs for Palermo increaſes every day, and we are beginning to look forward with regret to the time of our leaving it, which is now faſt approaching. We have made acquaintance with many ſenſible and agreeable people. The Sicilians appear frank and ſincere; and their politeneſs does not conſiſt in ſhew and grimace, like ſome of the polite nations of the continent. The viceroy ſets the pattern of hoſpitality, and he is followed by the reſt of the nobles. He is an amiable, agreeable man, and I believe is as much beloved and eſteemed as a viceroy to an abſolute monarch can be. He was in England in his youth, and is ſtill fond of many of our authors, with whom he ſeems

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to be intimately acquainted; he ſpeaks the language tolerably well, and encourages the learning of it amongſt his people.—He may be conſidered with regard to Naples, as what the lord lieutenant of Ireland is with regard to England, with this trifling difference, that, like his maſter, he is inveſted with abſolute authority; and keeps his parliament (for he has one too) in the moſt perfect ſubjection. The patriots here, although a very numerous body, have never been able to gain one point, no nor a place, nor even a penſion for a needy friend. Had lord Townſhend the power of the marquis Fogliano, I ſuppoſe your Hibernian ſquabbles (of which we hear ſo much, even at this diſtant corner) would ſoon have an end.—Notwithſtanding this great authority, he is affable and familiar, and makes his houſe agreeable to every body. We go very often to his aſſemblies, and have dined with him ſeveral times; his table is ſerved with elegance and magnificence, much ſu-

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perior indeed to that of his Sicilian majeſty, who eats off a ſervice of plate, at leaſt 300 years old, very black and ruſty indeed: I heard a gentleman aſk one day, whilſt we were ſtanding round the table, if it had not been dug out of Herculaneum. That of the viceroy is very elegant, and indeed the whole of his entertainments correſpond with it; though we have as yet ſeen nothing here, to be compared to the luxury of our feaſt in the granary at Agrigentum.

The Sicilian cookery is a mixture of the French and Spaniſh; and the Olio ſtill preſerves its rank and dignity in the center of the table, ſurrounded by a numerous train of fricaſſees, fricandeaus, ragouts, and pet de loups; like a grave Spaniſh Don, amidſt a number of little ſmart marquis.—The other nobility, whom we have had occaſion to ſee, are likewiſe very magnificent in their entertainments; but moſt particularly in

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in their deſerts and ices, of which there is a greater variety than I have ſeen in any other country. They are very temperate with regard to wine; though, ſince we have taught them our method of toaſting ladies they are fond of, and of hob and nobing with their friends, ringing the two glaſſes together; this ſocial practice has animated them ſo much, that they have been ſometimes led to drink a greater quantity than they are accuſtomed to; and they often reproach us with having made them drunkards. In their ordinary living they are very frugal and temperate; and from the ſobriety we have ſeen here, we are now more perſuaded that the elevated ſituation of Agrigentum muſt be one great cauſe of its drunkenneſs.

The Sicilians have always had the character of being very amorous, and ſurely not without reaſon. The whole nation are poets, even the peaſants; and a man ſtands

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a poor chance for a miſtreſs, that is not capable of celebrating her praiſes. I believe it is generally allowed that the paſtoral poetry had its origin in this iſland; and Theocritus, after whom they ſtill copy, will ever be looked upon as the prince of paſtoral poets. And indeed in muſick too, as well as poetry, the ſoft, amorous pieces are generally ſtiled *Siciliani*; theſe they uſed to play all night under their miſtreſſes' windows, to expreſs the delicacy of their paſſion; but ſerenading is not now ſo much in faſhion, as it was during the time of their more intimate connection with Spain, when it was ſaid by one of their authors, that no perſon could paſs for a man of gallantry that had not got a cold; and was ſure never to ſucceed in making love, unleſs he made it in a hoarſe voice. The ladies are not now ſo rigid, and will ſometimes condeſcend to hear a man, even although he ſhould ſpeak in a clear tone.—Neither do they any longer require the

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prodigious martial feats, that were then neceſſary to win them.—The attacking of a mad bull, or a wild boar, was reckoned the handſomeſt compliment a lover could pay to his miſtreſs; and the putting theſe animals to death ſoftened her heart much more than all the ſighing love-ſick tales that could be invented. This has been humorouſly ridiculed by one of their poets. He ſays that Cupid's little golden dart was now changed into a maſſy ſpear, which anſwered a double purpoſe; for at the ſame time that it pierced the tough bull's hide, it likewiſe pierced the tender lady's heart.—But theſe Gothick cuſtoms are now confined to Spain, and the gentle Sicilians have reaſſumed their ſoftneſs. To tell you the truth, gallantry is pretty much upon the ſame footing here as in Italy, the eſtabliſhment of Cicciſbees is pretty general, though not quite ſo univerſal as on the continent. However, a breach of the marriage vow is no longer looked upon as one of the deadly ſins;

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and the confeſſors fall upon eaſy and pleaſant enough methods of making them atone for it. The huſbands are content; and like able generals, make up for the loſs of one fortreſs, by the taking of another. However, female licentiouſneſs has by no means come to ſuch a height as in Italy. We have ſeen a great deal of domeſtic happineſs; huſbands and wives that truly love one another, and whoſe mutual care and pleaſure is the education of their children. I could name a number;—The Duke of Verdura, the Prince Partana, the Count Buſcemi, and many others who live in the moſt ſacred union. Such ſights are very rare on the continent. But indeed the ſtile that young people are brought up in here, ſeems to lay a much more ſolid foundation for matrimonial happineſs, than either in France or Italy. The young ladies are not ſhut up in convents till the day of their marriage, but for the moſt part live in the houſe with their parents, where they

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they receive their education, and are every day in company with their friends and relations. From what I can obſerve, I think they are allowed almoſt as much liberty as with us. In their great aſſemblies, we often ſee a club of young people (of both ſexes) get together in a corner, and amuſe themſelves for hours, at croſs purpoſes or ſuch like games, without the mothers being under the leaſt anxiety; indeed, we ſometimes join in theſe little parties, and find them extremely entertaining. In general, they are quick and lively, and have a number of thoſe *jeux d'eſprit*, which I think muſt ever be a proof, in all countries, of the familiar intercourſe betwixt the young people of the two ſexes; for all theſe games are inſipid, if they are not ſeaſoned by ſomething of that inviſible and ſubtile agency, which renders every thing more intereſting in theſe mixed ſocieties, than in the lifeleſs ones, compoſed of only one part of the ſpecies. Thus, in Italy,

Spain,

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Spain, and Portugal, I have never ſeen any of theſe games; in France ſeldom, but in Switzerland, (where the greateſt liberty and familiarity is enjoyed amongſt the young people) they are numberleſs.——But the converſation hour is arrived, and our carriage is waiting.

Adieu.

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LETTER XXIV.

Palermo, June 28th.

THERE are two ſmall countries, one to the eaſt, the other to the weſt of this city, where the principal nobility have their country palaces. Both theſe we have viſited; there are many noble houſes in each of them. That to the eaſt is called La Bagaria, that to the weſt Il Colle.—We are this inſtant returned from La Bagaria, and I haſten to give you an account of the ridiculous things we have ſeen, though perhaps you will not thank me for it.

The palace of the Prince of Valguarnera is, I think, by much the fineſt and moſt beautiful of all the houſes of the Bagaria; but it is far from being the moſt extraordinary: were I to deſcribe it, I ſhould only tell you of things you have often ſeen and heard of in

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in other countries, ſo I ſhall only ſpeak of one, which, for its ſingularity, certainly is not to be paralleled on the face of the earth; it belongs to the prince of P——, a man of immenſe fortune, who has devoted his whole life to the ſtudy of monſters and chimeras, greater and more ridiculous than ever entered into the imagination of the wildeſt writers of romance or knight-errantry.

The amazing crowd of ſtatues that ſurround his houſe, appear at a diſtance like a little army drawn up for its defence; but when you get amongſt them, and every one aſſumes his true likeneſs, you imagine you have got into the regions of deluſion and enchantment; for of all that immenſe group, there is not one made to repreſent any object in nature; nor is the abſurdity of the wretched imagination that created them leſs aſtoniſhing than its wonderful fertility. It would require a volume

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to deſcribe the whole, and a ſad volume indeed it would make. He has put the heads of men to the bodies of every ſort of animal, and the heads of every other animal to the bodies of men. Sometimes he makes a compound of five or ſix animals that have no ſort of reſemblance in nature. He puts the head of a lion to the neck of a gooſe, the body of a lizard, the legs of a goat, the tail of a fox. On the back of this monſter, he puts another, if poſſible ſtill more hideous, with five or ſix heads, and and a buſh of horns, that beats the beaſt in the Revelations all to nothing. There is no kind of horn in the world that he has not collected; and his pleaſure is, to ſee them all flouriſhing upon the ſame head. This is a ſtrange ſpecies of madneſs; and it is truly unaccountable that he has not been ſhut up many years ago; but he is perfectly innocent, and troubles nobody by the indulgence of his phrenzy; on the contrary,

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contrary, he gives bread to a number of ſtatuaries and other workmen, whom he rewards in proportion as they can bring their imaginations to coincide with his own; or, in other words, according to the hideouſneſs of the monſters they produce. It would be idle and tireſome to be particular in an account of theſe abſurdities. The ſtatues that adorn, or rather deform the great avenue, and ſurround the court of the palace, amount already to 600, notwithſtanding which, it may be truly ſaid, that he has not broke the ſecond commandment; for of all that number, there is not the likeneſs of any thing in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. The old ornaments which were put up by his father, who was a ſenſible man, appear to have been in a good taſte. They have all been knocked to pieces, and laid together in a heap, to make room for this new creation.

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The inſide of this inchanted caſtle correſponds exactly with the out; it is in every reſpect as whimſical and fantaſtical, and you cannot turn yourſelf to any ſide, where you are not ſtared in the face by ſome hideous figure or other. Some of the apartments are ſpacious and magnificent, with high arched roofs; which inſtead of plaiſter or ſtucco, are compoſed entirely of large mirrors, nicely joined together. The effect that theſe produce (as each of them make a ſmall angle with the other,) is exactly that of a multiplying glaſs; ſo that when three or four people are walking below, there is always the appearance of three or four hundred walking above. The whole of the doors are likewiſe covered over with ſmall pieces of mirror, cut into the moſt ridiculous ſhapes, and intermixed with a great variety of chryſtal and glaſs of different colours. All the chimney-pieces, windows, and ſide-boards are crouded with pyramids and pillars of tea-pots,

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caudle-cups, bowls, cups, ſaucers, &c. ſtrongly cemented together; ſome of theſe columns are not without their beauty: one of them has a large china chamber-pot for its baſe, and a circle of pretty little flower-pots for its capital: the ſhaft of the column, upwards of four feet long, is compoſed entirely of tea-pots of different ſizes, diminiſhing gradually from the baſe to the capital. The profuſion of china that has been employed in forming theſe columns is incredible; I dare ſay there is not leſs than forty pillars and pyramids formed in this ſtrange fantaſtic manner.

Moſt of the rooms are paved with fine marble tables of different colours, that look like ſo many tomb-ſtones. Some of theſe are richly wrought with lapis lazuli, porphyry, and other valuable ſtones; their fine poliſh is now gone, and they only appear like common marble; the place of theſe beautiful tables he has ſupplied by a

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new ſet of his own invention, ſome of which are not without their merit. Theſe are made of the fineſt tortoiſe-ſhell mixed with mother of pearl, ivory, and a variety of metals; and are mounted on fine ſtands of ſolid braſs.

The windows of this inchanted caſtle are compoſed of a variety of glaſs of every different colour, mixed without any ſort of order or regularity. Blue, red, green, yellow, purple, violet.—So that at each window, you may have the heavens and earth of whatever colour you chuſe, only by looking through the pane that pleaſes you.

The houſe clock is caſed in the body of a ſtatue; the eyes of the figure move with the pendulum, turning up their white and black alternately, and make a hideous appearance.

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His bed-chamber and dreſſing-room are like two apartments in Noah's ark; there is ſcarce a beaſt, however vile, that he has not placed there; toads, frogs, ſerpents, lizards, ſcorpions, all cut out in marble, of their reſpective colours. There are a good many buſts too, that are not leſs ſingularly imagined.—Some of theſe make a very handſome profile on one ſide; turn to the other, and you have a ſkeleton; here you ſee a nurſe with a child in her arms; its back is exactly that of an infant; its face is that of a wrinkled old woman of ninety.

For ſome minutes one can laugh at theſe follies, but indignation and contempt ſoon get the better of your mirth, and the laugh is turned into a ſneer. I own I was ſoon tired of them; though ſome things are ſo ſtrangely fancied, that it may well excuſe a little mirth, even from the moſt rigid cynic.

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The family ſtatues are charming; they have been done from ſome old pictures, and make a moſt venerable appearance; he has dreſſed them out from head to foot, in new and elegant ſuits of marble; and indeed the effect it produces is more ridiculous than any thing you can conceive. Their ſhoes are all of black marble, their ſtockings generally of red; their cloaths are of different colours, blue, green, and variegated, with a rich lace of *giall' antique*. The perriwigs of the men and head-dreſſes of the ladies are of fine white; ſo are their ſhirts, with long flowing ruffles of alabaſter. The walls of the houſe are covered with ſome fine baſſo relievos of white marble, in a good taſte; theſe he could not well take out, or alter, ſo he has only added immenſe frames to them. Each frame is compoſed of four large marble tables.

The author and owner of this ſingular collection is a poor miſerable lean figure,

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ſhivering at a breeze, and ſeems to be afraid of every body he ſpeaks to; but (what ſurpriſed me) I have heard him talk ſpeciouſly enough on ſeveral occaſions. He is one of the richeſt ſubjects in the iſland, and it is thought he has not laid out leſs than 20,000 pounds in the creation of this world of monſters and chimeras.—He certainly might have fallen upon ſome way to prove himſelf a fool at a cheaper rate. However it gives bread to a number of poor people, to whom he is an excellent maſter. His houſe at Palermo is a good deal in the ſame ſtile: his carriages are covered with plates of braſs, ſo that I really believe ſome of them are muſket proof.

The government have had ſerious thoughts of demoliſhing the regiment of monſters he has placed round his houſe, but as he is humane and inoffenſive, and as this would certainly break his heart, they have as yet forborne. However, the ſeeing of them

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by women with child is ſaid to have been already attended with very unfortunate circumſtances; ſeveral living monſters having been brought forth in the neighbourhood. The ladies complain that they dare no longer take an airing in the Bagaria; that ſome hideous form always haunts their imagination for ſome time after: their huſbands too, it is ſaid, are as little ſatisfied with the great variety of horns. Adieu. I ſhall write you again by next poſt, as matter multiplies faſt upon me in this metropolis.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XXV.

Palermo, June 30th.

THE account the people here give of the Sirocc, or South-eaſt wind, is truly wonderful; to-day, at the viceroy's, we were complaining of the violence of the heat, the thermometer being at 79.—They aſſured us, that if we ſtaid till the end of next month, we ſhould probably look on this as pleaſant cool weather; adding, that if we had once experienced the Sirocc, all other weather will appear temperate.—I aſked to what degree the thermometer commonly roſe during this wind; but found to my ſurprize, that there was no ſuch inſtrument in uſe amongſt them: however, the violence of it, they aſſure us, is incredible; and that thoſe who had remained many years in Spain

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and Malta, had never felt any heat in thoſe countries to compare to it.—How it happens to be more violent in Palermo than in any other part of Sicily, is a myſtery that ſtill remains to be unfolded. Several treatiſes have been written on this ſubject, but none that give any tolerable degree of ſatisfaction. As we ſhall ſtay for ſome time longer, it is poſſible we may have an opportunity of giving you ſome account of it.

They have begun ſome weeks ago to make preparations for the great feaſt of St. Roſolia; and our friends here ſay they are determined that we ſhall not leave them till after it is over; but this I am afraid will not be in our power. The warm ſeaſon advances, and the time we appointed for our return to Naples is already elapſed; but indeed, return when we will, we ſhall make but a bad exchange; and were it not for thoſe of our

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own country whom we have left behind us, we certainly ſhould have determined on a much longer ſtay. But although the ſociety here is ſuperior to that of Naples, yet,—call it prejudice—or call it what you will, there is a—*je ne ſçai quoi*,—a certain confidence in the character, the worth, and friendſhip of our own people, that I have ſeldom felt any where on the continent, except in Switzerland. This ſenſation, which conſtitutes the charm of ſociety, and can alone render it ſupportable for any time, is only inſpired by ſomething analogous, and ſympathetic, in our feelings and ſentiments; like two inſtruments that are in uniſon, and vibrate to each other's touch: for ſociety is a concert, and if the inſtruments are not in tune, there never can be harmony; and (to carry on the metaphor) this harmony too muſt ſometimes be heightened and ſupported by the introduction of a diſcord; but where diſcords predominate, which

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which is often the caſe between an Engliſh and an Italian mind, the muſick muſt be wretched indeed.—Had we but a little mixture of our own ſociety, how gladly ſhould we ſpend the winter in Sicily; but we often think with regret on Mr. Hamilton's and Mr. Walter's families; and wiſh again to be on the continent.—Indeed, even the pleaſures we enjoy here, we owe principally to Mr. Hamilton: his recommendations we have ever found to be the beſt paſſport and introduction; and the zeal and cordiality with which theſe are always received, proceeds evidently not from motives of deference and reſpect to the miniſter, but of love and affection to the man.

This morning we went to ſee a celebrated convent of Capuchins, about a mile without the city; it contains nothing very remarkable but the burial place, which indeed is a great curioſity. This is a

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vaſt ſubterraneous apartment, divided into large commodious galleries, the walls on each ſide of which are hollowed into a variety of niches, as if intended for a great collection of ſtatues; theſe niches, inſtead of ſtatues, are all filled with dead bodies, ſet upright upon their legs, and fixed by the back to the inſide of the nich: their number is about three hundred: they are all dreſſed in the clothes they uſually wore, and form a moſt reſpectable and venerable aſſembly. The ſkin and muſcles, by a certain preparation, become as dry and hard as a piece of ſtock-fiſh; and although many of them have been here upwards of two hundred and fifty years, yet none are reduced to ſkeletons; the muſcles, indeed, in ſome appear to be a good deal more ſhrunk than in others; probably becauſe theſe perſons had been more extenuated at the time of their death.

Here

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Here the people of Palermo pay daily viſits to their deceaſed friends, and recal with pleaſure and regret the ſcenes of their paſt life: here they familiarize themſelves with their future ſtate, and chuſe the company they would wiſh to keep in the other world. It is a common thing to make choice of their nich, and to try if their body fits it, that no alterations may be neceſſary after they are dead; and ſometimes, by way of a voluntary penance, they accuſtom themſelves to ſtand for hours in theſe niches.

The bodies of the princes and firſt nobility are lodged in handſome cheſts or trunks, ſome of them richly adorned: theſe are not in the ſhape of coffins, but all of one width, and about a foot and a half, or two feet deep. The keys are kept by the neareſt relations of the family, who

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who ſometimes come and drop a tear over their departed friends.

I am not ſure if this is not a better method of diſpoſing of the dead than ours. Theſe viſits muſt prove admirable leſſons of humility; and I aſſure you, they are not ſuch objects of horror as you would imagine: they are ſaid, even for ages after death, to retain a ſtrong likeneſs to what they were when alive; ſo that, as ſoon as you have conquered the firſt feelings excited by theſe venerable figures, you only conſider this as a vaſt gallery of original portraits, drawn after the life, by the juſteſt and moſt unprejudiced hand. It muſt be owned that the colours are rather faded; and the pencil does not appear to have been the moſt flattering in the world; but no matter, it is the pencil of truth, and not of a mercenary, who only wants to pleaſe.

We

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We were alleging too, that it might be made of very conſiderable utility to ſociety; and that theſe dumb orators could give the moſt pathetic lectures upon pride and vanity. Whenever a fellow began to ſtrut, like Mr. B. or to affect the haughty ſupercilious air, he ſhould be ſent to converſe with his friends in the gallery; and if their arguments did not bring him to a proper way of thinking, I would give him up as incorrigible.

At Bologna they ſhewed us the ſkeleton of a celebrated beauty, who died at a period of life when ſhe was ſtill the object of univerſal admiration. By way of making atonement for her own vanity, ſhe bequeathed herſelf as a monument, to curb the vanity of others. Recollecting on her death-bed the great adulation that had been paid to her charms, and the fatal change they were ſoon to undergo, ſhe ordered

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ordered that her body ſhould be diſſected, and her bones hung up for the inſpection of all young maidens who are inclined to be vain of their beauty. However, if ſhe had been preſerved in this moral gallery, the leſſon would have been ſtronger; for thoſe very features that had raiſed her vanity would ſtill have remained, only diveſted of all their power, and diſarmed of every charm.

Some of the Capuchins ſleep in theſe galleries every night, and pretend to have many wonderful viſions and revelations; but the truth is, that very few people believe them.

No woman is ever admitted into this convent either dead or alive; and this interdiction is written in large characters over the gate. The poor indolent Capuchins, the fraileſt of all fleſh, have great need

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need of ſuch precautions: they have no occupation from without, and they have no reſources within themſelves, ſo that they muſt be an eaſy prey to every temptation:—Bocaccio, and all the books of that kind, are filled with ſtories of their frailty.—Yeſterday, dining at the Prince of Sperlinga's, and talking on this ſubject, the Abbé T—— gave us an anecdote of a friend of his, who was formerly a brother of this convent. He is known by the name of Fra Paſqual, and has paſſed through many ſingular ſcenes of life, which it would be too long to recount. His laſt migration, or, if you will, tranſmigration, was from one of the banditti of this kingdom, in which capacity he had been enrolled for ſome time; but, tired of the danger and fatigue to which he was perpetually expoſed, he at laſt determined to exchange the character of the hero, for that of the ſaint, and try

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if it was not both ſafer and ſurer, to rely on the weakneſs of others, than on our own ſtrength.

Fra Paſqual pretended a ſtrong compunction for the tranſgreſſions of his paſt life, and made a promiſe to the Virgin, that the remainder of it ſhould be ſpent in mortification and penance, to atone for them. To this end, Paſqual took the vows of poverty and of chaſtity, and entered into all the rigours of the monaſtic life.— For ſome weeks he behaved in a moſt exemplary manner; he went barefooted, wore a large roſary, and a thicker cord of diſcipline than any monk in the convent; and his whole deportment gave teſtimony of the moſt unfeigned repentance; however, the devil was ſtill at work in the heart of Paſqual, and all theſe external mortifications only made him work the harder; in ſhort, he found it impoſſible to drive him out: Paſqual was ſenſible of this;

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this; and afraid leſt the enemy ſhould at laſt get the better of him, he thought it adviſable to leave at Palermo the character of ſanctity he had acquired, and begin ſomewhere elſe upon a new ſcore. He embarked for Naples, where he was ſoon admitted into a Capuchin convent.

As Paſqual knew from experience that the dull uniformity of the monaſtic life required ſome little amuſements to render it ſupportable, the firſt thing he ſet about was to find a miſtreſs. He made love to a lady of eaſy virtue, who ſoon admitted his addreſſes, but at the ſame time informed him, that he had a formidable rival, who was jealous as a tiger, and would not fail to put them both to death, ſhould he diſcover the intrigue. This was no other than a lifeguard-man, a fellow of ſix feet two inches, with a vaſt ſpada, like that of Goliah, and a monſtrous pair of curled whiſkers, that would have

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caſt a damp on the heart of any man but Fra Paſqual; but the monaſtic life had not yet enervated him; he was accuſtomed to danger, and loved a few difficulties: however, as in his preſent character he could not be on a footing with his rival, he thought it beſt only to make uſe of prudence and ſtratagem to ſupplant him: theſe are the eccleſiaſtical arms, and they have generally been found too hard for the military.

The lady promiſed him an interview as ſoon as the court ſhould go to Portici, where the lifeguard-man's duty obliged him to attend the king. Paſqual waited with impatience for ſome time; at laſt the wiſhed-for night arrived; the king ſet off, after the opera, with all his guards. Paſqual flew like lightning to the arms of his miſtreſs; the preliminaries were ſoon ſettled, and the happy lovers had juſt fallen aſleep, when they were ſuddenly alarmed

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alarmed by a rap and a well known voice at the door. The lady ſtarted up in an agony of deſpair, aſſuring Paſqual that they were both undone; that this was her lover; and if ſome expedient was not fallen upon, in the firſt tranſports of his fury, he would certainly put them both to death. There was no time for reflection; the lifeguard-man demanded entrance in the moſt peremptory manner, and the lady was obliged to inſtant compliance. Paſqual had juſt time to gather his rags together, and cram himſelf in below the bed; at that inſtant the door opened, and the giant came in, rattling his arms and ſtorming at his miſtreſs, for having made him wait ſo long; however, ſhe ſoon pacified him. He then ordered her to ſtrike a light, that he might ſee to undreſs: —this ſtruck Paſqual to the ſoul, and he gave himſelf up for loſt; however, the lady's addreſs ſaved him, when he leaſt expected it. In bringing the tinder, ſhe

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took care to let fall ſome water into the box; and all the beating ſhe and her lover could beat, they could not produce one ſpark. Every ſtroke of the flint ſounded in Paſqual's ears like his death-knell; but when he heard the lifeguard-man ſwearing at the tinder for not kindling, he began to conceive ſome hopes, and bleſſed the fertile invention of woman.—The lady told him he might eaſily get a light at the guard, which was at no great diſtance. —Paſqual's heart leaped with joy;— but when the ſoldier anſwered that he was abſent without leave, and durſt not be ſeen, it again began to flag; but on his ordering *her* to go—it died within him, and he now found himſelf in greater danger than ever. The lady herſelf was diſconcerted; but quickly recovering, ſhe told him, it would be too long before ſhe could get dreſſed; but adviſed him to go to the corner of a neighbouring ſtreet, where there was a lamp burning before

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the Virgin Mary, who could have no objection to his lighting a candle at it.—Paſqual revived;—but the ſoldier declared he was too much fatigued with his walk, and would rather undreſs in the dark; he at the ſame time began to grope below the bed for a bottle of liqueurs, which he knew ſtood there.—Paſqual ſhook like a quaker,—however, ſtill he eſcaped.—The lady obſerving what he was about, made a ſpring, and got him the bottle, at the very inſtant he was within an inch of ſeizing Paſqual's head.—The lady then went to bed, and told her lover, as it was a cold night, ſhe would warm his place for him. Paſqual admired her addreſs, and began to conceive ſome hopes of eſcaping.

