

THE
HISTORY
OF
COLUMBUS,
THE
DISCOVERER OF AMERICA.



EDINBURGH:
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY J. BRYDONE,
SOUTH HANOVER STREET.

HISTORY
OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, the celebrated navigator, and first discoverer of America, was a native of Genoa. Neither the time nor place of his birth is known with certainty; only he was descended of an honourable family, who, by various misfortunes, had been reduced to indigence. His parents were sea-faring people; and Columbus having discovered, in his early youth, a capacity and inclination for that way of life, - was encouraged by them to follow the same profession. At the age of fourteen, he went to sea: his first voyages were to those parts in the Mediterranean frequented by the Genoese; after which he took a voyage to Iceland; and proceeding still further north, advanced several degrees within the polar circle. After this, Columbus entered into the service of a famous sea-captain of his own name and family. This man commanded a small squadron, fitted out at his own expense; and by cruising, sometimes against the Mahometans, and sometimes against the Venetians, the rivals of his country in trade, had acquired wealth and reputation. With him, Columbus continued for several years, no less distinguished for his courage than his experience as a sailor. At

length, in an obstinate engagement, off the coast of Portugal, with some Venetian caravans, returning richly laden from the Low Countries, the vessel on board which he served took fire, together with one of the enemy's ships, to which it was fast grappled. Columbus threw himself into the sea; laid hold of a floating oar, and by the support of it, and his dexterity in swimming, he reached the shore, which was about two leagues distant.

After this disaster, Columbus repaired to Lisbon, where he married a daughter of Bartholomew Perestrello, one of the captains employed by Prince Henry in his early navigations, and who had discovered and planted the islands of Porto Santo and Madeira. Having got possession of the journal and charts of that experienced navigator, Columbus was seized with an irresistible desire of visiting unknown countries. To indulge it, he made a voyage to Madeira, and continued for several years to trade with that island, the Canaries, Azores, the settlements in Guinea, and all the other places which the Portuguese had discovered on the continent of Africa. By the experience acquired in such a number of voyages, Columbus now became one of the most skilful navigators in Europe. At this time, the great object of discovery was a passage by sea to the East Indies. This was attempted, and at last accomplished by the Portuguese, by doubling the Cape of Good Hope. The danger and tediousness of the passage, however, supposing it to be really accomplished, which as yet it was not, set Columbus on considering whether a shorter and more direct passage to these regions might be found out; and, after long consideration, he

became thoroughly convinced, that, by sailing across the Atlantic Ocean, directly towards the west, new countries, which probably formed a part of the vast continent of India, must infallibly be discovered. His conjectures were confirmed by the observations of modern navigators. A Portuguese pilot, having stretched farther to the west than usual, picked up a piece of timber, artificially carved, which was floating on the sea; and as it was driven towards him by a westerly wind, he concluded that it came from some unknown land situated in that quarter. Columbus' brother-in-law had found, to the west of the Madeira Isles, a piece of timber fashioned in the same manner, and brought by the same wind; and had seen also canes of an enormous size floating upon the waves, which resembled those described by Ptolemy, as productions peculiar to the East Indies. After a course of westerly winds, trees torn up by the roots were often driven upon the coast of the Azores; and at one time the dead bodies of two men, with singular features, which resembled neither the inhabitants of Europe nor Africa, were cast ashore there. Even the mistakes of ancient geographers, as to the immense extent of India, as well as various other reasons, contributed to persuade Columbus that the shortest and most direct course to the remote regions of the *east*, was to be found by sailing *due west*.

In the year 1474, Columbus communicated his ingenious theory to Paul, a physician of Florence, eminent for his knowledge of Cosmography. He warmly approved it, and encouraged Columbus in an undertaking so laudable, and which promised so much benefit to the

world. Having fully satisfied himself with respect to the truth of his system, he became impatient to reduce it to practice. The first step towards this was to secure the patronage of some of the European powers. Accordingly, he laid his scheme before the senate of Genoa, making his native country the first offer of his services. They rejected his proposal as the dream of a chimerical projector. He next applied to John II., king of Portugal, a monarch of an enterprising genius, and no incompetent judge of naval affairs. The king listened to him in the most gracious manner, and referred the consideration of his plan to a number of eminent cosmographers, whom he was accustomed to consult in matters of this kind. These men, from mean and interested views, started innumerable objections, and asked many captious questions, on purpose to betray Columbus into a full explanation of his system. Having done this, they advised the king to dispatch a vessel, secretly, in order to attempt the proposed discovery, by following exactly the course which Columbus had pointed out. John, forgetting on this occasion the sentiments becoming a monarch, meanly adopted their perfidious counsel.

Upon discovering this dishonourable transaction, Columbus, with an indignation natural to an ingenuous mind, quitted the kingdom, and landed in Spain in 1484. Here he represented his scheme, in person, to Ferdinand and Isabella, who at that time governed the united kingdoms of Castile and Arragon. They injudiciously submitted it to the examination of unskilful judges, who, ignorant of the principles on which Columbus founded his theory, rejected it

as absurd, upon the credit of a maxim under which the ignorant and indolent, in every age, shelter themselves, "That it is presumptuous in any person to suppose that he alone possesses knowledge superior to all the rest of mankind united." They maintained, likewise, that if there were really any such countries as Columbus pretended, they would not have remained so long concealed; nor would the wisdom and sagacity of former ages have left the glory of this discovery to an obscure Genoese pilot.

Meanwhile, Columbus, who had experienced the uncertain issue of applications to kings, had taken the precaution of sending into England his brother Bartholomew, to whom he had fully communicated his ideas, to negociate the matter with Henry VII. On his voyage to England, he fell into the hands of pirates, who stripped him of every thing, and detained him a prisoner several years. At length, he made his escape, and arrived at London in extreme indigence, where he employed himself some time in selling maps. With his gains, he purchased a decent dress, and in person presented to the king the proposals which his brother had entrusted to his management. Notwithstanding Henry's excessive caution and parsimony, he received the proposals of Columbus with more approbation than any monarch to whom they had been presented. After several unsuccessful applications to other European powers of less note, he was induced, by the entreaty and interposition of Perez, a man of considerable learning, and of some credit with Queen Isabella, to apply again to the Court of Spain. This application, after much warm debate, and several mortifying repulses, proved at last suc-

successful, though not without the most vigorous and persevering exertions of Quintanilla and Santangel, two vigilant and discerning patrons of Columbus, whose meritorious zeal in promoting this grand design entitles their names to an honourable place