His ſituation was the moſt irkſome in the world; the bed was ſo low, that he had no room to move; and when the great heavy lifeguard-man entered it, he found

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found himſelf ſqueezed down to the ground. He lay trembling and ſtifling his breath for ſome time, but found it abſolutely impoſſible to ſupport his ſituation till morning; and indeed, if it had, his clothes, which were ſcattered about, muſt infallibly diſcover him: he therefore began to think of making his eſcape; but he could not move without alarming his rival, who was now lying above him. At firſt he thought of ruſhing ſuddenly out, and throwing himſelf into the ſtreet; but this he diſdained, and, on ſecond thoughts, determined to ſeize the lifeguard-man's ſword, and either put him to death, or make an honourable capitulation both for himſelf and the lady. In the midſt of theſe reflections, his rival began to ſnore, and Paſqual declares that no muſick was ever ſo grateful to his ſoul. He tried to ſtir a little, and finding that it did not awake the enemy, he by degrees worked himſelf out of his priſon. He immediately laid

hold

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hold of the great ſpada;—when all his fears forſook him, and he felt as bold as a lion. He now relinquiſhed the daſtardly ſcheme of eſcaping, and only thought how he could beſt retaliate on his rival, for all that he had made him ſuffer.

As Paſqual was ſtark naked, it was no more trouble to him to put on the ſoldier's clothes than his own; and as both his cloak and his cappouch together were not worth a ſixpence, he thought it moſt eligible to equip himſelf à la militaire, and to leave his ſacerdotal robes to the ſoldier. In a ſhort time he was dreſſed cap-a-pie. His greaſy cowl, his cloak, his ſandals, his roſary, and his rope of diſcipline, he gathered together, and placed on a chair before the bed; and girding himſelf with a great buff belt, inſtead of the cordon of St. Francis, and graſping his truſty Toledo inſtead of the crucifix, he ſallied forth into the ſtreet. He pondered for ſome

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ſome time what ſcheme to fall upon; and at firſt thought of returning in the character of another lifeguard-man, pretending to have been ſent by the officer with a guard in queſt of his companion, who not being found in his quarters, was ſuppoſed to have deſerted: and thus, after having made him pay heartily for all that he had ſuffered under the bed, to leave him to the enjoyment of his pannic, and the elegant ſuit of clothes he had provided him. However, he was not ſatisfied with this revenge, and determined on one ſtill more ſolid. He went to the guard, and told the officer that he had met a Capuchin friar, with all the enſigns of his ſanctity about him, ſculking through the ſtreets, in the dead of night, when they pretend to be employed in prayer for the ſins of mankind. That prompted by curioſity to follow him, the holy friar as he expected went ſtraight to the houſe of a celebrated courtezan; that he ſaw him admitted,

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admitted, and liſtened at the window till he heard them go to bed together: that if he did not find this information to be true, he ſhould reſign himſelf his priſoner, and ſubmit to whatever puniſhment he ſhould think proper.

The officer and his guard delighted to have ſuch a hold of a Capuchin, (who pretend to be the very models of ſanctity, and who revile in a particular manner the licentious life of the military) turned out with the utmoſt alacrity, and, under the conduct of Paſqual, ſurrounded the lady's houſe. Paſqual began thundering at the door; and demanded entrance for the officer and his guard. The unhappy ſoldier waking with the noiſe, and not doubting that it was a detachment ſent to ſeize him, gave himſelf up to deſpair, and inſtantly took ſhelter in the very place that Paſqual had ſo lately occupied; at the ſame time laying hold of all the things he found

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found on the chair, never doubting that they were his own clothes. As the lady was ſomewhat dilatory in opening the door, Paſqual pretended to put his foot to it, when up it flew, and entering with the officer and his guard, demanded the body of a Capuchin friar, who they were informed, lodged with her that night. The lady had heard Paſqual go out, and having no ſuſpicion that he would inform againſt himſelf, ſhe proteſted her innocence in the moſt ſolemn manner, taking all the ſaints to witneſs that ſhe knew no ſuch perſon: but Paſqual ſuſpecting the retreat of the lover, began groping below the bed, and ſoon pulled out his own greaſy cowl and cloak;—"Here (ſaid he to the officer)—"here are proofs enough:—I'll anſwer for "it, *Signor Padre* himſelf is at no great "diſtance."—And putting his noſe below the bed;—"Fogh (ſays he) I ſmell him;—"he ſtinks like a fox. The ſureſt method "of finding a Capuchin, is by the noſe;

"you

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"you may wind him a mile off."—Then lowering their lanthorn, they beheld the unfortunate lover ſqueezed in betwixt the bed and the ground, and almoſt ſtifled.—"*Ecco lo*, (ſaid Paſqual) here he is, with "all the enſigns of his holineſs;" and pulling them out one by one,—the crucifix, the roſary, and the cord of diſcipline.—"You may ſee (ſaid he) that the reverend "father came here to do penance;"—and taking up the cord,—"Suppoſe now we "ſhould aſſiſt him in this meritorious "work. *Andiamo, Signor Padre,—an-* "*diamo.*—We will ſave you the trouble of "inflicting it yourſelf;—and whether you "came here to ſin, or to repent, by your "own maxims, you know, a little ſound "diſcipline is healthful to the ſoul."—The guard were lying round the bed, in convulſions of laughter; and began breaking the moſt galling and moſt inſolent jokes upon the ſuppoſed padre.—The lifeguard-

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man thought himſelf enchanted.—He at laſt ventured to ſpeak, and declared they were all in a miſtake;—that he was no Capuchin:—upon which the laugh redoubled, and the coarſeſt jokes were repeated. The lady, in the mean time, with the beſt diſſembled marks of fear and aſtoniſhment, ran about the room, exclaiming—"*Oime Siamo Perduti,—Siamo* "*incantati,—Siamo inſorcelati.*"—Paſqual delighted to ſee that his plan had taken its full effect, thought it now time to make his retreat, before the unfortunate lover could have an opportunity of examining his clothes, and perhaps detecting him: he therefore pretended regimental buſineſs, and regretting much that he was obliged to join his corps, took leave of the officer and his guard; at the ſame time recommending by all means, to treat the holy father with all that reverence and reſpect that was due to ſo ſacred a perſon.

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The lifeguard-man, when he got out from below the bed, began to look about for his clothes; but obſerving nothing but the greaſy weeds of a Capuchin friar, he was now perfectly convinced, that Heaven had delivered him over, for his offences, to the power of ſome dæmon; (for of all mortals, the Neapolitan ſoldiers are the moſt ſuperſtitious)—The lady too, acted her part ſo well, that he had no longer any doubt of it.—"Thus it is (ſaid he in a "penitential voice) to offend heaven!—I "own my ſin.—I knew it was Friday, and "yet—O, fleſh, fleſh!—Had it been any "other day, I ſtill ſhould have remained "what I was.—O, St. Gennaro! I paſs'd "thee * too without paying the due "reſpect:—thy all-ſeeing eye has found "me out. Gentlemen, do with me what "you pleaſe;—I am not what I ſeem to

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* A celebrated ſtatue of St. Januarius, betwixt Portici and Naples.

"be."

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"be."—"No, no (ſaid the officer) we "are ſenſible of that.—But, come, Signor "Padre, on with your garments, and "march;—we have no time to trifle.—"Here, Corporal—(giving him the cordon) "tie his hands, and let him feel the weight "of St. Francis.—The ſaint owes him that, "for having ſo impudently denied him for "his maſter."—The poor ſoldier was perfectly paſſive;—they arrayed him in the ſandals, the cowl, and the cloak of Fra Paſqual, and put the great roſary about his neck; and a moſt woeful figure he made.—The officer made him look in the glaſs, to try if he could recollect himſelf, and aſked if he was a Capuchin now or not.—He was ſhocked at his own appearance; but bore every thing with meekneſs and reſignation. They then conducted him to the guard, belabouring him all the way with the cord of St. Francis, and aſking him every ſtroke, if he knew his maſter now?—

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In the mean time, Paſqual was ſnug in his convent, enjoying the ſweets of his adventure. He had a ſpare cloak and cowl, and was ſoon equipped again like one of the holy fathers; he then took the clothes and accoutrements of the lifeguard-man, and laid them in a heap, near the gate of another convent of Capuchins, but at a great diſtance from his own, reſerving only to himſelf a trifle of money which he found in the breeches pocket, juſt to indemnify him for the loſs of his cloak and his cowl; and even this, he ſays, he ſhould have held ſacred, but he knew whoever ſhould find the clothes, would make lawful prize of it.

The poor ſoldier remained next day a ſpectacle of ridicule to all the world; at laſt his companions heard of his ſtrange metamorphoſis, and came in troops to ſee him: their jokes were perhaps ſtill more galling than thoſe of the guard, but as he

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thought himſelf under the finger of God, or at leaſt of St. Januarius, he bore all with meekneſs and patience; at laſt his clothes were found, and he was ſet at liberty; but he believes to this day, that the whole was the work of the devil, ſent to chaſtize him for his ſins; and has never ſince ſeen his miſtreſs on a Friday, nor paſſed the ſtatue of St. Januarius without muttering a prayer. Fra Paſqual has told the ſtory to ſeveral of his moſt intimate friends, whom he can depend on, amongſt whom is the Abbé T-t-i, who has often had it from his own mouth.

I beg pardon for this long ſtory; had I ſuſpected that it would have run out to half this length, I aſſure you, I ſhould not have troubled you with it. Perhaps, however, you will think this apology preciſely the moſt unneceſſary, and moſt impertinent part of it all.—This is often the fate of apologies, particularly for long letters;

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ters; Firſt, becauſe it always makes them longer;—Secondly,—Hey-day! where are we going now?—To return then to our ſubject. We had no ſooner left the Capuchin convent, than our carriage broke down, long before we reached the city: and as walking (at Palermo as well as Naples) is of all things the moſt diſgraceful, we riſked by this unfortunate accident to have our characters blaſted for ever. However, Philip, our Sicilian ſervant, took care to make ſuch a noiſe about it, that our dignity did not much ſuffer. He kept a little diſtance before us, peſting and blaſting all the way at their curſed crazy carriages;—and ſwearing that there never was any thing in the world ſo infamous: that in a city like Palermo, the capital of all Sicily, Signori of our rank and dignity ſhould be obliged to walk on foot; that it muſt be an eternal reflection againſt the place,—and bawled out to every perſon he met, if there was no

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coaches to be had; no carriages of any kind, either for love or money. In ſhort, we had not got half through the ſtreet, before we had ſeveral offers from gentlemen of our acquaintance, who lamented exceedingly the indignity we had ſuffered, and wondered much, that we did not rather ſend forward a ſervant for another coach, and wait (in the heat of the ſun) till it arrived.

This is not the only time that Philip's wits have been of ſervice to us on ſuch occaſions. A few nights ago, we had a diſpute with our coachman; turned him off, and had not provided another. We were unfortunately engaged to go to the great converſation. What was to be done?—No ſuch thing as walking.—Should we be caught in the fact, we are diſgraced for ever.—It would be worſe than to be caught in that of adultery.—No alternative, however. There was not a coach to be had,

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had, and our old coachman would not ſerve us for one night only.—Philip made ſad wry faces, and ſwore the coachman ought to be crucified;—but when he ſaw us bent on walking, he was ſtill more diſtreſſed; and I really believe, if we had been diſcovered, that he would not have ſerved us any longer. He therefore ſet his wits to work, how he ſhould preſerve both his maſters' honour and his own place. He at firſt heſitated, before he would take up the flambeau; but he would by no means be prevailed on to light it.—"What, "(ſaid Philip) do you think I have no "more regard for you, than to expoſe you "to the eyes of the whole world? No, no, "Gentlemen; if you will bring yourſelves "to diſgrace, you ſhall not at leaſt make "me the agent of ſhewing it: but remem-"ber, if you are obſerved walking, no "mortal will believe you keep a coach; "and do you expect after that to be re-"ceived into company?"—"Well, well,

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" Philip, do as you pleaſe, but we muſt go " to the converſation."—Philip ſhrugged up his ſhoulders.—" *Diabolo—che faremo!* " *Andiamo dunque Signori—andiamo.*"—So ſaying, he led the way, and we followed.

Philip had ſtudied the geography of the town; he conducted us through lanes only known to himſelf, and carefully avoided the great ſtreet; till at laſt we arrived at a little entry, which leads to the converſation rooms; here the carriages uſually ſtop. We ſlipped up the entry in the dark; when Philip, darting into a ſhop, lighted his flambeau in an inſtant, and came ruſhing before us, bawling out,—" *Piazza per gli* " *Signori forreſtieri;*"—when all the world immediately made way for us.—After we had got into the rooms, he called ſo loud after us, aſking at what time he ſhould order the coach to return; that, overcome partly by riſibility, and partly by a conſciouſneſs

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ſciouſneſs of the deceit, not one of us had power to anſwer him. Philip, however, followed us, and repeated the queſtion ſo often, that we were obliged to give him a reply, "*a mezzo notte.*"—At midnight he came to tell us that the coach was ready.—We were curious to ſee how he would behave on this occaſion; for it was not half ſo difficult to get in unobſerved, as to get out: however, Philip's genius was equal to both.—So ſoon as we got into the entry, he run to the door, bawling out Antonio, as hard as he could roar.—No Antonio anſwered;—and unfortunately, there was a number of gentlemen and ladies going away at the ſame time. They begged of us, as ſtrangers, to ſtep firſt into our carriage, and abſolutely refuſed to go out before us.—Philip was ſadly puzzled.—He firſt ran up the ſtreet, then he ran down, and came back all out of breath, curſing Antonio. "That raſcal (ſaid he) is never "in the way, and you muſt turn him off.—

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" He pretends that he could not get up his " coach to the door, for the great croud of " carriages; and is waiting about fifty " yards below.—Voſtri Eccellenzi had better " ſtep down (ſaid Philip) otherwiſe you " will be obliged to wait here at leaſt half " an hour."—We took leave of the company, and ſet off.—Philip ran like a lamp-lighter, till he had almoſt paſſed the carriages, when daſhing his flambeau on the ground, as if by accident, he extinguiſhed it, and getting into a narrow lane, he waited till we came up; when he whiſpered us to follow him,—and conducted us back, by the ſame labyrinth we had come; and thus ſaved us from eternal infamy.—However, he aſſures us, that he will not venture it again for his place.

Now, what do you think of a nation where ſuch prejudices as theſe prevail?—It is pretty much the caſe all over Italy.—An Italian nobleman is aſhamed of nothing ſo much

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much as making uſe of his legs.—They think their dignity augments by the repoſe of their members; and that no man can be truly reſpectable, that does not loll away one half of his time on a ſofa, or in a carriage.—In ſhort, a man is obliged to be indolent and effeminate, not to be deſpiſed and ridiculous.—What can we expect of ſuch a people?—Can they be capable of any thing great or manly, who ſeem almoſt aſhamed to appear men!—I own, it ſurpaſſes my comprehenſion; and I bleſs my ſtars every time that I think of honeſt John Bull, even with all his faults.—Will you believe me, that, of all that I have known in Italy, there are ſcarce half a dozen that have had fortitude enough to ſubdue this moſt contemptible of all human prejudices?—The Prince of Campo Franco too in this place, is above it. He is a noble fellow, and both in his perſon and character, greatly reſembles our late worthy friend, General Craufurd. He is a major-general too, and

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always dreſſes in his uniform, which ſtill increaſes the reſemblance. Every time I ſee him, he ſays or does ſomething that recalls ſtrongly to my mind the idea of our noble general.—He laughs at the follies of his country, and holds theſe wretched prejudices in that contempt they deſerve.—"What would the old hardy Romans think "(ſaid he, talking on this ſubject) were "they permitted to take a view of the oc-"cupations of their progeny?—I ſhould "like to ſee a Brutus or a Caſſius amongſt "us for a little;—how the clumſy vulgar "fellows would be hooted.—I dare ſay "they would ſoon be glad to return to the "ſhades again."

Adieu;—for ſome nights paſt we have been obſerving the courſe of a comet; and as we were the firſt people here that took notice of it, I aſſure you, we are looked upon as very profound aſtronomers. I ſhall ſay more of it next letter.—We have now

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got out of our abominable inn, and have taken a final leave of our French landlady. The Count Buſhemi, a very amiable young man, has been kind enough to provide us a lodging on the ſea-ſhore; one of the cooleſt and moſt agreeable in Palermo.

Ever yours, &c.

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LETTER XXVI.

Palermo, July 2d.

OUR comet is now gone; we firſt obſerved it on the 24th. It had no tail, but was ſurrounded with a faintiſh ill defined light, that made it look like a bright ſtar ſhining through a thin cloud. This, in all probability, is owing to an atmoſphere, around the body of the comet, that cauſes a refraction of the rays, and prevents them from reaching us with that diſtinctneſs we obſerve in bodies that have no atmoſphere. —We were ſtill the more perſuaded of this two nights ago, when we had the good fortune to catch the comet juſt paſſing cloſe by a ſmall fixed ſtar, whoſe light was not only conſiderably dimm'd, but we thought we obſerved a ſenſible change of place in the ſtar, as ſoon as its rays fell into the atmo-

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atmoſphere of the comet; owing no doubt to the refraction in paſſing through that atmoſphere.—We attempted to trace the line of the comet's courſe, but as we could find no globe, it was not poſſible to do it with any degree of preciſion.—Its direction was almoſt due north, and its velocity altogether amazing.—We did not obſerve it ſo minutely the two or three firſt nights of its appearance, but on the 30th it was at our zenith here, (latitude 38° 10′; longitude from Lond. 13°) about five minutes after midnight, and laſt night, the firſt of July, it paſſed four degrees to the eaſt of the polar ſtar, nearly at 40 minutes after eight. So that, in leſs than 24 hours, it has deſcribed a great arch in the heavens, upwards of 50 degrees; which gives an idea of the moſt amazing velocity. Suppoſing it at the diſtance of the ſun, at this rate of travelling, it would go round the earth's orbit in leſs than a week. Which makes, I think, conſiderably more than ſixty millions

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lions of miles in a day; a motion that vaſtly ſurpaſſes all human comprehenſion. And as this motion continues to be greatly accelerated, what muſt it be, when the comet approaches ſtill nearer to the body of the ſun! Laſt night a change of place was obſervable in the ſpace of a few minutes, particularly when it paſſed near any of the fixed ſtars. We attempted to find if it had any obſervable parallax, but the vaſt rapidity of its motion always prevented us; for whatever fixed ſtars it was near in the horizon, it had got ſo far to the north of them, long before it reached the meridian, that the parallax, if there was any, entirely eſcaped us.

I ſhall long much to ſee the obſervations that have been made with you, and in other diſtant countries, on this comet; as from theſe, we ſhall probably be enabled to form ſome judgment of its diſtance from the earth; which, although we could obſerve

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no parallax, I am apt to believe was not very great, as its motion was ſo very perceptible.—We could procure no inſtruments to meaſure its apparent diſtance from any of the fixed ſtars, ſo that the only two obſervations any thing can be made of, are, the time of its paſſing the polar ſtar laſt night, its diſtance from it, and the time of its arrival at our zenith on the 30th; this we found by applying the eye to a ſtraight rod, hung perpendicularly from a ſmall thread. The comet was not in the exact point of the zenith, but to the beſt of our obſervation, about ſix or ſeven minutes to the north of it. Laſt night it was viſible almoſt immediately after ſun-ſet; long before any of the fixed ſtars appeared. It is now immerſed in the rays of the ſun, and has certainly got very near his body. If it returns again to the regions of ſpace, it will probably be viſible in a few days, but I own I ſhould much doubt of any ſuch return, if it is really by the attractive force

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of the ſun, that it is at preſent carried with ſuch amazing celerity towards him. This is the third comet of this kind, whoſe return I have had an opportunity of watching; but never was fortunate enough to find any of them after they had paſſed the ſun; though thoſe that do really return, appear at that time much more luminous than before they approached him.

The aſtronomy of comets, from what I can remember of it, appears to be clogged with very great difficulties, and even ſome ſeeming abſurdities. It is difficult to conceive, that theſe immenſe bodies, after being drawn to the ſun with the velocity of a million of miles in an hour; when they have at laſt come almoſt to touch him, ſhould then fly off from his body, with the ſame velocity they approached it; and that too, by the power of this very motion that his attraction has occaſioned.—The demonſtration of this I remember is very curious

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curious and ingenious; but I wiſh it may be entirely free from ſophiſtry. No doubt, in bodies moving in curves round a fixed center, as the centripetal motion increaſes, the centrifugal one increaſes likewiſe;—but how this motion, which is only generated by the former, ſhould at laſt get the better of the power that produces it; and that too, at the very time this power has acquired its utmoſt force and energy; ſeems ſomewhat difficult to conceive. It is the only inſtance I know, wherein the effect increaſing regularly with the cauſe; at laſt, whilſt the cauſe is ſtill acting with full vigour; the effect entirely gets the better of the cauſe, and leaves it in the lurch. For, the body attracted, is at laſt carried away with infinite velocity from the attracting body.—By what power is it carried away?—Why, ſay our philoſophers, by the very power of this attraction, which has now produced a new power ſuperior to itſelf, to wit, the centrifugal force. How-

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ever, perhaps all this may be reconcilable to reaſon; far be it from me to preſume attacking ſo glorious a ſyſtem as that of attraction. The law that the heavenly bodies are ſaid to obſerve, in deſcribing equal areas in equal times, is ſuppoſed to be demonſtrated, and by this it would appear, that the centripetal and centrifugal forces alternately get the maſtery of one another.

However, I cannot help thinking it ſomewhat hard to conceive, that gravity ſhould always get the better of the centrifugal force, at the very time that its action is the ſmalleſt, when the comet is at its greateſt diſtance from the ſun; and that the centrifugal force ſhould get the better of gravity, at the very time that its action is the greateſt, when the comet is at its neareſt point to the ſun.

To a common obſerver it would rather appear, that the ſun, like an electric

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body, after it had once charged the objects that it attracted with its own effluvia or atmosphere, by degrees loses its attraction, and at last even repels them; and, that the attracting power, like what we likewise observe in electricity, does not return again till the effluvia imbibed from the attracting body is dispelled or dissipated; when it is again attracted, and so on alternately. For it appears (at least to an unphilosophical observer) somewhat repugnant to reason, to say that a body flying off from another body some thousands of miles in a minute, should all the time be violently attracted by that body, and that it is even by virtue of this very attraction that it is flying off from it.—He would probably ask, What more could it do, pray, were it really to be repelled?

Had the system of electricity, and of repulsion as well as attraction, been known and established in the last age, I have little

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doubt that the profound genius of Newton would have called it to his aid; and perhaps accounted in a more ſatisfactory manner, for many of the great phænomena of the heavens. To the beſt of my remembrance, we know of no body that poſſeſſes, in any conſiderable degree, the power of attraction, that in certain circumſtances does not likewiſe poſſeſs the power of repulſion.—The magnet, the tourmalin, amber, glaſs, and every electrical ſubſtance. —Now from analogy, as we find the ſun ſo powerfully endowed with attraction, why may we not likewiſe ſuppoſe him to be poſſeſſed of repulſion? Indeed, this very power ſeems to be confeſſed by the Newtonians to reſide in the ſun in a moſt wonderful degree; for they aſſure us he repels the rays of light with ſuch amazing force, that they fly upwards of 80 millions of miles in ſeven minutes. Now why ſhould we confine this repulſion to the rays of light only?—As they are material, may not other

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other matter brought near his body, be affected in the ſame manner? Indeed one would imagine, that their motion alone would create the moſt violent repulſion; and that the force, with which they are perpetually flowing from the ſun, would moſt effectually prevent every other body from approaching him; for this we find is the conſtant effect of a rapid ſtream of any other matter.—But let us examine a little more his effects on comets. The tails of theſe bodies, are probably their atmoſpheres rendered highly electrical, either from the violence of their motion, or from their proximity to the ſun.—Of all the bodies we know, there is none in ſo conſtant and ſo violent an electrical ſtate, as the higher regions of our own atmoſphere. Of this I have long been convinced; for, ſend up a kite with a ſmall wire about its ſtring, only to the height of 12 or 1300 feet, and at all times it will produce fire, as I have found by frequent experience; ſometimes,

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when the air was perfectly clear, without a cloud in the hemiſphere; at other times, when it was thick and hazy, and totally unfit for electrical operations below. Now, as this is the caſe at ſo ſmall a height, and as we find the effect ſtill grows ſtronger, in proportion as the kite advances, (for I have ſometimes obſerved, that a little blaſt of wind, ſuddenly raiſing the kite about a hundred feet, has more than doubled the effect) what muſt it be in very great elevations?—Indeed we may often judge of it from the violence with which the clouds are agitated, from the meteors formed above the region of the clouds, and particularly from the aurora borealis, which has been obſerved to have much the ſame colour and appearance as the matter that forms the tails of comets.

Now what muſt be the effect of ſo vaſt a body as our atmoſphere, made ſtrongly electrical, when it happens to approach any other

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other body ?—It muſt always be either violently attracted or repelled, according to the poſitive or negative quality (in the language of electricians) of the body that it approaches.

It has ever been obſerved that the tails of comets (juſt as we ſhould expect, from a very light fluid body, attached to a ſolid heavy one) are drawn after the comets, as long as they are at a diſtance from the ſun; but ſo ſoon as the comet gets near his body, the tail veers about to that ſide of the comet that is in the oppoſite direction from the ſun, and no longer follows the comet, but continues its motion ſideways, oppoſing its whole length to the medium through which it paſſes, rather than allow it in any degree to approach the ſun. Indeed, its tendency to follow the body of the comet is ſtill obſervable, were it not prevented by ſome force ſuperior to that tendency; for the tail is always obſerved to bend a little

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to that ſide from whence the comet is flying. This perhaps is ſome proof too, that it does not move in an abſolute vacuum.

When the comet reaches its perihelion, the tail is generally very much lengthened, perhaps by the rarefaction from the heat; —perhaps by the increaſe of the ſun's repulſion, or that of his atmoſphere. It ſtill continues projected, exactly in the oppoſite direction from the ſun; and when the comet moves off again to the regions of ſpace, the tail, inſtead of following it, as it did on its approach, is projected a vaſt way before it, and ſtill keeps the body of the comet exactly oppoſed betwixt it and the ſun; till by degrees, as the diſtance increaſes, the length of the tail is diminiſhed; the repulſion probably becoming weaker and weaker.

It has likewiſe been obſerved, that the length of theſe tails are commonly in pro-

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portion to the proximity of the comet to the ſun. That of 1680 threw out a train that would almoſt have reached from the ſun to the earth. If this had been attracted by the ſun, would it not have fallen upon his body? when the comet at that time was not one fourth of his diameter diſtant from him; but inſtead of this, it was darted away to the oppoſite ſide of the heavens, even with a greater velocity than that of the comet itſelf—Now what can this be owing to, if not to a repulſive power in the ſun, or his atmoſphere?

And, indeed, it would at firſt appear but little leſs abſurd to ſay, that the tail of the comet is all this time violently attracted by the ſun, although it be driven away in an oppoſite direction from him, as to ſay the ſame of the comet itſelf. It is true, this repulſion ſeems to begin much ſooner to affect the tail, than the body of the comet; which is ſuppoſed always to

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paſs the ſun before it begins to fly away from him, which is by no means the caſe with the tail. The repulſive force, therefore, (if there is any ſuch) is in a much leſs proportion than the attractive one, and probably juſt only enough to counterbalance the latter, when theſe bodies are in their perihelions, and to turn them ſo much aſide, as to prevent their falling into the body of the ſun. The projectile force they have acquired will then carry them out to the heavens, and repulſion probably diminiſhing as they recede from the ſun's atmoſphere, his attraction will again take place, and retard their motion regularly, till they arrive at their aphelia, when they once more begin to return to him.

I don't know how you will like all this: —Our comet has led me a dance I very little thought of; and I believe I ſhould have done better to ſend it at once into the ſun, and had done with it: and that, indeed,

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indeed, I am apt to believe, will be its fate. For as this comet has no tail, there is, of conſequence, no apparent repulſion. If it was repelled, its atmoſphere, like the others, would be driven away in the oppoſite direction from the ſun; I therefore do not ſee any poſſible method it has of eſcaping.

Theſe comets are certainly bodies of a very different nature from thoſe with tails, to which indeed they appear even to bear a much leſs reſemblance than they do to planets: and it is no ſmall proof of the little progreſs we have made in the knowledge of the univerſe, that they have not as yet been diſtinguiſhed by a different name.

This is the third kind of body that has been diſcovered in our ſyſtem, that all appear eſſentially different from each other, that are probably regulated by different laws, and intended for very different purpoſes.

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poſes.—How much will poſterity be aſtoniſhed at our ignorance, and wonder that this ſyſtem ſhould have exiſted for ſo many thouſand years, before we were in the leaſt acquainted with one half of it, or had even invented names to diſtinguiſh its different members!

I have no doubt, that in future ages, the number of the comets, the form of their orbits, and time of their revolutions, will be as clearly demonſtrated as that of the planets. It is our countryman, Dr. Halley, who has begun this great work, which may be conſidered juſt now as in its earlieſt infancy.—Theſe bodies too, with thick atmoſpheres, but without tails, will likewiſe have their proper places aſcertained, and will no longer be confounded with bodies to which they bear no reſemblance or connection.

Comets

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Comets with tails have ſeldom been viſible, but on their receſs from the ſun. It is he that kindles them up, and gives them that alarming appearance in the heavens. —On the contrary, thoſe without tails have ſeldom, perhaps never, been obſerved, but on their approach to him. I don't recollect any whoſe return has been tolerably well aſcertained. I remember, indeed, a few years ago, a ſmall one, that was ſaid to have been diſcovered by a teleſcope, after it had paſſed the ſun, but never more became viſible to the naked eye. This aſſertion is eaſily made, and nobody can contradict it; but it does not at all appear probable, that it ſhould have been ſo much leſs luminous after it had paſſed the ſun, than before it approached him; and I will own to you, when I have heard that the return of theſe comets had eſcaped the eyes of the moſt acute aſtronomers, I have been tempted to think, that they did not return at all, but were abſorbed in the body of

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the ſun, which their violent motion towards him ſeemed to indicate.—Indeed, I have often wiſhed that this diſcovery might be made, as it would in ſome meaſure account for what has as yet been looked upon as unaccountable: that the ſun, notwithſtanding his daily waſte, from enlightening the univerſe, never appears diminiſhed either in ſize or light.—Surely this waſte muſt be immenſe, and were there not in nature ſome hidden proviſion for ſupplying it, in the ſpace of ſix thouſand years, ſuppoſing the world to be no older, the planets muſt have got to a much greater diſtance from his body, by the vaſt diminution of his attraction; they muſt likewiſe have moved much ſlower, and conſequently the length of our year muſt have been greatly increaſed.—Nothing of all this ſeems to be the caſe: the diameter of the ſun is the ſame that ever it was: he neither appears diminiſhed, nor our diſtance from him increaſed: his light,

heat,

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heat, and attraction ſeem to be the ſame as ever; and the motion of the planets round him is performed in the ſame time; of conſequence, his quantity of matter ſtill continues the ſame.—How then is this vaſt waſte ſupplied?—May there not be millions of bodies attracted by him, from the boundleſs regions of ſpace, that are never perceived by us? Comets, on their road to him, have ſeveral times been accidentally diſcovered by teleſcopes, that were never ſeen by the naked eye.—Indeed, the number of black ſpots on the ſun ſeem to indicate that there is always a quantity of matter there, only in a preparation to give light, but not yet refined and pure enough to throw off rays like the reſt of his body. For I think we can hardly conceive, that any matter can remain long on the body of the ſun without becoming luminous; and ſo we find theſe ſpots often diſappear, that is to ſay, the matter of which they are compoſed is then perfectly

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fectly melted, and has acquired the ſame degree of heat and light as the reſt of his body.—Even in our glaſs-houſes, and other very hot furnaces, moſt ſorts of matter very ſoon acquire the ſame colour and appearance as the matter in fuſion, and emit rays of light like it. But how much more muſt this be the caſe at the ſurface of the ſun! when Newton computes, that even at many thouſand miles diſtance from it, a body would acquire a degree of heat two thouſand times greater than that of red hot iron. It has generally been underſtood, that he ſaid the great comet really did acquire this degree of heat; but this is certainly a miſtake: Sir Iſaac's expreſſion, to the beſt of my remembrance, is, that it might have acquired it. And if we conſider the very great ſize of that body, and the ſhort time of its perihelion, the thing will appear impoſſible: nor indeed do I think we can conceive, that a body only as large as our Earth, and the ſpots

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on the ſun are often much larger, could be reduced to fuſion, even on his ſurface, but after a very conſiderable ſpace of time.

Now as it ſeems to be univerſally ſuppoſed, that the rays of light are really particles of matter, proceeding from the body of the ſun, I think it is abſolutely neceſſary that we ſhould fall upon ſome ſuch method of ſending him back a ſupply of thoſe rays, otherwiſe, let his ſtock be ever ſo great, it muſt at laſt be exhauſted.

I wiſh aſtronomers would obſerve whether the ſpots on the ſun are not increaſed after the appearing of theſe comets; and whether theſe ſpots do not diſappear again by degrees, like a body that is gradually melted down in a furnace. But there is another conſideration too, which naturally occurs: pray what becomes of all this vaſt

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quantity of matter after it is reduced to light?—Is it ever collected again into ſolid bodies; or is it for ever loſt and diſſipated, after it has made its journey from the ſun to the object it illuminates?—It is ſomewhat ſtrange, that of all that immenſe quantity of matter poured down on us during the day, that pervades and fills the whole univerſe; the moment we are deprived of the luminous body, the whole of it, in an inſtant, ſeems to be annihilated: —in ſhort, there are a number of difficulties attending the common received doctrine of light; nor do I think there is any point in natural philoſophy the ſolution of which is leſs ſatisfactory. If we ſuppoſe every ray to be a ſtream of particles of matter, darting from the luminous body, how can we conceive that theſe ſtreams may be interfected and pierced by other ſtreams of the ſame matter ten thouſand thouſand different ways, without cauſing the leaſt confuſion either to the one or the other?

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other? for in a clear night we ſee diſtinctly any particular ſtar that we look at, although the rays coming from that ſtar to our eye is pierced for millions of miles before it reaches us, by millions of ſtreams of the ſame rays, from every other ſun and ſtar in the univerſe. Now ſuppoſe, in any other matter that we know of, and one would imagine there ought at leaſt to be ſome ſort of analogy; ſuppoſe, I ſay, we ſhould only attempt to make two ſtreams paſs one another; water, for inſtance, or air, one of the pureſt and the moſt fluid ſubſtances we are acquainted with, we find it totally impoſſible.—The two ſtreams will mutually interrupt and incommode one another, and the ſtrongeſt will ever carry off the weakeſt into its own direction; but if a ſtream of light is hit by ten thouſand other ſtreams, moving at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, it is not even bent by the impreſſion, nor in the ſmalleſt degree diverted from its

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courſe; but reaches us with the ſame preciſion and regularity, as if nothing had interfered with it. Beſides, on the ſuppoſition that light is real particles of matter moving from the ſun to the earth, in the ſpace of ſeven minutes, how comes it to paſs, that with all this wonderful velocity, there ſeems to be no momentum! for it communicates motion to no body that obſtructs its paſſage, and no body whatever is removed by the percuſſion.—Suppoſing we had never heard of this diſcovery, and were at once to be told of a current of matter flying at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, and ſo large as to cover one half of our globe, would we not imagine that the earth muſt inſtantly be torn to pieces by it, or carried off with the moſt incredible velocity? It will be objected, that the extreme minuteneſs of the particles of light prevents it from having any ſuch effect;—but as theſe particles are in ſuch quantity, and ſo cloſe

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to each other as to cover the ſurface of every body that is oppoſed to them, and entirely to fill up that vaſt ſpace betwixt the earth and the ſun, this objection I ſhould think in a great meaſure falls to the ground. The particles of air and of water are likewiſe extremely minute, and a ſmall quantity of theſe will produce little or no effect, but increaſe their number, and only give them the millionth part of the velocity that is aſcribed to a ray of light, and no force whatever could be able to withſtand them.

Adieu.—I have unwarily run myſelf into the very deeps of philoſophy; and find it rather difficult to ſtruggle out again.—I aſk your pardon, and promiſe, if poſſible, for the future, to ſteer quite clear of them. —I am ſure, whatever this comet may be to the univerſe, it has been an ignis fatuus to me; for it has led me ſtrangely out of my road, and bewildered me amongſt

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rocks and quickſands, where I was like to ſtick fifty times.

I have forgot whether or not you are a rigid Newtonian; if you are, I believe I had better recant in time, for fear of accidents. I know this is a very tender point; and have ſeen many of thoſe gentlemen, who are good Chriſtians too, that can bear with much more temper to hear the divinity of our Saviour called in queſtion, than that of Sir Iſaac; and look on a Carteſian or a Ptolomean, as a worſe ſpecies of infidel than an atheiſt.

I remember, when I was at college, to have ſeen a heretic to their doctrine of gravity, very ſuddenly converted by being toſſed in a blanket; and another, who denied the law of centripetal and centrifugal forces, ſoon brought to aſſent, from having the demonſtration made upon his ſhoulders, by a ſtone whirled at the end of a ſtring.

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Theſe are powerful arguments, and it is difficult to withſtand them.—I cry you mercy.—I am without reach of you at preſent, and you are heartily welcome to wreck your vengeance on my letter.

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LETTER XXVII.

Palermo, July 6th.

MANY of the churches here are extremely rich and magnificent. The cathedral (or, as they call it, *Madre Chieſa)* is a venerable Gothic building, and of a large ſize; it is ſupported within by eighty columns of Oriental granite, and divided into a great number of chapels, ſome of which are extremely rich, particularly that of St. Roſolia, the patroneſs of Palermo, who is held in greater veneration here, than all the perſons of the Trinity; and, which is ſtill much more, than even the Virgin Mary herſelf. The relics of the ſaint are preſerved in a large box of ſilver, curiouſly wrought, and enriched with precious ſtones. They perform many miracles, and are looked upon as the greateſt treaſure of the city.

They

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They are eſteemed a moſt effectual remedy againſt the plague, and have often preſerved them from that fatal diſtemper. The ſaint gained ſo much credit, in ſaving them from the laſt plague of Meſſina, although it was at two hundred miles diſtance, that they have, out of gratitude, erected a noble monument to her.—St. Agatha did as much for Catania, but that city has not been ſo generous to her.—The other riches of this church conſiſt principally in ſome bones of St. Peter, and a whole arm of St. John the Baptiſt.—There is likewiſe a jaw-bone of prodigious efficacy; and ſome other bones of leſſer note.—It contains ſome things of ſmaller conſequence, which, however, are not altogether without their merit. The monuments of their Norman kings, ſeveral of whom lie buried here, are of the fineſt porphiry, ſome of them near ſeven hundred years old, and yet of very tolerable workmanſhip. Oppoſite to theſe, there is a

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tabernacle of lapis lazuli. It is about fifteen feet high, and finely ornamented. Some of the preſents made to St. Roſolia, are by no means contemptible. A croſs of very large brilliants, from the king of Spain, is, I think, the moſt conſiderable.

The Sachriſtie too is very rich: There are ſome robes embroidered with Oriental pearl, that are near four hundred years old, and yet look as freſh as if done yeſterday.

The Jeſuits church is equal in magnificence to any thing I have ſeen in Italy.—The genius of thoſe fathers appears ſtrong in all their works; one is never at a loſs to find them out. They have been groſsly calumniated; for they certainly had leſs hypocriſy than any other order of monks.

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The Chieſa del Pallazzo is entirely encruſted over with antient moſaic; and the vaulted roof too is all of the ſame.—But it is endleſs to talk of churches. Here are upwards of three hundred.—That of Monreale, about five miles diſtant from this city, is the next in dignity in the iſland, after the cathedral of Palermo. It is nearly of the ſame ſize, and the whole is encruſted with moſaic, at an incredible expence. Here are likewiſe ſeveral porphiry and marble monuments of the firſt kings of Sicily. This cathedral was built by King William the Good, whoſe memory is ſtill held in great veneration amongſt the Sicilians.

The archbiſhop of Monreale, is already looked upon as a ſaint, and indeed he deſerves beatification better, I believe, than moſt of thoſe in the calendar. His income is very great, of which he reſerves to himſelf juſt as much as procures him clothes,

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clothes, and the ſimpleſt kind of food; all the reſt he devotes to charitable, pious, and public uſes. He even ſeems to carry this too far, and denies himſelf the moſt common gratifications of life. Such as ſleeping on a bed; a piece of luxury he is ſaid never to indulge himſelf in, but lies every night on ſtraw.—He is, as you may believe, adored by the people, who crowd in his way as he paſſes to receive his benediction; which they allege is even of more ſovereign efficacy than that of the pope. And indeed ſo it is, for he never ſees an object in diſtreſs, but he is ſure to relieve him; not truſting alone to the ſpiritual efficacy of the bleſſing, but always accompanying it with ſomething ſolid and temporal; and perhaps this accompaniment is not eſteemed the worſt part of it. The town and country round Monreale are greatly indebted to his liberality; and in every corner exhibit marks of his munificence. He has juſt now made a preſent to

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the cathedral of a magnificent altar; only about one half of which is finiſhed. It is of maſſive ſilver, exquiſitely wrought, repreſenting in high relief, ſome of the principal ſtories in the Bible, and, I think, will be one of the fineſt in the world.—But what is of much greater utility, he has at his own expence made a noble walk the whole way from this city to Monreale, which was formerly of very difficult acceſs, as it ſtands near the top of a pretty high mountain. The walk is cut with a great deal of judgment on the ſide of this mountain, and winds by eaſy zig-zags to the top of it. It is adorned with ſeveral elegant fountains of water, and is bordered on each ſide with a variety of flowering ſhrubs.—The valley at the foot of the mountain is rich and beautiful. It appears one continued orange garden for many miles, and exhibits an elegant piece of ſcenery; perfuming the air at the ſame time with the moſt delicious odours.—We were ſo pleaſed

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with this little expedition, that notwithſtanding the heat of the ſeaſon, we could not keep in our carriage, but walked almoſt the whole of it.

The city of Palermo for theſe ten days paſt has been wholly occupied in preparing for the great feaſt of St. Roſolia. And if the ſhew is in any degree adequate to the expence and trouble it coſts them, it muſt indeed be a very noble one. They are erecting an incredible number of arches and pyramids for the illuminations. They are of wood; painted, and adorned with artificial flowers. Theſe, they tell us, are to be entirely covered over with ſmall lamps; ſo that when ſeen at a little diſtance, they appear like ſo many pyramids and arches of flame. The whole Marino, and the two great ſtreets that divide the city, are to be illuminated in this magnificent manner. The number of pyramids and arches prepared for theſe illuminations,

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we are told, exceeds two thouſand. They are erected on each ſide of the ſtreet, betwixt the foot-path and the pavement, and run in two right lines exactly parallel from end to end. Each of theſe lines is a mile in length, which makes four miles for the whole. The four gates are the viſtas to theſe four ſtreets, and are to be highly decorated and illuminated. From the ſquare in the center of the city, the whole of this vaſt illumination can be ſeen at once; and they aſſure us the grandeur of it exceeds all belief.—The whole of the Marino is to be dreſſed out in the ſame manner; and for theſe three weeks paſt, they have been employed in erecting two great theatres for fireworks. One of theſe fronts the viceroy's palace, and is almoſt equal to it in ſize. The other is raiſed on piles driven in the ſea, exactly oppoſite to the great orcheſtra in the center of the Marino.—Beſides theſe, they are building an enormous engine, which they call St. Roſolia's triumphal

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triumphal car. From the ſize of it, one would imagine it were for ever to remain in the ſpot where it is erected; but they aſſure us, it is to be drawn in triumph through the city. It is indeed mounted upon wheels, but it does not appear that any force whatever can be able to turn them.

I own my curioſity increaſes every day to ſee this ſingular exhibition. The car is already higher than moſt houſes in Palermo, and they are ſtill adding to its height. But the part of the ſhew they value themſelves the moſt on, is the illumination of the great church; this they affirm is ſuperior to any thing in the world; the illumination of St. Peter's itſelf not excepted. The preparations for it, are indeed amazing. Theſe were begun about a month ago, and will not be finiſhed till towards the laſt days of the feaſt. The whole of the cathedral, both roof and walls,

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walls, is entirely covered over with mirrour, intermixed with gold and silver paper, and an infinite variety of artificial flowers. All these are arranged and disposed, in my opinion, with great taste and elegance; none of them predominate, but they are intermingled every where in a just proportion.

Every altar, chapel, and column are finished in the same manner, which takes off from the littleness of the particular ornaments, and gives an air of grandeur and uniformity to the whole. The roof is hung with innumerable lustres filled with wax candles, and, I am persuaded, when the whole is lighted up, it must be equal to any palace either in the Fairy Tales or the Arabian Nights Entertainment. Indeed it seems pretty much in the same stile too, for all is gold, silver, and precious stones. The saints are dressed out in all their glory, and the fairy queen herself was

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never finer than is St. Roſolia.—The people are lying yonder in crowds before her, praying with all their might.—I dare ſay, for one petition offered to God Almighty, ſhe has at leaſt an hundred.

We were juſt now remarking, with how little reſpect they paſs the chapels dedicated to God; they hardly deign to give a little inclination of the head; but when they come near thoſe of their favourite ſaints, they bow down to the very ground: Ignorance and ſuperſtition have ever been inſeparable:—I believe in their hearts they think he has already reigned long enough; and would be glad to have a change in the government:—and every one of them (like the poor Welchman who thought he ſhould be ſucceeded by Sir Watkin Williams) is fully perſuaded, that his own favourite ſaint is the true heir apparent. Indeed they already give them the precedency on moſt occaſions; not in proceſſions and

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affairs of etiquette; there they think it would not be decent; but, in their more private affairs, they generally pay the compliment to the ſaint:—Yet in their inſcriptions on churches and chapels, (which one would think are public enough) when they are dedicated to God and any particular ſaint, they have often ventured to put the name of the ſaint firſt.—Sancto Januario, et Deo Opt. Max. taking every opportunity of raiſing their dignity, though at the expence of that of God himſelf.

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LETTER XXVIII.

Palermo, July 7th.

I HAVE been enquiring who this ſame St. Roſolia may be, who has become ſo very capital a perſonage in this part of the world; but, notwithſtanding their adoring her with ſuch fervency, I have found none that can give any tolerable account of her ſaintſhip. They refer you to the moſt fabulous legends, that even differ widely in their accounts of her. And, after all the offerings they have made, the churches they have built, and monuments they have raiſed to her memory, I think it is far from being improbable, that there really never did exiſt ſuch a perſon. I went through all the bookſellers ſhops, but could find nothing relative to her, except an epic poem, of which ſhe is the heroine. It is

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in the Sicilian language; and is indeed one of the greateſt curioſities I have met with. The poet ſets her at once above all other ſaints except the Virgin, and it ſeems to be with the greateſt reluctance, that he can prevail upon himſelf to yield the pas even to her. I find, from this curious compoſition, and the notes upon it, that St. Roſolia was niece to King William the Good. That ſhe began very early to diſplay ſymptoms of her ſanctity. That at fifteen ſhe deſerted the world and diſclaimed all human ſociety. She retired to the mountains on the weſt of this city; and was never more heard of for about five hundred years. She diſappeared in the year 1159. The people thought ſhe had been taken up to heaven; till in the year 1624, during the time of a dreadful plague, a holy man had a viſion, that the ſaint's bones were lying in a cave near the top of the Monte Pelegrino. That if they were taken up with due reverence, and carried in proceſ-

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ſion thrice round the walls of the city, they ſhould immediately be delivered from the plague. At firſt little attention was paid to the holy man, and he was looked upon as little better than a dreamer; however, he perſiſted in his ſtory, grew noiſy, and got adherents. The magiſtrates, to pacify them, ſent to the Monte Pelegrino; when lo the mighty diſcovery was made! —the ſacred bones were found,—the city was freed from the plague,—and St. Roſolia became the greateſt ſaint in the calendar.—Churches were reared, altars were dedicated, and miniſters appointed to this new divinity, whoſe dignity and conſequence have ever ſince been ſupported at an incredible expence. Now I think it is more than probable that theſe bones, that are now ſo much reverenced, and about which this great city is at preſent in ſuch a buſtle, belong to ſome poor wretch that perhaps was murdered, or died for want in the mountains. The holy man probably could

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could have given a very good account of them.

It is really aſtoniſhing to think, what animals ſuperſtition makes of mankind.—I dare ſay, the bones of St. Roſolia are juſt as little intitled to the honours they receive, as thoſe of poor *St. Viar*, which were found ſomewhere in Spain under a broken tomb-ſtone, where theſe were the only legible letters. The ſtory I think, is told by Dr. Middleton. The prieſts found that the bones had an excellent knack at working miracles, and were of opinion that this, together with the *S. Viar* on the ſtone, was proof ſufficient of his ſanctity. He continued long in high eſtimation, and they drew no inconſiderable revenue from his abilities; till unfortunately they petitioned the pope to grant him ſome immunities. The pope (Leo the tenth, I think,) not entirely ſatisfied with regard to his ſaintſhip, deſired to be informed of his pretenſions.—A liſt of his

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miracles was ſent over, accompanied by the ſtone with *S. Viar* upon it. The firſt part of the proof was ſuſtained; but the antiquaries diſcovered the fragment to be part of the tomb-ſtone of a (Roman) *præfectus viarum*, or overſeer of the high roads; to whoſe bones they had been ſo much indebted: and poor St. Viar, though probably an honeſter man than moſt of them, was ordered to be ſtruck out of the calendar.

The people of faſhion here hold the ſuperſtition of the vulgar in great contempt; and perhaps that very ſuperſtition is one principal cauſe of their infidelity. Indeed I have ever found, that deiſm is moſt prevalent in thoſe countries where the people are the wildeſt and moſt bigotted.—A refined and cultivated underſtanding, ſhocked at their folly, thinks it cannot poſſibly recede too far from it, and is often tempted to fly to the very oppoſite extreme.—When reaſon is much offended by any particular dogma of faith

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faith or act of worſhip, ſhe is but too apt, in the midſt of her diſguſt, to reject the whole. The great misfortune is, that in theſe countries, the moſt violent champions for religion are commonly the moſt weak and ignorant; —And certainly, one weak advocate in any cauſe, but more particularly in a myſterious one, that requires to be handled with delicacy and addreſs, is capable of hurting it more, than fifty of its warmeſt opponents.—Silly books, that have been written by weak well-meaning men, in defence of religion, I am confident have made more infidels than all the works of Bolingbroke, Shafteſbury, or even Voltaire himſelf: they only want to make people believe that there are ſome ludicrous things to be ſaid againſt it; but theſe grave plodding blockheads do all they can to perſuade us that there is little thing to be ſaid for it. —The univerſal error of theſe gentry, is that they ever attempt to explain, and reconcile to ſenſe and reaſon thoſe very myſ-

teries

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teries that the firſt principles of our religion teach us are incomprehenſible; and of conſequence neither objects of ſenſe nor reaſon.—I once heard an ignorant prieſt declare, that he did not find the leaſt difficulty, in conceiving the myſtery of the Trinity, or that of incarnation; and that he would undertake to make them plain to the meaneſt capacities. A gentleman preſent told him, he had no doubt he could, to all ſuch capacities as his own. The prieſt took it as a compliment, and made him a bow.—Now don't you think, that a few ſuch teachers as this, muſt hurt religion more by their zeal, than all its opponents can by their wit? Had theſe heroes ſtill kept behind the bulwarks of faith and of myſtery, their adverſaries never could have touched them; but they have been fooliſh enough to abandon theſe ſtrong-holds, and dared them forth to combat on the plain fields of reaſon and of ſenſe.—A ſad piece of generalſhip indeed: ſuch defenders muſt ever ruin the beſt cauſe.

But

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But although the people of education here deſpiſe the wild ſuperſtition of the vulgar, yet they go regularly to maſs, and attend the ordinances with great reſpect and decency; and they are much pleaſed with us for our conformity to their cuſtoms, and for not appearing openly to deſpiſe their rites and ceremonies. I own, this attention of theirs, not to offend weak minds, tends much to give us a favorable opinion both of their hearts and underſtandings. They don't make any boaſt of their infidelity; neither do they peſter you with it as in France, where it is perpetually buzz'd in your ears; and where, although they pretend to believe leſs, they do in fact believe more than any nation on the continent.

I know of nothing that gives one a worſe opinion of a man, than to ſee him make a ſhew and parade of his contempt for things held ſacred: it is an open inſult to the judgment

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judgment of the public. A countryman of ours, about two years ago, offended egregiouſly in this article, and the people ſtill ſpeak of him both with contempt and deteſtation. It happened one day, in the great church, during the elevation of the hoſt, when every body elſe were on their knees, that he ſtill kept ſtanding, without any appearance of reſpect to the ceremony. A young nobleman that was near him expreſſed his ſurprize at this. "It is ſtrange, "Sir, (ſaid he) that you, who have had "the education of a gentleman, and ought "to have the ſentiments of one, ſhould "chuſe thus to give ſo very public offence." "Why, Sir, (ſaid the Engliſhman) I don't "believe in tranſubſtantiation."—"Neither "do I, Sir, (replied the other) and yet you "ſee I kneel."

Adieu. I am called away to ſee the preparations for the feaſt. In my next I ſhall probably give you ſome account of it.

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P.S. I have been watching with great care the return of our comet, but as yet I have discovered nothing of it: I observe too, with a very indifferent glass, several large round spots on the sun's disk, and am far from being certain that it is not one of them: but I shall not alarm you any more with this subject.

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LETTER XXIX.

Palermo, July 10th.

ON Sunday, the 8th, we had the long expected Sirocc wind, which, although our expectations had been raiſed pretty high, yet I own it greatly exceeded them. Ever ſince we came to our new lodging, the thermometer has ſtood betwixt 72 and 74; at our old one, it was often at 79 and 80; ſo great is the difference betwixt the heart of the city and the ſea-ſhore. At preſent, our windows not only front to the North, but the ſea is immediately under them, from whence we are conſtantly refreſhed by a delightful cooling breeze. Friday and Saturday were uncommonly cool, the mercury never being higher than 72½; and although the Sirocc is ſaid to have ſet in early on Sunday morning, the air in our apart-

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apartments, which are very large, with high cielings, was not in the leaſt affected by it at eight o'clock, when I roſe.—I opened the door without having any ſuſpicion of ſuch a change; and indeed I never was more aſtoniſhed in my life.—The firſt blaſt of it on my face felt like the burning ſteam from the mouth of an oven. I drew back my head and ſhut the door, calling out to Fullarton, that the whole atmoſphere was in a flame. However, we ventured to open another door that leads to a cool platform, where we uſually walk; this was not expoſed to the wind; and here I found the heat much more ſupportable than I could have expected from the firſt ſpecimen I had of it at the other door. It felt ſomewhat like the ſubterraneous ſweating ſtoves at Naples; but ſtill much hotter.—In a few minutes we found every fibre greatly relaxed, and the pores opened to ſuch a degree, that we expected ſoon to be thrown into a profuſe ſweat. I went to examine

the

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the thermometer, and found the air in the room as yet ſo little affected, that it ſtood only at 73. The preceding night it was at 72½. I took it out to the open air, when it immediately roſe to 110, and ſoon after to 112; and I am confident, that in our old lodgings, or any where within the city, it muſt have riſen ſeveral degrees higher. The air was thick and heavy, but the barometer was little affected; it had fallen only about a line. The ſun did not once appear the whole day, otherwiſe I am perſuaded the heat muſt have been inſupportable; on that ſide of our platform which is expoſed to the wind, it was with difficulty we could bear it for a few minutes. Here I expoſed a little pomatum which was melted down, as if I had laid it before the fire. I attempted to take a walk in the ſtreet, to ſee if any creature was ſtirring, but I found it too much for me, and was glad to get up ſtairs again.

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This extraordinary heat continued till 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the wind changed at once, almoſt to the oppoſite point of the compaſs, and all the reſt of the day it blew ſtrong from the ſea. It is impoſſible to conceive the different feeling of the air. Indeed, the ſudden change from heat to cold is almoſt as inconceivable as that from cold to heat. The current of this hot air had been flying for many hours from South to North; and I had no doubt, that the atmoſphere, for many miles round, was entirely compoſed of it; however, the wind no ſooner changed to the North, than it felt extremely cold, and we were ſoon obliged to put on our clothes, for till then we had been almoſt naked. In a ſhort time the thermometer ſunk to 82, a degree of heat that in England would be thought almoſt inſupportable, and yet all that night we were obliged, merely from the cold, to keep up the glaſſes of our coach; ſo much were the pores opened and the fibres relaxed

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by theſe few hours of the Sirocc. Indeed, I had expoſed myſelf a good deal to the open air, as I was determined to feel what effect it would produce on the human body. At firſt I thought it muſt have been impoſſible to bear it; but I ſoon diſcovered my miſtake, and found, that where I was ſheltered from the wind, I could walk about without any great inconveniency; neither did it produce that copious ſweat I expected; it occaſioned indeed a violent perſpiration, which was only attended with a ſlight moiſture on the ſkin; but I ſuppoſe, if I had put on my clothes, or taken the leaſt exerciſe, it ſoon would have brought it on.

I own to you my curioſity with regard to the Sirocc is now thoroughly ſatisfied; nor do I at all wiſh for another viſit of it during our ſtay in Sicily. Many of our acquaintance who had been promiſing us this *regalo*, as they call it, came crowding about

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about us as ſoon as it was over, to know what we thought of it. They own it has been pretty violent for the time it laſted; but aſſure us they have felt it more ſo, and likewiſe of a much longer duration; however, it ſeldom laſts more than thirty-ſix or forty hours, ſo that the walls of the houſes have not time to be heated throughout, otherwiſe they think there could be no ſuch thing as living: however, from what I felt of it, I believe they are miſtaken. Indeed, had I been ſatisfied with the firſt blaſt, (which is generally the caſe with them) and never more ventured out in it, I certainly ſhould have been of their opinion. They laughed at us for expoſing ourſelves ſo long to it; and were ſurprized that our curioſity ſhould lead us to make experiments at the expence of our perſons. They aſſure us, that during the time it laſts, there is not a mortal to be ſeen without doors, but thoſe whom neceſſity obliges. All their doors and windows are ſhut cloſe, to pre-

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vent the external air from entering; and where there are no window-ſhutters, they hang up wet blankets on the inſide of the window. The ſervants are conſtantly employed in ſprinkling water through their apartments, to preſerve the air in as temperate a ſtate as poſſible; and this is no difficult matter here, as I am told there is not a houſe in the city that has not a fountain within it. By theſe means the people of faſhion ſuffer very little from the Sirocc, except the ſtrict confinement to which it obliges them.

It is ſomewhat ſingular, that notwithſtanding the ſcorching heat of this wind, it has never been known to produce any epidemical diſtempers, nor indeed bad conſequences of any kind to the health of the people. It is true, they feel extremely weak and relaxed during the time it blows, but a few hours of the Tramontane, or North wind, which generally ſucceeds it, ſoon braces

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braces them up, and ſets them to rights again. Now, in Naples, and in many other places in Italy, where its violence is not to be compared to this, it is often attended with putrid diſorders, and ſeldom fails to produce almoſt a general dejection of ſpirits. It is true, indeed, that there the Sirocc laſts for many days, nay, even for weeks; ſo that, as its effects are different, it probably proceeds likewiſe from a different cauſe.

I have not been able to procure any good account of this very ſingular object in the climate of Palermo. The cauſes they aſſign for it are various, though none of them, I think, altogether ſatisfactory.

I have ſeen an old fellow here, who has written upon it. He ſays it is the ſame wind that is ſo dreadful in the ſandy deſarts of Africa, where it ſometimes proves mortal in the ſpace of half an hour. He alleges

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that it is cooled by its paſſage over the ſea, which entirely diſarms it of theſe tremendous effects, before it reaches Sicily. But if this were true, we ſhould expect to find it moſt violent on that ſide of the Iſland that lies neareſt to Africa, which is not the caſe:—though indeed it is poſſible, that its heat may be again increaſed by its paſſage acroſs the iſland; for it has ever been found much more violent at Palermo, which is near the moſt northern point, than any where elſe in Sicily.—Indeed, I begin to be more reconciled to this reaſon, when I conſider that this city is almoſt ſurrounded by high mountains, the ravines and vallies betwixt which are parched up and burning hot at this ſeaſon. Theſe likewiſe contain innumerable ſprings of warm water, the ſteams of which muſt tend greatly to increaſe the heat, and perhaps likewiſe to ſoften the air, and diſarm it of its noxious qualities. It is a practice too, at this ſeaſon, to burn heath and bruſhwood on the mountains,

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tains, which muſt ſtill add to the heat of the air.

Some gentlemen who were in the country told me, that they walked out immediately after the Sirocc, and found the graſs and plants, that had been green the day before, were become quite brown, and crackled under their feet as if dried in an oven.

I ſhall add for your amuſement, a journal of the weather ſince we came to Palermo. The barometer has continued conſtantly within a line or two of the ſame point, 29½;—and the ſky has been always clear, except the day of the Sirocc and the 26th of June, when we had a pretty ſmart ſhower of rain for two hours; ſo that I think I have nothing farther to do, but to mark the heights of the thermometer.

	Thermometer.
June 17 - - -	73½
18 - -	74

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		Thermometer.
June	19	75
	20	76
	21	75½
	22	77
	23	76½
	24	77
	25	77
	26	77½
	27	77
	28	77½
	29	77½
	30	78½
July	1	79
	2	80
	3	80½
	4 At our new lodgings on the sea-side, fronting the North,	74
	5	73
	6	72½
	7	72½
	8 The Sirocc wind,	112
	In the afternoon,	82
	9	79
	10	78

The

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The more I conſider the extreme violence of this heat, the more I am ſurpriſed that we were able to bear it with ſo little inconvenience. We did not even feel that depreſſion of ſpirits that commonly attends very great heats with us.—The thermometer roſe 40 degrees, or very near it; and it happens ſingularly enough, that before the Sirocc began, it ſtood juſt about 40 degrees above the point of congelation; ſo that in the morning of the 8th of July, the heat increaſed as much, almoſt inſtantaneouſly, as it generally does during the whole time that the ſun moves from tropic to tropic; for the difference of 72 and 112 is the ſame as between the freezing point and 72; or between a cold day in winter, and a warm one in ſummer.

Yeſterday we had a great entertainment in the palace of the Prince Partana, from the balcony of which the viceroy reviewed a regiment of Swiſs, the beſt I have yet

ſeen

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ſeen in the Neapolitan ſervice. They are really a fine body of men, and, notwithſtanding the violence of the heat, went through their motions with great ſpirit. They had two field-pieces on each flank, which were extremely well ſerved; and the evolutions were performed with more preciſion and ſteadineſs than one generally meets with, except in England or Germany. The grenadiers were furniſhed with falſe grenades, which produced every effect of real ones, except that of doing miſchief. The throwing of theſe was the part of the entertainment that ſeemed to pleaſe the moſt; and the grenadiers took care to direct them ſo, that their effect ſhould not be loſt. When a number of them fell together amongſt a thick crowd of the mobility, which was commonly the caſe, it afforded an entertaining ſcene enough, for they defended themſelves with their hats, and threw them very dexterouſly upon their neighbours. However, we ſaw no da-

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mage done, except the ſingeing of a few wigs and caps; for the ladies were there in as great numbers as the gentlemen.

The company at the Prince Partana's was brilliant, and the entertainment noble. It conſiſted principally of ices, creams, chocolate, ſweet-meats, and fruit, of which there was a great variety. Not one half of the company play'd at cards; the reſt amuſed themſelves in converſation and walking on the terraſs. We found the young prince and princeſs, who are very amiable, with ſeveral of their companions playing at croſs-purpoſes, and other games of that kind. We were joyfully admitted of this chearful little circle, where we amuſed ourſelves very well for ſeveral hours.—I only mention this, to ſhew you the different ſyſtem of behaviour here and in Italy, where no ſuch familiar intercourſe is allowed amongſt young people before marriage. The young ladies here are eaſy,

affable,

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affable, and unaffected; and, not (as on the continent) perpetually ſtuck up by the ſides of their mothers, who bring them into company, not for their amuſement, but rather to offer them to ſale; and ſeem mightily afraid leſt every one ſhould ſteal them, or that they themſelves ſhould make an elopement; which indeed I ſhould think there was ſome danger of, conſidering the reſtraint under which they are kept:—for ſurely there is no ſuch ſtrong incitement to vice, as the making a puniſhment of virtue.

Here the mothers ſhew a proper confidence in their daughters, and allow their real characters to form and to ripen. In the other caſe they have either no character at all, or an affected one, which they take care to throw off the moment they have got a huſband; when they think it impoſſible to recede too far from thoſe rigorous maxims of decorum and circumſpection, the practice

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practice of which they had ever found ſo extremely diſagreeable.

Were they allowed firſt to ſhew what they really are, I am perſuaded they would not be half ſo bad; but their parents, by the manner they treat them, ſhew that they have no confidence in their principles; and ſeem to have adopted the ungenerous maxim of our countryman,

"That every woman is at heart a rake."

Now in countries where this maxim becomes of general belief, there is no doubt, that it likewiſe becomes true; for the women having no longer any character to ſupport, they will even avoid the pretences to virtue, well knowing that thoſe pretences are only looked upon as hypocriſy and affectation. I dare ſay, you will agree with me, that the better method to make them virtuous, is firſt to make them believe that we think them ſo; for where virtue is really

eſteemed,

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eſteemed, there are none that would willingly relinquiſh the character; but where it requires a guard, (as parſon Adams ſays) it certainly is not worth the centinel.

Some of the families here put me in mind of our own domeſtic ſyſtem. The prince of Reſuttana, his wife and daughter, are always together; but it is becauſe they chuſe to be ſo, and there appears the ſtrongeſt affection, without the leaſt diffidence on the one ſide, or reſtraint on the other.—The young princeſs Donna Roſolia is one of the moſt amiable young ladies I have ſeen; ſhe was of our little party laſt night, and indeed made one of its greateſt ornaments. —It would appear vain and partial, after this to ſay, that in countenance, ſentiment, and behaviour, ſhe ſeems altogether Engliſh;—bnt it is true:—and this perhaps may have contributed to advance her ſtill higher in our eſteem; for in ſpite of all our philoſophy, theſe unphiloſophical prejudices

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judices will ſtill exiſt, and no man, I believe, has entirely diveſted himſelf of them. —We had lately a noble entertainment at her father's country houſe, and had reaſon to be much pleaſed with the unaffected hoſpitality and eaſy politeneſs of the whole family. This palace is reckoned the moſt magnificent in the neighbourhood of Palermo. It lies about ſix or ſeven miles to the weſt of the city, in the country called Il Colle; in the oppoſite direction from the Bagaria, which I have already mentioned. The viceroy and his family, with the greateſt part of the nobility, were of this party, which laſted till about two in the morning. At midnight a curious ſet of fire-works were played off, from the leads of the palace, which had a fine effect from the garden below.

Farewell.—I had no time to write yeſterday, and though we did not break up till near three this morning, I have got up

at

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at eight, I was ſo eager to give you ſome account of the Sirocc wind.

We are now going to be very buſy: The feaſt of St. Roſolia begins to-morrow; and all the world are on the very tip-toe of expectation: perhaps they may be diſappointed. I often wiſh that you were with us, particularly when we are happy: Though you know it is by no means feaſts and ſhews that make us ſo. However, as this is perhaps the moſt remarkable one in Europe; that you may enjoy as much of it as poſſible, I ſhall ſit down every night, and give you a ſhort account of the tranſactions of the day.—We are now going to breakfaſt; after which we are engaged to play at Ballon, an exerciſe I ſuppoſe you are well acquainted with; but as the day promiſes to be extremely hot, I believe I ſhall deſert the party and go a ſwimming.—But I ſee F. and G. have already attacked the figs and peaches, ſo I muſt appear for my intereſt.—Farewell.

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LETTER XXX.

Palermo, July 12th.

ABOUT five in the afternoon, the feſtival began by the triumph of St. Roſolia, who was drawn with great pomp through the center of the city, from the Marino to the Porto Nuovo. The triumphal car was preceded by a troop of horſe, with trumpets and kettle-drums; and all the city officers in their gala uniforms. It is indeed a moſt enormous machine: It meaſures ſeventy feet long, thirty wide, and upwards of eighty high; and, as it paſſed along, over-topped the loftieſt houſes of Palermo. The form of its under-part is like that of the Roman gallies, but it ſwells as it advances in height; and the front aſſumes an oval ſhape like an amphi-

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theatre, with ſeats placed in the theatrical manner. This is the great orcheſtra, which was filled with a numerous band of muſicians placed in rows, one above the other: Over this orcheſtra, and a little behind it, there is a large dome ſupported by ſix Corinthian columns, and adorned with a number of figures of ſaints and angels; and on the ſummit of the dome there is a gigantic ſilver ſtatue of St. Roſolia.—The whole machine is dreſſed out with orange-trees, flower-pots, and trees of artificial coral. The car ſtopped every fifty or ſixty yards, when the orcheſtra performed a piece of muſic, with ſongs in honour of the ſaint. It appeared a moving caſtle, and completely filled the great ſtreet from ſide to ſide. This indeed was its greateſt diſadvantage, for the ſpace it had to move in was in no wiſe proportioned to its ſize, and the houſes ſeemed to dwindle away to nothing as it paſſed along. This vaſt fabric was drawn by fifty-ſix huge mules,

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mules, in two rows, curiouſly caparifoned, and mounted by twenty-eight poſtilions, dreſſed in gold and ſilver ſtuffs, with great plumes of oſtrich feathers in their hats.—Every window and balcony, on both ſides of the ſtreet, were full of well-dreſſed people, and the car was followed by many thouſands of the lower ſort. The triumph was finiſhed in about three hours; and was ſucceeded by the beautiful illumination of the Marino.

I believe I have already mentioned, that there is a range of arches and pyramids extending from end to end of this noble walk: theſe are painted, and adorned with artificial flowers, and are entirely covered with lamps, placed ſo very thick, that at a little diſtance the whole appears ſo many pyramids and arches of flame. The whole chain of this illumination was about a mile in length, and indeed you can hardly conceive any thing more ſplendid. There

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was no break or imperfection any where; the night being ſo ſtill that not a ſingle lamp was extinguiſhed.

Oppoſite to the center of this great line of light, there was a magnificent pavilion erected for the viceroy and his company, which conſiſted of the whole nobility of Palermo: and on the front of this, at ſome little diſtance in the ſea, ſtood the great fire-works, repreſenting the front of a palace, adorned with columns, arches, trophies, and every ornament of architecture. All the chebecks, galleys, galliots, and other ſhipping, were ranged around this palace, and formed a kind of amphitheatre in the ſea, incloſing it in the center.—Theſe began the ſhew by a diſcharge of the whole of their artillery, the ſound of which, re-echoed from the mountains, produced a very noble effect; they then played off a variety of water rockets, and bombs of a curious conſtruction, that often

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often burſt below water. This continued for half an hour, when, in an inſtant, the whole of the palace was beautifully illuminated. This was the ſignal for the ſhipping to ceaſe, and appeared indeed like a piece of inchantment, as it was done altogether inſtantaneouſly, and without the appearance of any agent. At the ſame time the fountains that were repreſented in the court before the palace, began to ſpout up fire, and made a repreſentation of ſome of the great *jet d'eaus* of Verſailles and Marly. As ſoon as theſe were extinguiſhed, the court aſſumed the form of a great parterre; adorned with a variety of palm-trees of fire, interſperſed with orange-trees, flower-pots, vaſes, and other ornaments. On the extinguiſhing of theſe, the illumination of the palace was likewiſe extinguiſhed; and the front of it broke out into the appearance of a variety of ſuns, ſtars, and wheels of fire, which in a ſhort time reduced it to a perfect ruin.

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And when all appeared finiſhed, there burſt from the center of the pile, a vaſt exploſion of two thouſand rockets, bombs, ſerpents, ſquibs, and devils, which ſeemed to fill the whole atmoſphere; the fall of theſe made terrible havoc amongſt the clothes of the poor people who were not under cover, but afforded admirable entertainment to the nobility who were. During this exhibition we had a handſome entertainment of coffee, ices and ſweetmeats, with a variety of excellent wines, in the great pavilion in the center of the Marino; this was at the expence of the Duke of Caſtellano, the prætor (or mayor) of the city. The principal nobility give theſe entertainments by turns every night during the feſtival, and vie with each other in their magnificence.

As ſoon as the fireworks were finiſhed, the viceroy went out to ſea in a galley richly illuminated. We choſe to ſtay on

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ſhore, to ſee the appearance it made at a diſtance. It was rowed by ſeventy-two oars, and indeed made one of the moſt beautiful objects you can imagine; flying with vaſt velocity over the waters, as ſmooth and as clear as glaſs, which ſhone round it like a flame, and reflected its ſplendour on all ſides. The oars beat time to the French-horns, clarionets, and trumpets, of which there was a numerous band on the prow.

The day's entertainment was concluded by the Corſo, which began exactly at midnight, and laſted till two in the morning.

The great ſtreet was illuminated in the ſame magnificent manner as the Marino. The arches and pyramids were erected at little diſtances from each other, on both ſides of the ſtreet, betwixt the foot-path and the ſpace for carriages; and when ſeen from either of the gates, appeared to be

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two continued lines of the brighteſt flame. Indeed, theſe illuminations are ſo very different, and ſo much ſuperior, to any I have ever ſeen, that I find it difficult to give any tolerable idea of them.—Two lines of coaches occupied the ſpace betwixt theſe two lines of illumination. They were in their greateſt gala; and as they open from the middle, and let down on each ſide, the beauty of the ladies, the richneſs of their dreſs, and brilliance of their jewels, were diſplayed in the moſt advantageous manner.

This beautiful train moved ſlowly round and round for the ſpace of two hours; and every member of it ſeemed animated with a deſire to pleaſe.—The company appeared all joy and exultation:—Scarce two coaches paſſed without ſome mutual acknowledgment of affection or reſpect; and the pleaſure that ſparkled from every eye ſeemed to be reflected and communicated by

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by a kind of ſympathy through the whole.

In ſuch an aſſembly, it was impoſſible for the heart not to dilate and expand itſelf;—I own mine was often ſo full, that I could hardly find utterance; and I have ſeen a tragedy with leſs emotion than I did this ſcene of joy.—I always thought theſe affections had been ſtrangers to pomp and parade; but here the univerſal joy ſeemed really to ſpring from the heart: it brightened up every countenance, and ſpoke affection and friendſhip from every face.—No ſtately air,—no ſupercilious look;—all appeared friends and equals.—And ſure I am, that the beauty of the ladies was not half ſo much heightened either by their dreſs or their jewels, as by that air of complacency and good humour with which it was animated.

We

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We were diſtributed in different coaches amongſt the nobility, which gave us a better opportunity of making theſe obſervations.—I will own to you, that I have never beheld a more delightful ſight;—and if ſuperſtition often produces ſuch effects, I ſincerely wiſh we had a little more of it amongſt us. I could have thrown myſelf down before St. Roſolia, and bleſſed her for making ſo many people happy.

We retired about two o'clock; but the variety of glittering ſcenes and gaudy objects ſtill vibrated before my eyes, and prevented me from ſleeping; however, I am almoſt as much refreſhed as if I had: but I really believe four more ſuch days will be too much for any of us. Indeed, I am ſure that it is impoſſible to keep it up, and it muſt neceſſarily flag. I think, from what I can obſerve, they have already exhauſted almoſt one half of their preparations;

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rations; how they are to support the other four days, I own, I do not comprehend;—however, we shall see.

I thought to have given you an account of every thing at night, after it was over, but I find it impossible: the spirits are too much dissipated, and exhausted, and the imagination is too full of objects to be able to separate them with any degree of regularity.—I shall write you therefore regularly the morning following, when this fever of the fancy has had time to cool, and when things appear as they really are.—Adieu then till to-morrow.—Here is a fine shower, which will cool the air, and save the trouble of watering the Marino and the great street, which is done regularly every morning when there is no rain. The thermometer is at 73.

13th. I thought there would be a falling off.—Yesterday's entertainments were not

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not ſo ſplendid as thoſe of the day before. They began by the horſe-races. There were three races, and ſix horſes ſtarted each race. Theſe were mounted by boys of about twelve years old, without either ſaddle or bridle, but only a ſmall piece of cord, by way of bit, in the horſe's mouth, which it ſeems is ſufficient to ſtop them. The great ſtreet was the courſe; and to this end it was covered with earth to the depth of five or ſix inches.—The firing of a cannon at the Porto Felice was the ſignal for ſtarting: and the horſes ſeemed to underſtand this, for they all ſet off at once, full ſpeed, and continued at their utmoſt ſtretch to the Porto Nuovo, which was the winning poſt. It is exactly a mile, and they performed it in a minute and thirty-five ſeconds, which, conſidering the ſize of the horſes, (ſcarce fourteen hands) we thought was very great. Theſe are generally Barbs, or a mixed breed, betwixt the Sicilian and Barb. The boys were gaudily

dreſſed,

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dreſſed, and made a pretty appearance.—We were ſurpriſed to ſee how well they ſtuck on; but indeed, I obſerved they had generally laid faſt hold of the mane.

The moment before ſtarting, the ſtreet appeared full of people; nor did we conceive how the race could poſſibly be performed. Our ſurpriſe was increaſed when we ſaw the horſes run full ſpeed at the very thickeſt of this crowd, which did not begin to open, till they were almoſt cloſe upon it.—The people then opened, and fell back on each ſide, by a regular uniform motion, from one end of the ſtreet to the other. This ſingular manœuvre ſeemed to be performed without any buſtle or confuſion, and the moment the horſes were paſt, they cloſed again behind them. However, it deſtroys great part of the pleaſure of the race; for you cannot help being under apprehenſions for ſuch a number of people, whom you every moment ſee

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in imminent danger of being trod to death; for this muſt inevitably be their fate, were they only a ſecond or two later in retiring. Theſe accidents, they allow, have often happened; however, yeſterday every body eſcaped.

The victor was conducted along the ſtreet in triumph, with his prize diſplayed before him. This was a piece of white ſilk embroidered and worked with gold.

Theſe races I think are much ſuperior to the common ſtile of races in Italy, which are performed by horſes alone without riders; but they are by no means to be compared to thoſe in England.

The great ſtreet was illuminated in the ſame manner as on the preceding night; and the grand converſation of the nobles was held at the archbiſhop's palace, which was richly fitted up for the occaſion.

The

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The gardens were finely illuminated; and put me in mind of our Vauxhall. There were two orcheſtras (one at each end) and two very good bands of muſic. The entertainment was ſplendid, and the archbiſhop ſhewed attention and politeneſs to every perſon of the company.

About ten o'clock the great triumphal car marched back again in proceſſion to the Marino. It was richly illuminated with large wax tapers, and made a moſt formidable figure.—Don Quixote would have been very excuſable in taking it for an inchanted caſtle, moving through the air.—We did not leave the archbiſhop's till midnight, when the Corſo began, which was preciſely the ſame in every reſpect as the night before, and afforded us a delightful ſcene.

14th. Laſt night the two great ſtreets and the four gates of the city that terminate

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minate them, were illuminated in the moſt ſplendid manner.—Theſe ſtreets croſs each other in the center of the city, where they form a beautiful ſquare, called *La Piazza Ottangolare*, from the eight angles they form. This ſquare was richly ornamented with tapeſtry, ſtatues, and artificial flowers; and as the buildings which form its four ſides are uniform, and of a beautiful architecture, and at the ſame time highly illuminated, it made a fine appearance. There are four orcheſtras erected in it; and the four bands of muſic are greater than I had any conception this city could have produced.

From the center of this ſquare you have a view of the whole city of Palermo thus dreſſed out in its glory; and indeed, the effect it produces ſurpaſſes belief. The four gates that form the viſtas to this ſplendid ſcene are highly decorated, and lighted up in an elegant taſte; the illuminations

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minations repreſenting a variety of trophies, the arms of Spain, thoſe of Naples, Sicily, and the city of Palermo, with their guardian geniuſes, &c.

The converſation of the nobles was held in the viceroy's palace; and the entertainment was ſtill more magnificent than any of the former. The great fireworks oppoſite to the front of the palace began at ten o'clock, and ended at midnight; after which we went to the Corſo, which laſted, as uſual, till two in the morning. This part of the entertainment ſtill pleaſes us the moſt; it is indeed the only part of it that reaches the heart; and where this is not the caſe, a puppet-ſhew is juſt as good as a coronation.—We have now got acquainted almoſt with every countenance; and from that air of goodneſs and benignity that animates them, and which ſeems to be mutually reflected from one to the other, we are inclined to form the

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moſt favourable opinion of the people.

Our fireworks laſt night were greater than thoſe of the Marino, but their effect did not pleaſe me ſo much; the want of the ſea and the ſhipping were two capital wants. They likewiſe repreſented the front of a palace, but of a greater extent. It was illuminated too as the former, and the whole conducted pretty much in the ſame manner. We ſaw it to the greateſt advantage from the balconies of the ſtate apartments, in the viceroy's palace, where we had an elegant concert; but, to the no ſmall diſappointment of the company, Gabrieli, the fineſt ſinger, but the moſt capricious mortal upon earth, did not chuſe to perform.

15th. Three races, ſix horſes each, as formerly. They called it very good ſport. I cannot ſay that I admired it.—A poor creature

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creature was rode down, and I believe killed; and one of the boys had likewiſe a fall.

The great aſſembly of the nobility was held at the Judice Monarchia's, an officer of high truſt and dignity. Here we had an entertainment in the ſame ſtile as the others, and a good concert.—At eleven o'clock the viceroy, attended by the whole company, went on foot to viſit the ſquare and the great church.—We made a prodigious train; for though the city was all a lamp of light, the ſervants of the viceroy and nobility attended with wax flambeaux, to ſhew us the way. As ſoon as the viceroy entered the ſquare, the four orcheſtras ſtruck up a ſymphony, and continued playing till he left it.

The crowd around the church was very great, and without the preſence of the viceroy, it would have been impoſſible for

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us to get in: but his attendants ſoon cleared the paſſages; and at once entering the great gate, we beheld the moſt ſplendid ſcene in the world. The whole church appeared a flame of light; which, reflected from ten thouſand bright and ſhining ſurfaces, of different colours and at different angles, produced an effect, which, I think, exceeds all the deſcriptions of enchantment I have ever read. Indeed, I did not think that human art could have deviſed any thing ſo ſplendid. I believe I have already mentioned that the whole church, walls, roof, pillars, and pilaſters were entirely covered over with mirror, interſperſed with gold and ſilver paper, artificial flowers, &c. done up with great taſte and elegance, ſo that not one inch either of ſtone or plaiſter was to be ſeen.—Now, form an idea, if you can, of one of our great cathedrals dreſſed out in this manner, and illuminated with twenty thouſand wax tapers, and you will have ſome faint notion

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of this ſplendid ſcene.—I own it did greatly exceed my expectations, although, from the deſcriptions we had of it, they were raiſed very high.—When we recovered from our firſt ſurprize, which had produced, unknown to ourſelves, many exclamations of aſtoniſhment, I obſerved that all the eyes of the nobility were fixed upon us; and that they enjoyed exceedingly the amazement into which we were thrown.—Indeed this ſcene, in my opinion, greatly exceeds all the reſt of the ſhew.

I have often heard the illumination of St. Peter's ſpoken of as a wonderful fine thing: ſo indeed it is; but it is certainly no more to be compared to this, than the planet Venus is to the ſun.—The effects indeed are of a different kind, and cannot well be compared together.

This ſcene was too glaring to bear any conſiderable time; and the heat occaſioned

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by the immenſe number of lights, ſoon became intolerable.—I attempted to reckon the number of luſtres, and counted upwards of five hundred; but my head became giddy, and I was obliged to give it up.—They aſſure us that the number of wax tapers is not leſs than twenty thouſand. There are eight-and-twenty altars, fourteen on each ſide; theſe are dreſſed out with the utmoſt magnificence; and the great altar is ſtill the moſt ſplendid of all.

When you think of the gaudy materials that compoſe the lining of this church, it will be difficult to annex an idea of grandeur and majeſty to it: at leaſt, ſo it ſtruck me, when I was firſt told of it; yet, I aſſure you, the elegant ſimplicity and unity of the deſign prevents this effect, and gives an air of dignity to the whole.

It

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It is on this part of the ſhew the people of Palermo value themſelves the moſt; they talk of all the reſt as trifling in compariſon of this; and indeed, I think it is probable, that there is nothing of the kind in the world that is equal to it.—It is ſtrange they ſhould chuſe to be at ſo great an expence and trouble, for a ſhew of a few hours only; for they have already begun this morning, to ſtrip the church of its gaudy dreſs, and I am told it will not be finiſhed for many weeks.

From the church we went immediately to the Corſo, which concluded, as uſual, the entertainments of the day.

16th. Laſt night we had the full illumination of all the ſtreets.—The aſſembly was held at the prætor's, where there was an elegant entertainment and a concert.—Pacherotti, the firſt man of the opera, diſtinguiſhed himſelf very much. I think

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he is one of the moſt agreeable ſingers I have ever heard; and am perſuaded, that in a few years, he will be very celebrated. Campanucci, the ſecond ſoprano, is, I think, preferable to moſt that I have heard in Italy; and you will the more eaſily believe this, when I inform you, that he is engaged for next winter, to be the firſt ſinger in the great opera at Rome. Is it not ſtrange, that the capital of all Italy; and, for the fine arts, (as it formerly was for arms) the capital of the world, ſhould condeſcend to chuſe its firſt opera-performer from amongſt the ſubalterns of a remote Sicilian ſtage?

You will believe, that with two ſuch ſopranos as theſe, and Gabrieli for the firſt woman, the opera here will not be a deſpicable one. It is to begin in a few days, notwithſtanding the extreme heat of the ſeaſon; ſo fond are the people here of theſe entertainments.

Their

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Their opera dancers are thoſe you had laſt year at London: they are juſt arrived, and the people are by no means pleaſed with them. We ſaw them this morning at the rehearſal; and, to their great ſurprize, addreſſed them in Engliſh. You cannot imagine how happy they were to ſee us. Poor ſouls! I was delighted to hear with what warmth of gratitude and affection they ſpoke of England. There is a mother and two daughters; the youngeſt pretty, but the eldeſt, the firſt dancer, appears a ſenſible, modeſt, well-behaved girl;—more ſo than is common with theſe ſort of people. Speaking of England, ſhe ſaid, with a degree of warmth, that her good treatment in general could hardly inſpire, that in her life ſhe never left any country with ſo ſore a heart; and had ſhe only enjoyed her health, all the world ſhould never have torn her away from it.—She ſeemed affected when ſhe ſaid this.—I acknowledged the

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the honour ſhe did the Engliſh nation; but alleged that theſe ſentiments, and the manner in which they were uttered, could ſcarcely proceed from a *general love* of the country.—She anſwered me with a ſmile, but at the ſame time I could obſerve the tear in her eye.—At that inſtant we were interrupted; however, I ſhall endeavour, if poſſible, to learn her ſtory; for I am perſuaded there is one: perhaps you may know it, as I dare ſay it is no ſecret in London.

But I have got quite away from my ſubject, and had forgot that I ſat down to give you an account of the feaſt.—Indeed, I will own, it is a kind of ſubject I by no means like to write upon;—I almoſt repent that I had undertaken it, and am heartily glad it is now over.—It does very well to ſee ſhews; but their deſcription is of all things on earth the moſt inſipid: for words and writing convey ideas

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ideas only by a ſlow and regular kind of progreſs; and while we gain one, we generally loſe another, ſo that the fancy ſeldom embraces the whole;—but when a thouſand objects ſtrike you at once, the imagination is filled and ſatisfied.

The great proceſſion that cloſes the feſtival began at ten o'clock.—It only differed from other proceſſions in this, that beſides all the prieſts, friars, and religious orders of the city, there were placed at equal diſtances from each other ten lofty machines made of wood and paſteboard, ornamented in an elegant manner, repreſenting temples, tabernacles, and a variety of beautiful pieces of architecture.—Theſe are furniſhed by the different convents and religious fraternities, who vie with each other in the richneſs and elegance of the work. Some of them are not leſs than ſixty feet high.—They are filled with

figures

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figures of ſaints and of angels, made of wax, ſo natural and ſo admirably well painted, that many of them ſeemed really to be alive. All theſe figures are prepared by the nuns, and by them dreſſed out in rich robes of gold and ſilver tiſſue.

We were a good deal amuſed this morning to ſee them returning home in coaches to their reſpective nunneries.—At firſt we took them for ladies in their gala dreſs, going out to viſit the churches, which we were told was the cuſtom, and began to pull off our hats as they went paſt.—Indeed, we were led into this blunder by ſome of our friends, who carried us out on purpoſe; and as they ſaw the coaches approach, told us, This is the Princeſs of ſuch a thing—there is the Dutcheſs of ſuch another thing;—and, in ſhort, we had made half a dozen of our beſt bows, (to the no ſmall entertainment of theſe wags)

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before we discovered the trick—They now insist upon it, that we are good Catholics, for all this morning we have been bowing to saints and angels.

A great silver box, containing the bones of St. Rosolia, closed the procession. It was carried by thirty-six of the most respectable burgesses of the city, who look upon this as the greatest honour. The archbishop walked behind it, giving his benediction to the people as he passed.

No sooner had the procession finished the tour of the great square, before the prætor's palace, than the fountain in the center, one of the largest and finest in Europe, was converted into a fountain of fire; throwing it up on all sides, and making a beautiful appearance. It only lasted for a few minutes, and was extinguished by a vast explosion, which concluded the whole. As this was altogether unex-

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unexpected, it produced a fine effect, and ſurpriſed the ſpectators more than any of the great fireworks had done.

There was a mutual and friendly congratulation ran through the whole aſſembly, which ſoon after parted; and this morning every thing has once more reaſſumed its natural form and order;—and I aſſure you, we were not more happy at the opening of the feſtival, than we are now at its concluſion. Every body was fatigued and exhauſted by the perpetual feaſting, watching, and diſſipation of theſe five days. However, upon the whole, we have been much delighted with it, and may with truth pronounce, that the entertainments of the feaſt of St. Roſolia are much beyond thoſe of the holy week at Rome; of the Aſcenſion, at Venice; or, indeed, any other feſtival we have ever been witneſs of.

I believe

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I believe I did not tell you, that about ten or twelve days ago, as the time we had appointed for our return to Naples was elapſed, we had hired a ſmall veſſel, and provided every thing for our departure: we had even taken leave of the viceroy, and received our paſſports. Our baggage and ſea-ſtore was already on board, when we were ſet upon by our friends, and ſolicited with ſo much earneſtneſs and cordiality, to give them another fortnight, that we found it impoſſible to refuſe it; and in conſequence diſcharged our veſſel, and ſent for our trunks.—I ſhould not have mentioned this, were it not to ſhew you how much more attention is paid to ſtrangers here than in moſt places on the continent.

We reckon ourſelves much indebted to them for having obliged us to prolong our ſtay; as, independent of the amuſements of the feſtival, we have met with ſo much hoſpi-

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hoſpitality and urbanity, that it is now with the moſt ſincere regret we find ourſelves obliged to leave them. Indeed, had we brought our clothes and books from Naples, it is hard to ſay how long we might have ſtayed.

We have ſent to engage a veſſel, but probably ſhall not ſail for five or ſix days. Adieu.

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LETTER XXXI.

Palermo, July 19th.

WE have now had time to enquire a little into ſome of the antiquities of this iſland, and have found ſeveral people, particularly the prince of Torremuzzo, who have made this the great object of their ſtudy. However, I find we muſt wade through oceans of fiction, before we can arrive at any thing certain or ſatiſfactory.

Moſt of the Sicilian authors agree in deriving their origin from Ham, or as they call him, Cham, the ſon of Noah, who, they pretend, is the ſame with Saturn. They tell you that he built a great city, which from him was named Cameſena. There have been violent diſputes about the

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ſituation of this city:—Beroſo ſuppoſes it to have ſtood, where Camarina was afterwards founded, and that this was only a corruption of its primitive name. But Guarneri, Carrera, and others, combat this opinion, and affirm, that Cameſena ſtood near the foot of Ætna, between Aci and Cattania, almoſt oppoſite to theſe three rocks that ſtill bear the name of the Cyclops.—Indeed Carrera mentions an inſcription that he had ſeen in a ruin near Aci, ſuppoſed to have been the ſepulchre of Acis, which he thinks puts this matter out of doubt. Theſe are his words: "Hæc eſt inſcriptio vetuſtæ cujuſdam tabellæ repertæ in pyramide ſepulchri Acis, ex fragmentis vetuſtiſſimæ Chameſenæ, urbis hodie Acis, conditæ a Cham, gigantum principe, etiam nuncupato Saturno Chameſeno, in promontorio Xiphonio, ubi adhuc hodie viſuntur ſolo æquata antiqua veſtigia, et ruinæ dictæ urbis et arcis in inſula prope Scopulos Cyclopum,

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Cyclopum, et retinet adhuc ſincopatum nomen La Gazzena."

This ſame Cham they tell you was a very great ſcoundrel, and that *eſenus*, which ſignified infamous, was added to his name, only to denote his character. Fazzello ſays, he married his own ſiſter, who was called Rhea; that Ceres was the fruit of this marriage; that ſhe did not inherit the vices of her father, but reigned over Sicily with great wiſdom and moderation. That ſhe taught her ſubjects the method of making bread and wine, the materials for which their iſland produced ſpontaneouſly in great abundance. That her daughter Proſerpine was of equal beauty and virtue with herſelf. That Orius king of Epirus had demanded her in marriage, and on a refuſal, carried her off by force; which gave occaſion to the wild imagination of Greece to invent the fable of the rape of Proſerpine by Pluto king of Hell, this

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Orius being of a moroſe and gloomy diſpoſition.

Ceres has ever been the favourite deity of the Sicilians. She choſe her ſeat of empire in the center of the iſland, on the top of a high hill called Enna, where ſhe founded the city of that name. It is ſtill a conſiderable place, and is now called Caſtragiovanni; but little or nothing remain of the ruins of Enna.

Cicero gives a particular account of this place. He ſays, from its ſituation in the center of the iſland, it was called *Umbilicus Siciliæ*, and deſcribes it as one of the moſt beautiful and fertile ſpots in the world. The temple of Ceres at Enna was renowned all over the heathen world, and pilgrimages were made to it, as they are at preſent to Loretto. Fazzello ſays, it was held in ſuch veneration, that when the city was ſurprized and pillaged by the ſlaves and barbarians,

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barians, they did not presume to touch this sacred temple, although it contained more riches than all the city besides.

There have been violent disputes amongst the Sicilian authors, whether Proserpine was carried off near the city of Enna, or that of Ætna, which stood at the foot of that mountain, but it is of mighty little consequence, and more respect, I think, is to be paid to the sentiments of Cicero, who gives it in favour of Enna, than the whole of them. Diodorus too is of the same opinion, and his description of this place is almost in the very words as that of Cicero. They both paint it as a perfect paradise; abounding in beautiful groves, clear springs and rivulets, and like Ætna, covered with a variety of flowers at all seasons of the year. To these authorities, if you please you may add that of Milton, who compares it to paradise itself.

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——Nor that fair field
Of Enna, where Proſerpine gathering flowers,
Herſelf a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered.

If you want to have a fuller account of this place you will find it in Cicero's pleadings againſt Verres, and in the fifth book of Diodorus.—I have converſed with ſeveral gentlemen who have been there: they aſſure me that it ſtill anſwers in a great meaſure to the deſcription of theſe authors. —Medals, I am told, are ſtill found, with an elegant figure of Ceres, and an ear of wheat for the reverſe; but I have not been able to procure any of them.

There was another temple in Sicily not leſs celebrated than this one of Ceres.—It was dedicated to Venus Erecina, and, like the other too, was built on the ſummit of a high mountain. The antient name of this mountain was Eryx, or as the Si-

cilians

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cilians call it Erice, but it is now called St. Juliano. Both mountain and temple are often mentioned by the Greek and Latin hiſtorians, and happily the Sicilian ones have no diſpute about its ſituation or origin, which they make to be almoſt as antient as that of Ceres.—Diodorus ſays, that Dedalus, after his flight from Crete, was hoſpitably received here, and by his wonderful ſkill in architecture added greatly to the beauty of this temple. He enriched it with many fine pieces of ſculpture, but particularly with the figure of a ram of ſuch exquiſite workmanſhip that it appeared to be alive. This, I think, is likewiſe mentioned by Cicero.

Æneas too in his voyage from Troy to Italy, landed in this part of the iſland, and according to Diodorus and Thucydides, made rich preſents to this temple; but Virgil is not ſatisfied with this; he muſt raiſe the piety of his hero ſtill higher, and,

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in oppoſition to all the hiſtorians, makes Æneas the founder of the temple *. Its fame and glory continued to increaſe for many ages; and it was ſtill held in greater veneration by the Romans, than it had been by the Greeks. Fazzello ſays, and quotes the authority of Strabo, that ſeventeen cities of Sicily were laid under tribute, to raiſe a ſufficient revenue to ſupport the dignity, and enormous expences of this temple. Two hundred ſoldiers were appointed for its guard, and the number of its prieſts, prieſteſſes, and miniſters male and female, were incredible.

At certain ſeaſons of the year, great numbers of pigeons, which were ſuppoſed to be the attendants of Venus, uſed to paſs betwixt Africa and Italy; and reſting for

* Tum vicina aſtris Erycino in vertice ſede.
Fundatur Veneri Idaliæ, tumuloque ſacerdos
Et lucus late ſacer additur Anchiſaæo.

ſome

ſome days on mount Eryx, and round this temple, it was then imagined by the people that the goddeſs herſelf was there in perſon; and on theſe occaſions, he ſays, they worſhipped her with all their might. —Feſtivals were inſtituted in honour of the deity, and the moſt modeſt woman was only looked upon as a prude, that refuſed to comply with the rites. However, there were not many complaints of this kind; and it has been alleged, that the ladies of Eryx were ſometimes ſeen looking out for the pigeons long before they arrived; and that they uſed to ſcatter peas about the temple to make them ſtay as long as poſſible.

Venus was ſucceeded in her poſſeſſions of Eryx by St. Juliano, who now gives his name both to the city and mountain; and indeed he has a very good title, for when the place was cloſely beſieged, the Sicilians tell you, he appeared on the walls armed cap-

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cap-a-pie, and frightened the enemy to ſuch a degree, that they inſtantly took to their heels, and left him ever ſince in quiet poſſeſſion of it.—It would have been long before Venus and her pigeons could have done as much for them.

Many medals are found in the neighbourhood, but there is not the leaſt veſtige of this celebrated temple.—Some marbles with inſcriptions and engravings that have been found deep below ground are almoſt the only remaining monuments of its exiſtence. Suetonius ſays, that it had even fallen to ruins before the time of Tiberius; but as Venus was the favourite divinity of that emperor, he had ordered it to be magnificently repaired: however, it is ſomewhat difficult to reconcile this with Strabo's account; who tells us, that even before his time it had been totally abandoned; and indeed this ſeems moſt probable, as every veſtige of it has now diſappeared,

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peared, which is not commonly the caſe with the great works of the age of Tiberius.

Æneas landed at the port of Drepanum, at the foot of this mountain. Here he loſt his father Anchiſes; in honour of whom, on his return from Carthage about a year after, he celebrated the games that make ſo great a figure in the Æneid, which Virgil introduces with a good deal of addreſs as a compliment to the piety of Auguſtus, who had inſtituted games of the ſame kind in honour of Julius Cæſar, his father by adoption.

It is ſingular, that Virgil's account of this part of Sicily ſhould be ſo very different from that of Homer, when there was ſo ſhort a ſpace, only a few months, between the times that their two heroes viſited it.—Indeed, Virgil ſeems to have followed

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lowed the hiſtorians, in his conduct of this part of his poem, more than the ſentiments of Homer; who makes this very country where Æneas was ſo hoſpitably received, the habitation of Polyphemus and the Cyclops, where Ulyſſes loſt ſo many of his companions, and himſelf made ſo very narrow an eſcape. The iſland of Licoſia where he moored his fleet, lay very near the port of Drepanum, and Homer deſcribes the adventure of Polyphemus to have happened on the ſhore of Sicily, oppoſite to that iſland. Virgil has taken the liberty to change the ſcene of action, as he was better acquainted both with the geography and hiſtory of the country than Homer; and perhaps with a good deal of propriety places it at the foot of mount Ætna. I am afraid there is not ſo much propriety in his changing the action itſelf, and contradicting the account that Homer gives of it. For Ulyſſes ſays that Polyphemus devoured four

of

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of his companions; but that he, by his addreſs, ſaved all the reſt, and was himſelf the laſt that eſcaped out of the cave. Now Virgil makes Ulyſſes to have told a lie, for he affirms that he left Achemenides behind him; and Achemenides too gives a different account of this affair from Ulyſſes: he aſſures Æneas, that Polyphemus devoured only two of his companions; after which they put out his eye, *(acuto telo)* with a ſharp weapon; which rather gives the idea of a ſpear or javelin, than that of a great beam of wood made red hot in the fire, as Homer deſcribes it. But there are many ſuch paſſages.—Don't you think they ſeem either to indicate a negligence in Virgil, or a want of deference for his maſter? neither of which, I believe, he has ever been accuſed of.

The Sicilian authors are by no means pleaſed with Virgil for making Æneas the founder

founder of this temple of Venus Erecina. They will only allow that the colony which he was obliged to leave there, after the burning of his ſhips, did, in honour of his mother Venus, build the city of Eryx around her temple: but they all inſiſt upon it, that the temple was built by Eryx, or as they call him Erice, another ſon of Venus, but much older than Æneas; the ſame that was found to be ſo equal a match for Hercules, but was at laſt killed by him, at a boxing match near the foot of this mountain. The ſpot where this is ſuppoſed to have happened, ſtill retains the name of *(il campo di Hercole)* the field of Hercules. Through the whole fifth book of the Æneid, this Eryx is ſtiled the brother of Æneas; and, in his account of the games, Virgil introduces thoſe very gauntlets with which he fought with Hercules, *(in hoc ipſo littore)* in this very field. The ſight of which, from their

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enormous size, astonishes the whole host, and frightens the champion Dares so much that he refuses to fight.

Adieu. The opera begins in two days; after which, I think, we shall soon take leave of Sicily.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XXXII.

Palermo, July 21ſt.

YESTERDAY we walked up to the Monte Pelegrino to pay our reſpects to St. Roſolia, and thank her for the variety of entertainment ſhe has afforded us. It is one of the moſt fatiguing expeditions I ever made in my life. The mountain is extremely high, and ſo uncommonly ſteep, that the road up to it is very properly termed *la Scala*, or the Stair: before the diſcovery of St. Roſolia, it was looked upon as almoſt inacceſſible, but they have now at a vaſt expence cut out a road, over precipices that were almoſt perpendicular. We found the ſaint lying in her grotto, in the very ſame attitude in which ſhe is ſaid to have been diſcovered; her head reclining gently upon her hand, and a crucifix before her. This is a ſtatue of the fineſt white marble,

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marble, and of moſt exquiſite workmanſhip. It is placed in the inner part of the cavern, on the very ſame ſpot where St. Roſolia expired. It is the figure of a lovely young girl of about fifteen, in an act of devotion. The artiſt has found means to throw ſomething that is extremely touching, into the countenance and air of this beautiful ſtatue. I never in my life ſaw one that affected me ſo much, and am not ſurpriſed that it ſhould have captivated the hearts of the people. It is covered with a robe of beaten gold, and is adorned with ſome valuable jewels. The cave is of a conſiderable extent, and extremely damp, ſo that the poor little ſaint muſt have had very cold uncomfortable quarters. They have built a church around it; and appointed prieſts to watch over theſe precious relics, and receive the offerings of pilgrims that viſit them.

An inſcription graved by the hand of St. Roſolia herſelf, was found in a cave in mount Queſquina, at a conſiderable diſtance

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from this mountain. It is ſaid that ſhe was diſturbed in her retreat there, and had wandered from thence to mount Pelegrino, as a more retired and inacceſſible place. I ſhall copy it exactly, as it is preſerved in the poor little ſaint's own Latin.

EGO ROSOLIA
SINIBALDI QUISQUI-
NE ET ROSARUM
DOMINI FILIA AMORE
DEI MEI JESU
CHRISTI
IN HOC
ANTRO HABITA-
RI DECREVI.

After St. Roſolia was ſcared from the cave where this inſcription was found, ſhe was never more heard of, till her bones were found about five hundred years after, in this ſpot.

The proſpect from the top of mount Pelegrino is beautiful and extenſive. Moſt of the Lipari iſlands are diſcovered in a very clear day, and likewiſe a large portion of

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mount Ætna, although at the distance of almost the whole length of Sicily. The Bagaria too, and the Colle, covered over with a number of fine country houses and gardens, make a beautiful appearance. The city of Palermo stands within less than two miles of the foot of the mountain, and is seen to great advantage. Many people went to this mountain during the time of the great illumination, from whence they pretend it has a fine effect; but this unfortunately we neglected.

Near the middle of the mountain, and not far from its summit, there still appears some remains of a celebrated castle, the origin of which the Sicilian authors carry back to the most remote antiquity. Massa says, it is supposed to have been built in the reign of Saturn immediately after the flood; for in the time of the earliest Carthaginian wars, it was already much respected on account of its venerable anti-

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quity.—It was then a place of ſtrength, and is often mentioned by the Greek hiſtorians. Diodorus ſays, in his twenty-third book, that Hamilcar kept poſſeſſion of it for three years, againſt all the power of the Romans; who, with an army of forty thouſand men, attempted in vain to diſlodge him.

The ſituation of Palermo is ſeen, I think, to more advantage from the Monte Pelegrino than from any where elſe. This beautiful city ſtands near the extremity of a kind of natural amphitheatre, formed by high and rocky mountains; but the country that lies betwixt the city and theſe mountains, is one of the richeſt and moſt beautiful ſpots in the world. The whole appears a magnificent garden, filled with fruit-trees of every ſpecies, and watered by clear fountains and rivulets, that form a variety of windings through this delightful plain.—From the ſingularity of this ſituation, as well as from the richneſs of the ſoil, Pa-

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lermo has had many flattering epithets beſtowed upon it; particularly by the poets, who have denominated it *Conca d'oro*, The Golden Shell, which is at once expreſſive both of its ſituation and richneſs. It has likewiſe been ſtiled *Aurea Valle*, *Hortus Siciliæ*, *&c.*; and to include all theſe together, the laſting term of *Felix* has been added to its name, by which you will find it diſtinguiſhed even in the maps.

Many of the etymologiſts allege, that it is from the richneſs of this valley that it had its original name of *Panormus*, which, in the old Greek language, they pretend, ſignified All a garden: but others ſay there is no occaſion for ſtraining ſignifications, and aſſert, with more appearance of plauſibility, that it was called *Pan-ormus*, from the ſize and conveniency of its harbours; one of which is recorded antiently to have extended into the very center of the city. And this is the account Diodorus gives of it; it was

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called Panormus, ſays he, becauſe its harbour even penetrated to the very innermoſt parts of the city, Panormus in the Greek language ſignifying All a port: And Procopius, in his hiſtory of the wars of the Goths, aſſures us, that in the time of Beliſarius, the port was deep enough for that general to run his ſhips up to the very walls of the city, and give the aſſault from them. It is not now ſo well intitled to this name as it was formerly. Theſe harbours have been almoſt entirely deſtroyed and filled up; moſt probably I think by the violent torrents from the mountains that furround it; which are recorded ſometimes to have laid waſte great part of the city. Fazzello ſpeaks of an inundation of which he was an eye-witneſs, that came down from the mountains with ſuch fury, that they thought the city would have been entirely ſwept away. He ſays, it burſt down the wall near to the royal palace, and bore away every thing that oppoſed its paſſage;

churches,

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churches, convents, houſes, to the number of two thouſand, and drowned upwards of three thouſand people.—Now the fragments and ruins carried to the ſea by ſuch a torrent alone would be ſufficient to fill up a little harbour, ſo that we are not to be ſurpriſed, that theſe capacious ports, for which it had been ſo much celebrated, no longer exiſt.

Next to Chameſeno, Palermo is generally ſuppoſed to be the moſt ancient city in the iſland. Indeed, there ſtill remain ſome monuments that carry back its origin to the times of the moſt remote antiquity. A biſhop of Lucera has wrote on this ſubject. He is clearly of opinion, that Palermo was founded in the days of the firſt patriarchs. You will laugh at this;—ſo did I;—but the biſhop does not go to work upon conjecture only: he ſupports his opinion with ſuch proofs, as I own to you, ſtaggered me a good deal. A Chal-

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dean inſcription was diſcovered about ſix hundred years ago, on a block of white marble; it was in the reign of William II. who ordered it to be tranſlated into Latin and Italian. The biſhop ſays, there are many fragments in Palermo with broken inſcriptions in this language; and ſeems to think it beyond a doubt, that the city was founded by the Chaldeans, in the very early ages of the world. This is the literal tranſlation:——"During the time that Iſaac, "the ſon of Abraham, reigned in the valley "of Damaſcus, and Eſau, the ſon of Iſaac, "in Idumea, a great multitude of Hebrews, "accompanied by many of the people of "Damaſcus, and many Phœnicians, coming "into this triangular iſland, took up their "habitation in this moſt beautiful place, "to which they gave the name of Panor-"mus."

The biſhop tranſlates another Chaldean inſcription, which is indeed a great curioſity.

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ſity. It is ſtill preſerved, though not with that care that ſo valuable a monument of antiquity deſerves. It is placed over one of the old gates of the city, and when that gate falls to ruin, it will probably be for ever loſt. The tranſlation is in Latin, but I ſhall give it you in Engliſh:——"There "is no other God but one God. There is "no other power but this ſame God. There "is no other conqueror but this God whom "we adore. The commander of this tower "is Saphu, the ſon of Eliphar, ſon of Eſau, "brother of Jacob, ſon of Iſaac, ſon of "Abraham. The name of the tower is "Baych, and the name of the neighbour-"ing tower is Pharat."

Theſe two inſcriptions ſeem to reflect a mutual light upon each other. Fazzello has preſerved them both, and remarks upon this laſt, that it appears evidently from it, that the tower of Baych was built antecedent to the time of Saphu, (or, as we tranſ-

late

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late it, Zephu) who is only mentioned as commander of the tower, but not as its founder.

Part of the ruins of this tower ſtill remain, and many more Chaldean inſcriptions have been found amongſt them, but ſo broken and mangled, that little could be made of them. Fazzello is in great indignation at ſome maſons he found demoliſhing theſe precious relics, and complains bitterly of it to the ſenate, whom he with juſtice upbraids for their negligence and indifference.

Converſing on this ſubject t'other night with a gentleman who is well verſed in the antiquities of this place, I took the liberty of objecting to the Greek etymology, Pan-ormus, it appearing extremely abſurd to give a Greek name to the city long before the exiſtence of the Greek nation: I added, that I was a good deal

ſurpriſed

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ſurpriſed Fazzello had not attempted to account for this ſeeming abſurdity. He allowed the apparent validity of the objection, and blamed Fazzello for his negligence; but aſſured me, that Pan-ormus, or ſomething very nearly of the ſame ſound, ſignified in the Chaldean language, and likewiſe in the Hebrew, a paradiſe, or delicious garden; and that the Greeks probably finding it ſo applicable, never thought of changing its name. This I was in no capacity to contradict.—He added too, that Panormus was likewiſe an Arabic word, and ſignified *This water*; which probably was the reaſon that the Saracens did not change its name, as they have done that of almoſt every thing elſe; as this is as applicable and as expreſſive of the ſituation of Palermo, as any of the other etymologies; it being ſurrounded on all ſides with beautiful fountains of the pureſt water, the natural conſequence of the vicinity of the mountains.

Pray

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Pray ſhew this letter to our friend Mr. Crofts, and deſire his ſentiments on theſe etymologies and antiquities. Tell him I have not forgot his commiſſion, and ſhall procure him all the oldeſt and moſt unintelligible books in Palermo; but I muſt beg, for the repoſe and tranquillity of mankind, that he will not republiſh them. On theſe conditions, I ſend him a moſt valuable fragment: it is part of a Chaldean inſcription that has been exactly copied from a block of white marble found in the ruins of the tower Baych.—I own I ſhould like much to ſee it tranſlated: the people here have as yet made nothing of it: and we were in no capacity to aſſiſt them.

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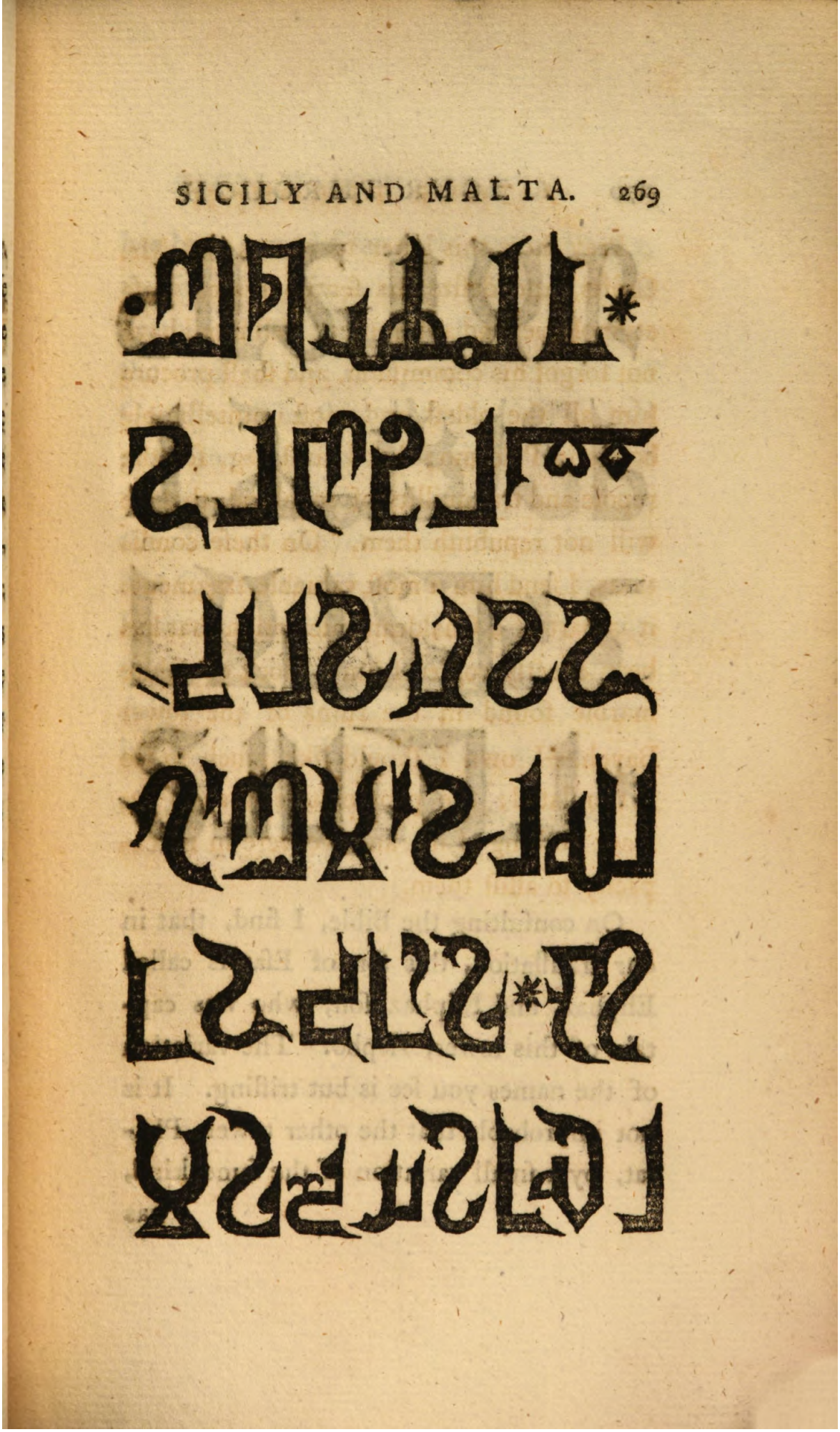

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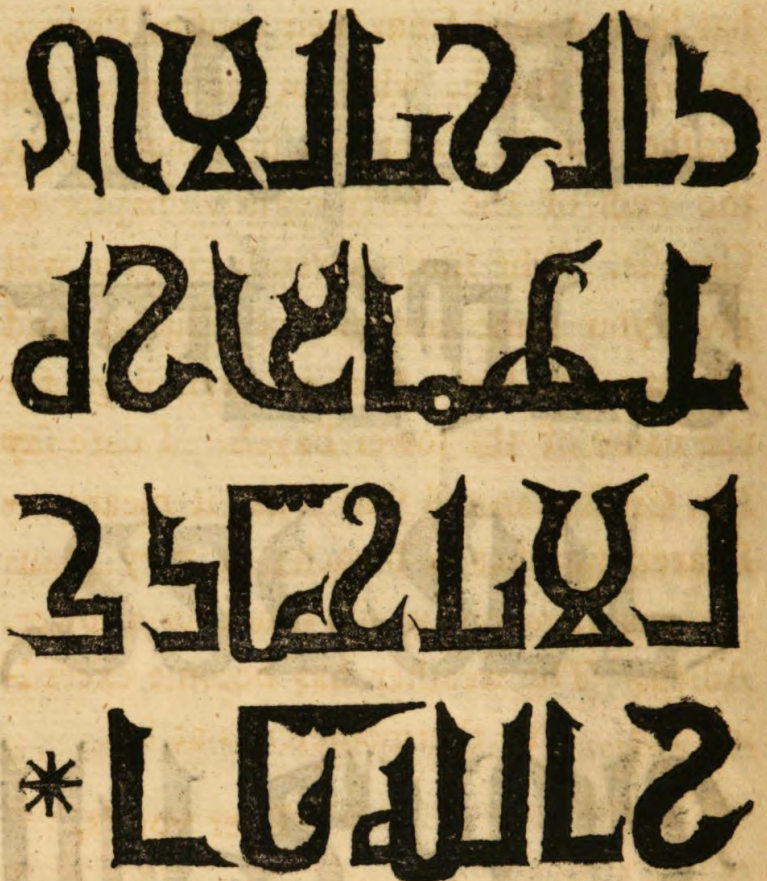

On conſulting the Bible, I find, that in our tranſlation, this ſon of Eſau is called Eliphaz, and Eliphaz' ſon, who was captain of this tower, Zepho. The variation of the names you ſee is but trifling. It is not improbable that the other tower, Pharat, by a ſmall variation of the ſame kind, has

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has been named from their couſin, Pharez, the ſon of Judah, who got the ſtart of his brother Zarah. You will find the ſtory at the end of the thirty-eighth chapter of Geneſis. The thirty-ſeventh chapter will give you ſome account of Eliphar and Saphu: but I can find no etymology for the name of the tower Baych. I dare ſay Mr. Crofts can tell you what it means.—Pharez ſignifies a breach; a very inauſpicious name one would think for a tower. Adieu. The weather has become exceeding hot. The thermometer is at 80.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XXXIII.

Palermo, July 24th.

IN the courſe of our acquaintance with ſome gentlemen of ſenſe and obſervation in this place, we have learned many things concerning the iſland, that perhaps may be worthy of your attention; and as this day is ſo hot that I cannot go out, I ſhall endeavour to recollect ſome of them, both for your amuſement and my own. The thermometer is up at 81½.—So you may judge of the ſituation of our northern conſtitutions.

There is one thing, however, that I have always obſerved in theſe ſouthern climates; that although the degree of heat is much greater than with us, yet it is not commonly attended with that weight and

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and oppreſſion of ſpirits that generally accompany our ſultry days in ſummer.—I am ſure, that in ſuch a day as this, in England, we ſhould be panting for breath; and no mortal would think either of reading or writing.—That is not the caſe here; I never was in better ſpirits in my life: Indeed I believe the quantities of ice we eat may contribute a good deal towards it; for I find, that in a very violent heat, there is no ſuch cordial to the ſpirits as ice, or a draught of ice-water: it is not only from the cold it communicates, but, like the cold bath, from the ſuddenneſs of that communication, it braces the ſtomach, and gives a new tone to the fibres.—It is ſtrange that this piece of luxury (in my opinion the greateſt of all, and perhaps the only healthy one) ſhould ſtill be ſo much neglected with us.

I knew an Engliſh lady at Nice, who in a ſhort time was cured of a threatening

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conſumption, only by a free indulgence in the uſe of ices; and I am perſuaded, that in ſkilful hands, few remedies would be more effectual in many of our ſtomach and inflammatory complaints, as hardly any thing has a ſtronger or more immediate effect upon the whole frame; and ſurely our adminiſtering of warm drinks and potions in theſe complaints tend often to nouriſh the diſeaſe.—It is the common practice here, in inflammatory fevers, to give quantities of ice-water to drink; nay, ſo far have they carried it, that Dr. Sanghes, a celebrated Sicilian phyſician, covered over the breaſt and belly of his patients with ſnow or ice; and they aſſure us, in many caſes, with great ſucceſs.—But, indeed, I ought in juſtice to add, that this phyſician's practice has not been generally adopted.

Perhaps it is from the preſent benefit I find from ice, that I have ſaid ſo much in favour

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ſavour of it; for I am fully perſuaded, that if I had not a quantity of it ſtanding here below the table, I ſhould very ſoon be obliged to give up writing, and go to bed; but whenever I begin to flag, another glaſs is ſure to ſet me to rights again.

I was going to give you ſome account of the fiſheries of this iſland.

The catching the tunny-fiſh conſtitutes one of the principal Sicilian amuſements during the ſummer months; and the curing and ſending them to foreign markets makes one of the greateſt branches of their commerce.—We were invited yeſterday by the Prince Sperlinga to a party of tunny-fiſhing; but the violence of the heat prevented it.

Theſe fiſh do not make their appearance in the Sicilian ſeas till towards the latter end of May; at which time, the *Tonnaros*,

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as they call them, are prepared for their reception. This is a kind of aquatic caſtle, formed, at a great expence, of ſtrong nets, faſtened to the bottom of the ſea by anchors and heavy leaden weights.

Theſe tonnaros are erected in the paſſages amongſt the rocks and iſlands that are moſt frequented by the tunny-fiſh. They take care to ſhut up with nets the entry into theſe paſſages, all but one little opening, which is called the outward gate of the tonnaro. This leads into the firſt apartment, or, as they call it, the hall. As ſoon as the fiſh have got into the hall, the fiſhermen, who ſtand ſentry in their boats during the ſeaſon, ſhut the outer door, which is no more than letting down a ſmall piece of net, which effectually prevents the tunny from returning by the way they came. They then open the inner door of the hall, which leads to the ſecond apartment, which they call the anti-

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chamber, and, by making a noiſe on the ſurface of the water, they ſoon drive the tunny-fiſh into it. As ſoon as the whole have got into the antichamber, the inner door of the hall is again ſhut, and the outer door is opened for the reception of more company.

Some tonnaros have a great number of apartments, with different names to them all; the ſaloon, the parlour, the dining-room, &c.; but the laſt apartment is always ſtiled *la Camera della Morte*, The chamber of Death: this is compoſed of ſtronger nets and heavier anchors than the others.

As ſoon as they have collected a ſufficient number of tunny-fiſh, they are driven from all the other apartments into the chamber of death; when the ſlaughter begins. The fiſhermen, and often the gentlemen too, armed with a kind of ſpear

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or harpoon, attack the poor defenceleſs animals on all ſides; which now giving themſelves up to deſpair, daſh about with great force and agility, throwing the water over all the boats; and tearing the nets to pieces, they often knock out their brains againſt the rocks or anchors, and ſometimes even againſt the boats of their enemies.

You ſee there is nothing very generous or manly in this ſport.—The taking of the *Peſce Spada*, or ſword-fiſh, is a much more noble diverſion: no art is made uſe of to enſnare him; but with a ſmall harpoon, fixed to a long line, they attack him in the open ſeas, and will often ſtrike him at a very conſiderable diſtance. It is exactly the whale-fiſhing in miniature. The Sicilian fiſhermen (who are abundantly ſuperſtitious) have a Greek ſentence which they make uſe of as a charm to bring him near their boats. This is the only bait

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they uſe, and they pretend that it is of wonderful efficacy, and abſolutely obliges him to follow them; but if unfortunately he ſhould overhear them ſpeak a word of Italian, he plunges under water immediately, and will appear no more.

As theſe fiſh are commonly of a great ſize and ſtrength, they will ſometimes run for hours after they are ſtruck, and afford excellent ſport.—I have ſeen them with a ſword four or five feet long, which gives them a formidable appearance in the water, particularly after they are wounded. The fleſh of theſe animals is excellent; it is more like beef than fiſh, and the common way of dreſſing it is in ſteaks.

The fiſhing of the *peſce ſpada* is moſt conſiderable in the ſea of Meſſina, where they have likewiſe great quantities of eels, particularly the *Morena*, ſo much eſteemed

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amongſt the Romans, which I think is indeed the fineſt fiſh I ever eat.

But it is not only their large fiſh that they ſtrike with harpoons; they have the ſame method of taking mullet, dories, a kind of mackarel, and many other ſpecies; but this is always performed in the night. As ſoon as it is dark, two men get into a ſmall boat; one of them holds a lighted torch over the ſurface of the water, the other ſtands with his harpoon ready poiſed in his hand. The light of the torch ſoon brings the fiſh to the ſurface, when the harpooner immediately ſtrikes them. I have ſeen great quantities killed in this manner, both here and at Naples. A large fleet of boats employed in this kind of fiſhing make a beautiful appearance on the water, in a fine ſummer night.

The coral fiſhery is chiefly practiſed at Trapani: they have invented a machine there,

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there, which anſwers the purpoſe much beyond their expectations. This is only a great croſs of wood, to the center of which is fixed a heavy hard ſtone, capable of carrying the croſs to the bottom. Pieces of ſmall net are tied to each limb of the croſs, which is poized horizontally by a rope, and let down into the water. As ſoon as they feel it touch the bottom, the rope is made faſt to the boat. They then row about, all over the coral beds: The conſequence of which is, the great ſtone breaks off the coral from the rocks, and it is immediately entangled in the nets.—Since this invention the coral fiſhery has turned out to conſiderable account.

The people of Trapani are eſteemed the moſt ingenious of the iſland; they are the authors of many uſeful and ornamental inventions. An artiſt there, has lately diſcovered a method of making Cameios, which are a perfect imitation of the antient

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ones engraved on the onyx. They are done on a kind of hard ſhell from paſtes of the beſt antiques, and ſo admirably executed, that it is often difficult to diſtinguiſh the antient from the modern. Theſe ſet in gold, are generally worn as bracelets, and are at preſent in high eſtimation amongſt the ladies of quality here. Mrs. Hamilton * procured a pair of them laſt year, and carried them to Naples, where they have been much admired. Commiſſions were immediately ſent over, and the man has now more buſineſs than he can manage; however, we have been fortunate enough to procure a few pairs of them for our friends. I have ſeen cameios that have coſt two hundred guineas, that could ſcarce be diſtinguiſhed from one of theſe.

The difficulties under which the poor Sicilians labour, from the extreme oppreſ-

* Now lady Hamilton.

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ſion of their government, obliges them ſometimes to invent branches of commerce that nature ſeems to have denied them, as they are not allowed to enjoy thoſe ſhe has beſtowed.—The ſugar-cane was very much cultivated in this iſland, but the duties impoſed were ſo enormous, that it has been almoſt abandoned.—But their crops of wheat alone, were they under a free government, would ſoon be ſufficient to render this little nation one of the richeſt and moſt flouriſhing in the world; for even in the wretched ſtate of cultivation it is in at preſent, one good crop, I am told, is ſufficient to maintain the iſland for ſeven years. You will be a good deal ſurpriſed, after this, to hear that the exportation of this commodity has been prohibited for theſe ſeveral years paſt; at leaſt to all ſuch as are not able to pay moſt exorbitantly for that privilege. The conſequence is, that corn has become a drug. The common price of the ſalma, which is

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two loads, was about thirty-one ſhillings; at preſent it is reduced to five ſhillings and ſix-pence, and there is a probability that it will ſtill fall lower.

This crop, which has been very abundant, I am told, in many places they have hardly been at the pains to gather in, as there is little probability of this cruel prohibition being removed. The farmers are already ruined, and the ruin of their maſters muſt inevitably follow. This is the method the miniſtry of Naples, or rather that of Spain, has taken to humble the pride of the Sicilian barons, whoſe power they pretend is ſtill very extenſive, and their juriſdiction abſolute; moſt of them poſſeſſing a right of life and death in their own domain. However, there is a probability that they will ſoon be obliged to relinquiſh their privileges. The complaint is univerſal, and if the miniſtry perſevere in theſe rigorous meaſures, there

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muſt either be a revolt, or they muſt ſoon be reduced to a ſtate of poverty as well as of ſervitude. I believe indeed moſt of them would readily embrace any plauſible ſcheme, to ſhake off their yoke; as in general they appear to be people of great ſenſibility, with high notions of honour and liberty.

Talking of the natural riches of their iſland,—Yes, ſay they, if theſe were diſplayed, you would have reaſon indeed to ſpeak of them. Take a look of theſe mountains,—they contain rich veins of every metal, and many of the Roman mines ſtill remain;—but to what end ſhould we explore them?—It is not we that ſhould reap the profit.—Nay, a diſcovery of any thing very rich might poſſibly prove the ruin of its poſſeſſor.—No, —in our preſent ſituation the hidden treaſures of the iſland muſt ever remain a profound ſecret.—Were we happy enough to enjoy the bleſſings of your conſtitution,

you

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you might call us rich indeed. Many hidden doors of opulence would then be opened, which now are not even thought of, and we ſhould ſoon re-aſſume our antient name and conſequence; but at preſent we are nothing.

This is the language that ſome of the firſt people amongſt them hold with us. However, they ſtill boaſt that they retain more of the feudal government than any nation in Europe. The ſhadow indeed remains, but the ſubſtance is gone long ago. It has long been the object of the Bourbon miniſtry to reduce the power of the barons in every kingdom. Richlieu began the ſyſtem in France, and it has ever ſince been proſecuted by his ſucceſſors; its influence has now ſpread over the whole of their poſſeſſions in Europe; of which, as this is the moſt remote, it has likewiſe been the longeſt in reaching it.

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The foundation of the feudal ſyſtem was firſt laid here by the count Rugeiro, about the middle of the eleventh century, immediately after he had driven the Saracens out of the iſland. He divided Sicily into three parts; the firſt, by conſent of his army, was given to the church; the ſecond he beſtowed upon his officers, and the third he reſerved for himſelf.

Of theſe three branches, or as they call them *Braccios*, (arms) he compoſed his parliament, the form of which remains the ſame to this day. The *Braccio Militare* is compoſed of all the barons of the kingdom, to the number of two hundred and fifty-one, who are ſtill obliged to military ſervice: their chief is the prince Butero, who is hereditary preſident of the parliament; for in conformity to the genius of the feudal government ſome of the great offices are ſtill hereditary. The three archbiſhops, all the biſhops, abbes,

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priors, and dignified clergy, amounting to near ſeventy, form the *Braccio Eccleſiaſtico*: The archbiſhop of Palermo is their chief. The *Braccio Demaniale* is formed by election, like our houſe of commons: there are forty-three royal cities, ſtiled *Demaniale*, that have a right to elect members. Every houſeholder had a vote in this election. Their chief is the member for Palermo; who is likewiſe prætor (or mayor of the city). He is an officer of the higheſt rank, and his power is very extenſive; inferior only to that of the viceroy; in whoſe abſence, the greateſt part of the authority devolves upon him. He has a company of grenadiers for his body guard; and receives the title of excellency.

The prætor, together with ſix ſenators, who are ſtiled patricians, have the management of the civil government of the city. He is appointed every year, by the king, or by the viceroy, which is the ſame thing;

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thing; for I don't find that the people any longer exerciſe even the form of giving their votes: ſo that the very ſhadow of liberty has now diſappeared as well as the ſubſtance.—You may judge of the ſituation of liberty in a kingdom, where all courts civil and criminal are appointed by regal authority, and where all offices are conferred only by the will of the ſovereign, and depend entirely upon his caprice.

I own I feel moſt ſincerely for the Sicilians, who, I think, are poſſeſſed of many admirable qualities. But the ſpirit of every nation muſt infallibly ſink, under an oppreſſive and tyrannical government.—Their ſpirit however has in a great meaſure kept them free from one branch of tyranny, the moſt dreadful of all, that of the inquiſition. The kings of Spain wanted to eſtabliſh it in its full force; but the barons, accuſtomed to exerciſe deſpotic government themſelves, could not bear the thoughts

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of becoming ſlaves to a ſet of ignorant Spaniſh prieſts; and, I believe, they took the only way that was left to avoid it. Every inquiſitor that pretended to more zeal than they thought became him, was immediately aſſaſſinated; particularly if he preſumed to interfere with the conduct or ſentiments of the nobility. This ſoon took off the edge of their zeal, and reduced the holy office to a becoming moderation. However, they are extremely circumſpect in their converſation about religious matters; and generally adviſe ſtrangers to be on their guard, as the power of the inquiſition, although conſiderably reduced, is by no means annihilated.

The laws of Sicily are ſcattered in a great number of volumes; theſe the king of Sardinia intended to abridge, and collect into one code, but unfortunately he was not long enough in poſſeſſion of the iſland, to accompliſh this uſeful work.—

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But where there is an authority above all laws, laws can be but of little ſervice.

The power of the viceroy is very abſolute; he has not only the command of all the military force in the kingdom, but likewiſe preſides with unbounded authority in all civil tribunals; and as he is alſo inveſted with the legantine power, his ſway is equally great in religious matters.

He has the right of nominating to all the great offices in the kingdom; and confirming of all dignities, both civil and eccleſiaſtical.

In viſiting the priſons, a ceremony which he performs with great pomp twice a year, he has the power of liberating whatever priſoners he pleaſes; of reducing or altering their ſentences, their crimes and accuſations having firſt been read over to him.

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Indeed, that there may be ſome appearance of a regard to law and juſtice, his counſellor always attends him on theſe occaſions, to mark out the limits of the law.—This is an officer of very high rank, appointed to aſſiſt the viceroy in his deciſions, where the caſe may appear intricate or dubious; and always is, or ought to be, one of the ableſt lawyers in the iſland. For the moſt part, this office has been given to ſtrangers, who are ſuppoſed to have no kindred or particular connections here, that in giving their judgment they may be free from all prejudice and partiality. He has free admittance into all courts and tribunals, that he may be the better enabled to give the viceroy an account of their proceedings.

The whole military force of Sicily, amounts at preſent, from what I can learn, to 9500 men, about 1200 of which are cavalry. Many of their cities and for-

treſſes

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treſſes would require a very numerous garriſon to defend them: particularly Meſſina, Syracuſe, and Palermo: but indeed the ſtate of their fortifications, as well as that of their artillery, is ſuch, that (even if they were inclined) they could make but a ſmall defence.

If this iſland were in the hands of a naval power, I think it is evident, that it muſt command the whole Levant trade:—there are ſeveral little ports at each end of it, beſides the great ones of Trapani, Syracuſe, and Meſſina, which lie pretty near the three angles of the triangle. Whatever ſhips had paſſed either of theſe, the others could be appriſed of in the ſpace of half an hour, by means of ſignal towers, which the Sicilians have erected all around their iſland to warn them againſt ſudden invaſions from the Barbary ſide. Theſe towers are built on every little promontory, within ſight of each other. Fires

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are always kept ready for lighting, and a perſon is appointed to watch at each of them, ſo that the whole iſland can be alarmed, they aſſure us, in the ſpace of an hour.

By the bye, we have been witneſs here of a practice, that appears to be a very iniquitous one, and in the end, I ſhould think, muſt prove the deſtruction of our Mediterranean trade. Several ſhips have put in at this port with Engliſh colours, but to our ſurpriſe, not one Engliſh man on board. Theſe, I find, they call Bandiere men;—perhaps it is a known practice, although, I own, I was an utter ſtranger to it. They are very numerous in theſe ſeas, and carry on a conſiderable trade through the whole of the Mediterranean, to the great detriment of our own ſhips. Moſt of them belong to Genoa and Sicily, though they paſs under the name of Minorquins. They purchaſe

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Mediterranean paſſports, I am told, from ſome of the governors of our garriſons, which entitles them during the term ſpecified in theſe paſſports, to trade under Engliſh colours. I am aſſured that the number of theſe Bandiere men amounts to ſome hundreds. They have often one or two Engliſh ſailors on board; or at leaſt ſome perſon that ſpeaks the language, to anſwer when they are challenged. Pray can you tell me if this practice is known in England?

Adieu. The heat has become intolerable, and I am able to write no more;—however, I ſhould not have given it up yet, but my ice is all melted, and I have not the conſcience to ſend out a ſervant for more: I dare ſay, you are very glad of it, and wiſh it had been melted long ago. If this continues, I believe we ourſelves ſhall be melted. The thermometer is above

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eighty-two, and the heat ſtill ſeems to increaſe.—The ſea has even become too hot for bathing; and it does not at all refreſh us now as it did formerly.

Farewell.

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LETTER XXXIV.

Palermo, July 26th.

WE have now got every thing ready for our departure, and if the wind continues favourable, this is probably the laſt letter I ſhall write you from Sicily. However, I had ſtill a great deal more to ſay, both of the Sicilians and their iſland, and ſhall leave them, I aſſure you, with a good deal of regret.

Two chebecks ſailed this morning for Naples. We had the offer of a paſſage; but had already engaged a little veſſel for ourſelves.—A young nobleman, the marquis of ——, was ſhipped off in one of them, with orders never more to ſet his foot in Palermo. Indeed we are much ſurpriſed that his ſentence is ſo mild, as he has

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has been guilty of a crime which in catholic countries is generally puniſhed with the greateſt rigour;—no leſs than the debauching a nun.—He met with the young lady at a bathing place, about thirty miles from this, where ſhe had been ſent from her convent for the recovery of her health; her mother was along with her, but as the two young people were firſt couſins, and had lived together like brother and ſiſter, the old lady thought there could be no riſk in allowing them their wonted familiarity.

The nun ſoon recovered her health, grew fat, and returned to her convent. This is about ſix or ſeven months ago; and it is only a few days ſince the fatal diſcovery was made; but alas, it would conceal no longer. He is baniſhed Sicily for life; and his eſtate, or the greateſt part of it, is confiſcated. He may think himſelf happy they have treated him with ſo much lenity: Had his jury been compoſed of

prieſts

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prieſts and confeſſors, he muſt have died, without benefit of clergy; for this is the firſt mortal ſin, for which there is neither atonement nor abſolution;—" to lie with a " nun, and yet not be in orders."

The puniſhment of the poor unfortunate girl is not yet determined; however, I am told, it will be a terrible one: probably confinement in a dungeon for ſeven or eight years, without any company but a ſkull and a crucifix; and to live all that time upon bread and water. I ſaw a nun, at Portallegre in Portugal, that had ſuffered this very puniſhment for the ſame crime.

This ſtory has been kept a profound ſecret, and if we had not been on a very intimate footing with ſome people here, we never ſhould have heard of it.

The Sicilians ſtill retain ſome of the Spaniſh cuſtoms, though nothing of their gravity

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gravity nor taciturnity: the younger ſons of the nobility are ſtiled Don by their chriſtened names, and the daughters Donna; like our appellation of lord and lady to the ſons and daughters of dukes. The eldeſt ſon has commonly the title of count or marquis, but they are not all counts as in France and Germany, where I have ſeen ſix counts in one houſe, and very near twice the number of barons in another.

One of the moſt common titles here, as well as at Naples, is that of Prince; and although theſe were only created by Philip II. of Spain, they take rank of all the other nobility, ſome of whom, particularly the counts, carry their origin as far back as the time of the Normans, and look with great contempt on theſe upſtart Princes. The dukes and marquiſſes are not ſo old: the firſt were created by Charles V, and the ſecond, though an inferior title, by King Alphonſo, in the fifteenth century.—

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So that the dignity of the Sicilian titles may be ſaid to be in the inverſe ratio of their antiquities.

The luxury of the people here, like that of the Neapolitans, conſiſts chiefly in their equipages and horſes; but by a wiſe law of the King of Sardinia, which I am ſurpriſed ſhould ſtill remain in force, the viceroy alone is allowed to drive in the city with ſix horſes; the prætor, the archbiſhop, and preſident of the parliament with four; all the reſt of the nobility are reſtricted to two. But this is only within the gates of Palermo; and when they go to the country, there is none of them that drive with leſs than four: beſides, every family of diſtinction has at leaſt two or three carriages in daily uſe; for no man of faſhion is ſo unpolite as to refuſe his wife a chariot of her own, of which ſhe has the entire command; (without this the Marino could never ſubſiſt) and the upper ſervants of the firſt families

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families would be juſt as much aſhamed to be ſeen on foot as their maſters.—We took the liberty to ridicule the folly of this practice: they allow of its abſurdity, and wiſh to break through it; but who is to lead the way? We even prevailed with ſome of the young nobility, which I aſſure you was no ſmall condeſcenſion, to walk the ſtreets with us during the illuminations; but even this condeſcenſion ſhewed the folly of the prejudice in a ſtronger light than if they had refuſed us; for they would not be prevailed on to ſtir out, till they had ſent their ſervants about ten yards before them, with large wax flambeaux, although the whole city was in a flame of light. You may believe we did not ſpare them upon this occaſion; but it was all to no purpoſe. However, it is poſſible that we may overlook many cuſtoms of our own, that are not leſs ridiculous; for ridicule for the moſt part is relative, and depends only on time and place.—Perhaps you may remember the

Prince

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Prince of Anamaboo;—I ſhould like to hear the account he would give of the Engliſh nation in his own country; for ſome of our cuſtoms ſtruck him in a ſtill more ridiculous light.—Walking out in St. James's Park, in the afternoon, he obſerved one of his acquaintance driving in a phaeton with four horſes. The Prince burſt into a violent fit of laughing:—when they aſked him what was the matter?—"Vat "the devil, (ſaid the Prince in his bad "Engliſh) has that fellow eat ſo much "dinner that now it takes four horſes to "carry him?—I rode out with him this "morning, and he was then ſo light, that "van little horſe ran away with him.—He "muſt either be a great fool or a great "glutton."—Another time they inſiſted on the Prince going to the play.—He went; but he ſoon tired of it, and returned to his companions.—"Well, Prince, (ſaid they) "what did you ſee?"—"Vat did I ſee, "(replied

" (replied he with the utmoſt contempt) I " did ſee ſome men playing de fiddle—and " ſome men playing de fool."

I only infer from this, that it is with ſome degree of caution we ſhould ridicule the cuſtoms of other nations: a Sicilian, perhaps, would laugh with as much juſtice at many of our cuſtoms;—that, for inſtance, of obliging people to drink when they have no inclination to it;—that in the North, of eating Soland geeſe before dinner, to give them an appetite;—that of phyſicians and lawyers wearing enormous wigs, and many others that will naturally occur to you, none of which appear in the leaſt ridiculous to the people that practiſe them; who would no doubt defend them as ſtrenuouſly as the Sicilians do the neceſſity of carrying flambeaux before them during the great illumination.—Indeed, they have juſt now given us an admirable

ſpecimen

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ſpecimen of ſome of our ridicules, in one of their opera-dances, with which we have been a good deal entertained.

I believe I told you that the dancers are lately come from England: they have brought upon the ſtage many of the capital London characters:—The bucks, the maccaronies, the prigs, the cits, and ſome others ſtill more reſpectable: theſe are well ſupported, and afford a good deal of laughing. But I am interrupted, otherwiſe I ſhould have given you a more particular account of them. Adieu. The heat is intolerable; and there is no poſſibility of walking out.—We complain without reaſon of our own climate; and King Charles's obſervation I am perſuaded was juſt; "That there is hardly any climate, where, throughout the year, we can have ſo much exerciſe in the open air."

Ever your's.

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LETTER XXXV.

Palermo, July 27th.

THE Sicilians are animated in converſation, and their action for the moſt part is ſo juſt and ſo expreſſive of their ſentiments, that without hearing what is ſaid, one may comprehend the ſubject of their diſcourſe. We uſed to think the French and Neapolitans great adepts in this art; but they are much outdone by the Sicilians, both in the variety and juſtneſs of their geſticulation.

The origin of this cuſtom they carry ſo far back as the time of the earlieſt tyrants of Syracuſe, who, to prevent conſpiracies, had forbid their ſubjects, under the moſt ſevere penalties, to be ſeen in parties talking together. This obliged them to invent a me-

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a method of communicating their ſentiments by dumb ſhew, which they pretend has been tranſmitted from generation to generation ever ſince.

I think it is not at all improbable that this cuſtom too may have given the firſt idea of comedy; as we find, that ſome ſhort time after, Epicarmus, a native of that city, was the author of this invention.

The Sicilians till lately retained a great many fooliſh and ſuperſtitious cuſtoms; but particularly in their marriage and funeral ceremonies: it would be tedious to give you an account of all theſe; ſome of them are ſtill practiſed in the wild and mountainous parts of the iſland.—As ſoon as the marriage ceremony is performed, two of the attendants are ready to cram a ſpoonful of honey into the mouths of the bride and bridegroom; pronouncing it emblematical of their love and union, which they

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hope will ever continue as ſweet to their ſouls, as that honey is to their palates.—They then begin to throw handfuls of wheat upon them, which is continued all the way to the houſe of the bridegroom. This is probably the remains of ſome ancient rite to Ceres, their favourite divinity, and they think it cannot fail of procuring them a numerous progeny:—however, the Sicilian women have no occaſion for any charm to promote this, as, in general, they are abundantly prolific even without it. Fazzello gives an account of women having frequently upwards of forty children; and Carrera mentions one who had forty-ſeven.

The young couple are not allowed to taſte of the marriage-feaſt; this they pretend is to teach them patience and temperance; but when dinner is finiſhed, a great bone is preſented to the bridegroom by the bride's father, or one of her neareſt relations, who pronounces theſe words: "*Rodi tu queſt'*

"*oſſo,*

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" *osso*, &c. Pick you this bone, for you have " now taken in hand to pick one, which you " will find much harder and of more dif- " ficult digeſtion."—Perhaps this may have given riſe to the common ſaying, when one has undertaken any thing arduous or difficult, that " He has got a bone to " pick."

The Sicilians, like moſt other nations in Europe, carefully avoid marrying in the month of May, and look upon ſuch marriages as extremely inauſpicious. This piece of ſuperſtition is as old, perhaps older than the time of the Romans, by whoſe authors it is frequently mentioned; and by whom it has been tranſmitted to almoſt every nation in Europe. It is ſomewhat unaccountable, that ſo ridiculous an idea, which can have no foundation in nature, ſhould have ſtood its ground for ſo many ages.—There are indeed other cuſtoms ſtill more trivial, that are not leſs univerſal.—

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That of making April fools on the firſt day of that month; the ceremony of the cake on Twelfth-night; and ſome others that will occur to you, of which, no more than this, I have ever been able to learn the origin.

The marriages of the Sicilian nobility are celebrated with great magnificence; and the number of elegant carriages produced on theſe occaſions is aſtoniſhing. I wanted to diſcover when this great luxury in carriages had taken its riſe; and have found an account of the marriage of the daughter of one of their viceroys to the duke of Bivona, in the year 1551. It is deſcribed by one Elenco, who was a ſpectator of the ceremony. He ſays the ladies as well as gentlemen were all mounted on fine horſes, ſumptouſly capariſoned, and preceded by pages: that there were only three carriages in the city, which were uſed by invalids who were not able to ride on horſeback. Theſe

he

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he calls *Carette*, which word now ſignifies a little cart.

The Sicilian ladies marry very young, and frequently live to ſee the fifth or ſixth generation. You will expect, no doubt, that I ſhould ſay ſomething of their beauty:—In general, they are ſprightly and agreeable; and in moſt parts of Italy they would be eſteemed handſome.—A Neapolitan or a Roman would ſurely pronounce them ſo.—But a Piedmonteſe would declare them very ordinary;—ſo indeed would moſt Engliſhmen.—Nothing ſo vague as our ideas of female beauty: they change in every climate; and the criterion is no where to be found.—

"Aſk where's the North?—at York, 'tis on the Tweed,
"In Scotland at the Orcades, and there,
"At Nova Zembla, or the Lord knows where."

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No two nations,—perhaps no two men, have affixed preciſely the ſame characteriſtics; and every one exalts his idea of it, according to the beauty of the women he is accuſtomed to ſee; ſo that even the ſame perſon may ſometimes appear beautiful, ſometimes ugly, juſt in proportion as we have ſeen others that are more or leſs ſo.—I remember, after making the tour of Savoy and the Lower Valais, every woman we met in Switzerland appeared an angel. The ſame thing happens in travelling through ſome parts of Germany; and you will eaſily recollect the ſurpriſing difference betwixt a beauty at Milan and one at Turin, although theſe places lie adjacent to each other.—It is a pity that the Juno of Zeuxis has been loſt, if it were no more than to have ſhewn us the notion the antients had of a perfect beauty. Indeed, the Venus of Medicis has been conſidered as a model of perfection,—but it is ſurely abſurd;—for

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who ever heard of a perfect beauty of five feet high!—the very idea is ridiculous; and whatever figure her goddeſship might make amongſt the ancient divinities, in the pantheon at Rome, I am afraid ſhe would cut but a ſorry one amongſt the modern ones, in that of London.—In ſhort, I believe we may ſafely conclude, that beauty is a relative quality, and the *To kalon* is no longer the ſame, no more in a phyſical than a moral ſenſe, in any two places on the globe.

The ladies here have remarkable fine hair, and they underſtand how to dreſs and adorn it to the greateſt advantage. It is now only uſed as an embelliſhment; but in former times we are told, that, like that of Sampſon, it was found to be the ſtrength and protection of their country.—There is a paradox for you, that all the wiſe men of the Eaſt could hardly ſolve.—Their hiſtorians relate, (in whoſe reign I believe is rather

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rather dubious) that this city had ſuffered a long ſiege from the Saracens, and was greatly reduced by famine; but, what diſtreſſed them ſtill more, there were no materials to be found for making bowſtrings, and they were on the point of ſurrendering.—In this dilemma, a patriotic dame ſtepped forth, and propoſed to the women, that the whole of them ſhould cut off their hair, and twiſt it into bowſtrings: This was immediately complied with.—The heroiſm of the women, you know, muſt ever excite that of the men.—The beſieged, animated by this gallant ſacrifice of the fair, renewed their defence with ſuch vigour, that the aſſailants were beat off; and a reinforcement ſoon after arriving, the city was ſaved.—The ladies ſtill value themſelves on this ſtory, which you may believe has not been forgotten by their bards.—"The hair of our ladies (ſays one of their "quaint poets) is ſtill employed in the "ſame office; but now it diſcharges no

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" other ſhafts but thoſe of Cupid; and the " only cords it forms are the cords of " love."

The Sicilians are much fonder of ſtudy than their neighbours on the continent; and their education is much more attended to. We were a good deal ſurpriſed to find, that inſtead of that frivolity and nothingneſs, which ſo often conſtitute the converſation of the Italian nobility, here their delight was to talk on ſubjects of literature, of hiſtory, of politics, but chiefly of poetry; for the other branches of knowlege and ſcience are only general: this is the only one that may be ſaid to be univerſal. Every perſon, in ſome period of his life, is ſure to be inſpired; and a lover is never believed ſo long as he can ſpeak of his paſſion in proſe; and, contrary to our way of reaſoning, is only reckoned true in proportion as he is poetical. Thus, inſpiration,

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ration, you ſee, has here become the teſt of truth.

We were aſtoniſhed on our firſt arrival at Palermo, to hear ourſelves addreſſed in Engliſh by ſome of the young nobility; but ſtill more ſo, to find them intimately acquainted with many of our celebrated poets and philoſophers.—Milton, Shakeſpeare, Dryden, Pope, Bacon, Bolingbroke we found in ſeveral libraries, not in the tranſlation, but generally in the beſt editions of the original.

Our language, indeed, has become ſo much in vogue, that it is now looked upon as no immaterial part of a polite education: the viceroy, the Marquis Fogliano, a man of great merit and humanity, has made ſome of our authors his favourite ſtudy, and greatly encourages the progreſs it is making in his kingdom. Many of

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of the nobility ſpeak it a little; and ſome of them even with eaſe and fluency, although they have never been out of their iſland. The Marquis Natali, the Counts Statela and Buſchemi, the Duke of St. Micheli, &c.; in whoſe company we have enjoyed a great deal of pleaſure, and whoſe knowlege and erudition is the leaſt part of their praiſe. Adieu.

Your's, &c.

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LETTER XXXVI.

Palermo, July 28th.

I HAD almoſt forgot to ſay any thing of the opera:—It would have been very ungrateful, for we have been much delighted with it. The firſt and ſecond man, are both admirable ſingers, and I make no doubt you will have them in London in a few years; neither of them are as yet known, and I dare ſay at preſent they might be engaged for a very moderate price; but in Italy they will ſoon be taught to eſtimate their value.—The name of the firſt is Pacherotti; he is very young, and an entire ſtranger in the muſical world; yet I am perſuaded, that after he has been heard on the different theatres in Italy, he will be eſteemed one of their capital performers. His excellence is the pathetic, at preſent

too

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too much neglected on moſt theatres; and indeed, I think, he gives more expreſſion to his *cantabile* airs, and makes his hearers feel more, becauſe he feels more himſelf, than any that I have ſeen in Italy. He indeed addreſſes himſelf to the heart, while moſt of the modern performers ſing only to the fancy.

The firſt woman is Gabrieli; who is certainly the greateſt ſinger in the world: and thoſe that ſing on the ſame theatre with her, muſt be capital, otherwiſe they never can be attended to. This indeed has been the fate of all the other performers, except Pacherotti; and he too gave himſelf up for loſt, on hearing her firſt performance.—It happened to be an air of execution, exactly adapted to her voice, which ſhe exerted in ſo aſtoniſhing a manner, that before it was half done, poor Pacherotti burſt out a crying, and ran in behind the ſcenes; lamenting that he had

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had dared to appear on the ſame ſtage with ſo wonderful a ſinger; where his ſmall talents muſt not only be loſt, but where he muſt ever be accuſed of a preſumption, which he hoped was foreign to his character.

It was with ſome difficulty they could prevail on him to appear again, but from an applauſe well merited, both from his talents and his modeſty, he ſoon began to pluck up a little courage; and in the ſinging of a tender air, addreſſed to Gabrieli in the character of a lover, even ſhe herſelf, as well as the audience, is ſaid to have been moved.

Indeed, in theſe very pathetic pieces, I am ſurpriſed that the power of the muſic does not ſometimes altogether overcome the deluſion of character; for when you are maſter of the language, and allow the united power of the poetry, the action, and

the

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the muſic, to have its full force on the mind, the effect is wonderfully great.—However I have never heard that this happened completely but once; and it was no leſs a ſinger than Farinelli that produced it.—He appeared in the character of a young captive hero, and in a tender air was ſoliciting mercy for his miſtreſs and himſelf, of a ſtern and cruel tyrant who had made them his priſoners. The perſon that acted the tyrant was ſo perfectly overcome by the melting ſtrains of Farinelli, that inſtead of refuſing his requeſt as he ought to have done, he entirely forgot his character, burſt into tears, and caught him in his arms.

The performance of Gabrieli is ſo generally known and admired, that it is needleſs to ſay any thing to you on that ſubject. Her wonderful execution and volubility of voice have long been the admiration of Italy, and has even obliged them to invent a new term to expreſs it; and

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would ſhe exert herſelf as much to pleaſe as to aſtoniſh, ſhe might almoſt perform the wonders that have been aſcribed to Orpheus and Timotheus; but it happens, luckily perhaps for the repoſe of mankind, that her caprice is, if poſſible, even greater than her talents, and has made her ſtill more contemptible than theſe have made her celebrated. By this means, her character has often proved a ſufficient antidote, both to the charms of her voice and thoſe of her perſon, which are indeed almoſt equally powerful; but if theſe had been united to the qualities of a modeſt and an amiable mind, ſhe muſt have made dreadful havoc in the world. However, with all her faults, ſhe is certainly the moſt dangerous ſyren of modern times, and has made more conqueſts, I ſuppoſe, than any one woman breathing.

It is but juſtice to add, that contrary to the generality of her profeſſion, ſhe is by no means

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means ſelfiſh or mercenary; but on the contrary, has given many ſingular proofs of generoſity and diſintereſtedneſs. She is very rich; from the bounty, as is ſuppoſed, of the laſt emperor, who was fond of having her at Vienna; but ſhe was at laſt baniſhed that city, as ſhe has likewiſe been moſt of thoſe in Italy, from the broils and ſquabbles that her intriguing ſpirit, perhaps ſtill more than her beauty, had excited. There are a great many anecdotes concerning her, that would not make an unentertaining volume; and, I am told, either are, or will ſoon be publiſhed.

Although ſhe is conſiderably upwards of thirty, on the ſtage ſhe ſcarcely appears to be eighteen; and this art of appearing young, is none of the moſt contemptible that ſhe poſſeſſes.—When ſhe is in good humour, and really chuſes to exert herſelf, there is nothing in muſic that I have ever

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heard, to be compared to her performance; for ſhe ſings to the heart as well as the fancy, when ſhe pleaſes; and ſhe then commands every paſſion with unbounded ſway. But ſhe is ſeldom capable of exerciſing theſe wonderful powers; and her caprice and her talents exerting themſelves by turns, have given her, all her life, the ſingular fate of becoming alternately an object of admiration and of contempt.

Her powers in acting and reciting, are ſcarcely inferior to thoſe of her ſinging; ſometimes, a few words in the recitative, with a ſimple accompaniment only, produces an effect, that I have never been ſenſible of from any other performer; and inclines me to believe what Rouſſeau advances on this branch of muſic, which with us is ſo much deſpiſed. She owes much of her merit to the inſtructions ſhe received from Meteſtaſio, particularly in acting and reciting;

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ing; and he allows that ſhe does more juſtice to his operas than any other actreſs that ever attempted them.

Her caprice is ſo fixed and ſo ſtubborn, that neither intereſt, nor flattery, nor threats, nor puniſhments, have the leaſt power over it; and it appears, that treating her with reſpect or contempt, have an equal tendency to increaſe it.

It is ſeldom that ſhe condeſcends to exert theſe wonderful talents; but moſt particularly if ſhe imagines that ſuch an exertion is expected. And inſtead of ſinging her airs as other actreſſes do, for the moſt part ſhe only hums them over, *a mezza voce*. And no art whatever is capable of making her ſing when ſhe does not chuſe it.

The moſt ſucceſsful expedient has ever been found, to prevail on her favourite lover, for ſhe always has one, to place him-

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ſelf in the center of the pit, or the front box; and if they are on good terms, which is ſeldom the caſe, ſhe will addreſs her tender airs to him, and exert herſelf to the utmoſt.—Her preſent enamorato promiſed to give us this ſpecimen of his power over her; he took his place accordingly; but Gabrieli, probably ſuſpecting the connivance, would take no notice of him; ſo that even this expedient does not always ſucceed.

The viceroy, who is fond of muſic, has tried every method with her to no purpoſe. Sometime ago he gave a great dinner to the principal nobility of Palermo, and ſent an invitation to Gabrieli to be of the party. Every other perſon arrived at the hour of invitation. The viceroy ordered dinner to be kept back, and ſent to let her know that the company waited her. The meſſenger found her reading in bed;—ſhe ſaid ſhe was ſorry for having made the company wait,

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wait, and begged he would make her apology, but that really ſhe had entirely forgot her engagement.

The viceroy would have forgiven this piece of inſolence, but, when the company came to the opera, Gabrieli repeated her part with the moſt perfect negligence and indifference, and ſung all her airs in what they call *ſotto voce*, that is, ſo low, that they can ſcarcely be heard. The viceroy was offended; but as he is a good-tempered man, he was loth to make uſe of authority; but at laſt, by a perſeverance in this inſolent ſtubbornneſs, ſhe obliged him to threaten her with puniſhment in caſe ſhe any longer refuſed to ſing.

On this ſhe grew more obſtinate than ever, declaring that force and authority ſhould never ſucceed with her; that he might make her cry, but that he never could make her ſing. The viceroy then

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ſent her to priſon, where ſhe remained twelve days. During which time, ſhe gave magnificent entertainments every day; paid the debts of all the poor priſoners, and diſtributed large ſums in charity. The viceroy was obliged to give up ſtruggling with her, and ſhe was at laſt ſet at liberty amidſt the acclamations of the poor.—Luckily for us, ſhe is at preſent in good humour, and ſometimes exerts herſelf to the utmoſt of her power.

She ſays ſhe has ſeveral times been on terms with the managers of our opera, but thinks ſhe ſhall never be able to pluck up reſolution enough to go to England. What do you think is her reaſon?—It is by no means a bad one. She ſays ſhe cannot command her caprice; but, for the moſt part, that it commands her; and that there, ſhe could have no opportunity of indulging it:—For, ſays ſhe, were I to take it into my head not to ſing, I am told the people

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people there would certainly mob me, and perhaps break my bones;—now I like to ſleep in a ſound ſkin, although it ſhould even be in a priſon.—She alleges too that it is not always caprice that prevents her from ſinging; but that it often depends upon phyſical cauſes; and this indeed I can readily believe: for that wonderful flexibility of voice that runs with ſuch rapidity and neatneſs through the moſt minute diviſions, and produces almoſt inſtantaneouſly ſo great a variety of modulation, muſt ſurely depend on the very niceſt tone of the fibres. And if theſe are in the ſmalleſt degree relaxed, or their elaſticity diminiſhed; how is it poſſible that their contractions and expanſions can ſo readily obey the will, as to produce theſe effects?—The opening of the glottis which forms the voice is extremely ſmall, and in every variety of tone, its diameter muſt ſuffer a ſenſible change; for the ſame diameter muſt ever produce the ſame tone:—So wonderfully minute

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minute are its contractions and dilatations, that Dr. Keil, I think, computes, that in ſome voices, its opening, not more than the tenth of an inch, is divided into upwards of 1200 parts, the different ſound of every one of which is perceptible to an exact ear. Now, what a nice tenſion of fibres muſt this require!—I ſhould imagine every the moſt minute change in the air, muſt cauſe a ſenſible difference, and that in our foggy climate the fibres would be in danger of loſing this wonderful ſenſibility; or at leaſt, that they would very often be put out of tune. It is not the ſame caſe with an ordinary voice; where the variety of diviſions run through, and the volubility with which they are executed, bear no proportion to thoſe of a Gabrieli.

One of the ballets of our opera, is a repreſentation of Vauxhall gardens, and this is the third time I have ſeen Vauxhall brought upon the Italian theatre; at Turin,

at

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at Naples, and here. The gardens are well repreſented, and the idea muſt have been given by ſome perſon that had been on the ſpot. A variety of good Engliſh figures are brought in: ſome with large frizzled wigs ſticking half a yard out behind their necks; ſome with little cut ſcratches, that look extremely ridiculous. Some come in cracking their whips, with buckſkin breeches and jockey caps. Some are armed with great oaken ſticks; their hair tied up in enormous clubs, and ſtocks that ſwell their necks to double its natural ſize. But what affords the principal part of the entertainment is, three quakers who are duped by three ladies of the town, in concert with three jack tars, their lovers.—Theſe characters, as you may believe, are much exaggerated, though, upon the whole, they are ſupported with humour, and have afforded us a good deal of laughing; however, we were hurt to ſee the reſpectable

character

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character of quakers turned into ſuch ridicule; and as the people here were altogether unacquainted with it, we have been at ſome pains to explain to them the ſimplicity and purity of their manners, and the incorruptible integrity of their principles.

Although the Sicilians in general are a good ſort of people, and ſeem to be endowed with a large ſhare of philanthropy and urbanity; yet it muſt be owned they have no great affection for their neighbours on the continent; and indeed the diſlike is altogether reciprocal.—It is ſomewhat ſingular; I am afraid not much for the honour of human nature; that through all Europe, the two neighbouring nations have a perpetual jarring with each other.—I could heartily wiſh that we had been an exception from this rule; but am ſorry to ſee, from our news-papers, which are ſent to the

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the nobility of this city, that at preſent we are rather the moſt diſtinguiſhed for it; at leaſt our animoſities, if there really are any, make by much the greateſt noiſe of all.—We have often been aſked by foreigners what was the ground of the mighty quarrel, that ſuch torrents of the moſt illiberal abuſe have been poured out by a people ſo celebrated for liberality of ſentiment; and it is with difficulty we can perſuade them, that although from the papers, this ſometimes appears to be the voice of the nation, yet in fact, it is only confined to a ſet of the moſt worthleſs and deſpicable incendiaries; like him who ſet the houſe in a flame, on purpoſe to pilfer during the conflagration.—But the abuſe that is levelled at the king, ſurpriſes them more than all the reſt; and you cannot conceive their amazement and indignation when we aſſured them, that notwithſtanding all this, he was the moſt virtuous

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tuous and benevolent prince on earth.—Then, exclaimed a Sicilian nobleman, you muſt certainly be the moſt damnable people on the globe.—I was a good deal ſtruck with the ſuddenneſs of the charge; and it was not without many explanations of the liberty of our conſtitution, and particularly that of the preſs, that I could prevail with him to retract his ſentiments; and think more favourably of us.—Still he inſiſted, that ſo egregious an abuſe of this liberty, was only a farther proof of his poſition; and that there muſt be ſomething eſſentially wrong, in a nation that could allow of ſuch abuſe levelled at the moſt ſacred of all characters: the higheſt virtue united to the higheſt ſtation. We aſſured him, that what he heard, was only the voice of the moſt abandoned and profligate wretches in the nation; who, taking advantage of the great freedom of the preſs, had often made theſe news-papers the

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vehicles of the moſt deteſtable ſedition. That both the king and queen were beloved by all their ſubjects, at leaſt by all thoſe of worth;—that they never were ſpoken of, but as the moſt perfect model of conjugal union and happineſs, as well as of every ſocial endowment; and that they could have no enemies, but the enemies of virtue.

However, after all, we could but patch up a peace with him. He could not comprehend (he ſaid) how the voice of a few incendiaries ſhould be louder than the general voice of the nation.—We told him, that people who were pleaſed commonly held their tongue; and that ſedition and libel ever made a greater noiſe than panegyric; juſt as the fire-bell is rung louder, and is more liſtened to than the bell for rejoicing.

Adieu.

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Adieu. Our pilot ſays the wind is not fair, ſo that poſſibly we may ſtill ſtay a day or two longer.

Ever your's.

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LETTER XXXVII.

Palermo, July 29th.

WERE I to enter upon the natural hiſtory of this iſland, it would lead me into a vaſt field of ſpeculation, for which I have neither time nor abilities: However, a variety of objects ſtruck us as we travelled along, that it may not be amiſs to give you ſome little account of.—There are a variety of mineral waters, almoſt through the whole of Sicily. Many of theſe are boiling hot; others ſtill more ſingular, are of a degree of cold ſuperior to that of ice, and yet never freeze.

In ſeveral places, they have fountains that throw up a kind of oil on their ſurface, which is of great uſe to the peaſants, who burn it in their lamps, and uſe it to many

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other purpoſes; but there is ſtill a more remarkable one near Nicoſia which is called *il fonte Canalotto.* It is covered with a thick ſcum of a kind of pitch, which amongſt the country people is eſteemed a ſovereign remedy in rheumatic, and many other complaints.

The water of a ſmall lake near Naſo is celebrated for dying black every thing that is put into it; and this it is ſaid to perform without the mixture of any other ingredient, although the water itſelf is remarkably pure and tranſparent.

They have a variety of ſulphureous baths, like thoſe near Naples, where the patient is thrown into a profuſe ſweat, only from the heat of the vapour. The moſt celebrated are thoſe of Sciaccia, and on the mountain of St. Cologero; not in the neighbourhood of Ætna, as I expected, but

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but at a great diſtance from that mountain. But indeed I am much inclined to believe, that not only mount Ætna, but the greateſt part of Sicily, and almoſt the whole of the circumjacent iſlands, have been originally formed by ſubterraneous fire; but I ſhall have an opportunity of ſpeaking more largely on this ſubject, when I give you an account of the country round Naples.

I have obſerved lava, pumice, and tufa in many parts of Sicily, at a great diſtance from Ætna; and there are a variety both of mountains and valleys that ſtill emit a hot vapour, and produce ſprings of boiling water.

About a mile and a half to the weſt of this city, at a ſmall beach where we often go a ſwimming, there are many ſprings of warm water, that riſe even within the ſea, at the depth of five or ſix feet. We were at firſt a good deal ſurpriſed to find our-

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ſelves almoſt inſtantaneouſly both in the hot and cold bath; for at one ſtroke we commonly paſſed through the hot water, which only extends for a few feet around the ſpring. It gave us a momentary glow, and produced a very odd, uncouth ſenſation, by no means an agreeable one. I mentioned this ſingularity to ſeveral gentlemen here, who tell me they have obſerved the ſame thing.

Not a great way from this is a celebrated fountain, called *Il Mar Dolce*, where there are ſome remains of an ancient naumachia; and in the mountain above it, they ſhew you a cavern, where a gigantic ſkeleton is ſaid to have been found: however, it fell to duſt when they attempted to remove it;—Fazzello ſays, its teeth were the only part that reſiſted the impreſſion of the air; that he procured two of them, and that they weighed near two ounces.—There are many ſuch ſtories

to

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to be met with in the Sicilian legends, as it ſeems to be an univerſal belief, that this iſland was once inhabited by giants; but although we have made diligent enquiry, we have never yet been able to procure a ſight of any of theſe gigantic bones which are ſaid to be ſtill preſerved in many parts of the iſland. Had there been any foundation for this, I think it is probable, they muſt have found their way into ſome of the muſeums; but this is not the caſe; nor indeed have we met with any perſon of ſenſe and credibility that could ſay they had ſeen any of them. We had been aſſured at Naples, that an entire ſkeleton, upwards of ten feet high, was preſerved in the muſeum of Palermo; but there is no ſuch thing there, nor I believe any where elſe in the iſland.—This muſeum is well furniſhed both with antiques and articles of natural hiſtory, but is not ſuperior to what we have ſeen in many other places.

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The number of ſouls in Palermo are computed at about 150,000. Thoſe of the whole iſland, by the laſt numeration, amounted to 1,123,163; of which number there are about 50,000 that belong to the different monaſteries and religious orders. The number of houſes are computed at 268,120, which makes betwixt five and ſix to a houſe.

The great ſtanding commodity of Sicily, which has ever conſtituted the riches of the iſland, was their crops of wheat; but they cultivate many other branches of commerce, though none that could bear any proportion to this, were it under a free government, and exportation allowed. Their method of preſerving their grain will appear ſomewhat ſingular to our farmers: inſtead of expoſing it, as we do, to the open air, they are at the greateſt pains to exclude it entirely from it.—In many places, where the ſoil is dry, particularly near

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near Agrigentum, they have dug large pits or caverns in the rock. Theſe open by a ſmall hole at top, and ſwell to a great width below; here they pour down their grain, after it has been made exceedingly dry; and ramming it hard, they cover up the hole, to protect it from rain; and they aſſure us it will preſerve in this manner for many years.

The Soda is a plant that is much cultivated, and turns out to conſiderable account. This is the vegetable, that by the action of fire, is afterwards converted into mirrors and chryſtals. Great quantities of it are ſent every year to ſupply the glaſs-houſes at Venice.—They have likewiſe a conſiderable trade in liquorice, rice, figs, raiſins, and currants, the beſt of which grow amongſt the extinguiſhed volcanoes of the Lipari Iſlands. Their honey is, I think, the higheſt flavoured I have ever ſeen; in ſome parts of the iſland even

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ſuperior to that of Minorca: this is owing, no doubt, to the quantity of aromatic plants, with which this beautiful country is every where overſpread. This honey is gathered three months in the year; July, Auguſt, and October. It is found by the peaſants in the hollows of trees and rocks; and is eſteemed of a ſuperior quality to that produced under the tyranny of man.—The country of the Leſſer Hybla is ſtill, as formerly, the part of the iſland that is moſt celebrated for honey. The Count Statela made us a preſent of ſome of it, gathered on his brother the Prince of Spaccaforno's eſtate, which lies near the ruins of that city.

Sugar is now no article of the Sicilian commerce, though a ſmall quantity of it is ſtill manufactured for home conſumption; but the plantations of the ſugar-cane, I am told, thrive well in ſeveral parts of the iſland.

The

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The juice of liquorice is prepared both here and in Calabria, and is ſent to the northern countries of Europe, where it is uſed for colds.—The juice is ſqueezed out of the roots; after which it is boiled to a conſiſtency, and formed into cakes, which are packed up with bay-leaves in the ſame order that we receive them.

In ſome of the northern parts of the iſland, I am told, they find the ſhell-fiſh that produces a kind of flax, of which gloves and ſtockings are made; but theſe too are found in greater quantities in Calabria.

Their plantations of oranges, lemons, bergamots, almonds, &c. produce no inconſiderable branch of commerce. The piſtachio-nut too is much cultivated in many parts of the iſland, and with great ſucceſs. Theſe trees, like many others, are

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male and female: the male is called *Scornobecco*, and is always barren; but unleſs a quantity of theſe are mixed in every plantation, the piſtachio-tree never bears a nut.—But of all the variety that is cultivated in Sicily, the manna-tree is eſteemed the moſt profitable; it reſembles the aſh, and is I believe of that ſpecies. About the beginning of Auguſt, during the ſeaſon of the greateſt heat, they make an inciſion in the bark, near to the root of the tree; a thick whitiſh liquor is immediately diſcharged from the wound, which ſoon hardens in the ſun; when it is carefully taken off and gathered into boxes. They renew theſe inciſions every day during the ſeaſon, obſerving, however, only to wound one ſide of the tree; the other ſide they reſerve for the ſummer following.

The cantharides-fly is a Sicilian commodity: it is found on ſeveral trees of Ætna, whoſe

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whoſe juice is ſuppoſed to have a corroſive or abſterſive quality, particularly the pine and the fig-tree; and I am told the cantharides of Mount Ætna are reckoned preferable to thoſe of Spain.

The marbles of Sicily would afford a great ſource of opulence, were there any encouragement to work the quarries: of theſe they have an infinite variety, and of the fineſt ſorts. I have ſeen ſome of them little inferior to the giall and verd antique, that is now ſo precious. The beautiful yellow columns you muſt have obſerved in the royal chapel of Caſſerto are of the firſt kind. They have likewiſe ſome that very much reſemble lapis lazuli and porphyry.

At Centorbi they find a kind of ſoft ſtone that diſſolves in water, and is uſed in waſhing inſtead of ſoap, from which property

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it is called *Pietra Saponaro.* They likewiſe find here, as well as in Calabria, the celebrated ſtone, which, upon being watered and expoſed to a pretty violent degree of heat, produces a plentiful crop of muſhrooms:—But it would be endleſs to give you an account of all the various commodities and curious productions of this iſland; Ætna alone affords a greater number than many of the moſt extenſive kingdoms, and is no leſs an epitome of the whole earth in its ſoil and climate, than in the variety of its productions.—Beſides the corn, the wine, the oil, the ſilk, the ſpice, and delicious fruits of its lower region; the beautiful foreſts, the flocks, the game, the tar, the cork, the honey, of its ſecond; the ſnow and ice of its third; it affords from its caverns a variety of mineral and other productions; cinnabar, mercury, ſulphur, allum, nitre, and vitriol; ſo that this wonderful mountain at the ſame time

produces

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produces every neceſſary, and every luxury of life.

Its firſt region covers their tables with all the delicacies that the earth produces; its ſecond ſupplies them with game, cheeſe, butter, honey; and not only furniſhes wood of every kind for building their ſhips and houſes, but likewiſe an inexhauſtible ſtore of excellent fewel; and as the third region, with its ice and ſnow, keeps them freſh and cool during the heat of ſummer, ſo this contributes equally to keep them warm and comfortable during the cold of winter.

Thus, you ſee, the variety of climates is not confined to Ætna itſelf; but, in obedience to the voice of man, deſcends from that mountain; and, mingling the violence of their extremes, diffuſes the moſt benign influences all over the iſland, tempering each

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each other to moderation, and ſoftening the rigours of every ſeaſon.

We are not then to be ſurpriſed at the obſtinate attachment of the people to this mountain, and that all his terrors have not been able to drive them away from him: for although he ſometimes chaſtiſes; yet, like an indulgent parent, he mixes ſuch bleſſings along with his chaſtiſements, that their affections can never be eſtranged; for at the ſame time that he threatens with a rod of iron, he pours down upon them all the bleſſings of the age of gold.

Adieu.—We are now going to pay our reſpects to the viceroy, and make our farewell viſits.—This ceremony never fails to throw a damp on my ſpirits; but I have ſeldom found it ſo ſtrong as at preſent, there being little or no probability that we ſhall ever ſee again a number of worthy people

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people we are juſt now going to take leave of; or that we ſhall ever have it in our power to make any return for the many civilities we have received from them.

Farewell. The wind we are told is fair, and I ſhall probably be the bearer of this to the continent, from whence you may ſoon expect to hear from, &c.

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LETTER XXXVIII.

Naples, Auguſt 1ſt.

AFTER two days delightful ſailing, we have again arrived in this city; where, to our infinite joy, we have found all the worthy friends we had left behind us. This indeed was neceſſary, to wipe out the impreſſions which the leaving of Sicily had occaſioned. We ſhall ſtill remain here, at leaſt for three months, till the ſeaſon of the *Mal Aria* is entirely over. You know the danger of travelling through the Campania during that ſeaſon; which although it is looked upon by many of our learned doctors as a vulgar error, yet we certainly ſhall not ſubmit ourſelves to the experiment.

We

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We propoſe to paſs the winter at Rome, where we ſhall probably find occupation enough for four or five months.—From thence by Loretto, Bologna, &c. to Venice; the old beaten track.—We ſhall then leave the parched fields of Italy, for the delightful cool mountains of Switzerland; —where liberty and ſimplicity, long ſince baniſhed from poliſhed nations, ſtill flouriſh in their original purity; where the temperature and moderation of the climate, and that of the inhabitants, are mutually emblematical of each other.—For whilſt other nations are ſcorched by the heat of the ſun, and the ſtill more ſcorching heats of tyranny and ſuperſtition; here the genial breezes for ever fan the air, and heighten that alacrity and joy which liberty and innocence alone can inſpire;—here the genial flow of the ſoul has never yet been check'd by the idle and uſeleſs refinements of art; but opens and expands itſelf to all the calls of affection and bene-

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volence.—But I muſt ſtop. You know my old attachment to that primitive country.—It never fails to run away with me. We propoſe then, to make this the ſcene of our ſummer pleaſures; and by that time, I can foreſee, we ſhall be heartily tired of Art, and ſhall begin again to languiſh after Nature. It is ſhe alone that can give any real or laſting pleaſure, and in all our purſuits of happineſs, if ſhe is not our guide, we never can attain our end.

Adieu my dear friend. You have been our faithful companion during this Tour; and have not contributed a little to its pleaſure. If it has afforded equal entertainment to you, we ſhall beg of you ſtill to accompany us through the reſt of our travels. A man muſt have a miſerable imagination indeed, that can be in ſolitude, whilſt he has ſuch friends to converſe with; the conſideration of it ſoon removes the mountains and ſeas that ſeparate us,

and

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and produces these sympathetic feelings, which are the only equivalent for the real absence of a friend; for I never sit down to write, but I see you placed on the opposite side of the table, and suppose that we are just talking over the transactions of the day. And without your presence to animate me, how is it possible that I could have had patience to write these enormous epistles?—Adieu. We are soon going to make some excursions through the kingdom of Naples; and if they produce any thing worthy of your observation, we must beg that you will still submit to be one of the party.

I ever am,

Most sincerely and affectionately, your's,

PAT. BRYDONE.

FINIS.

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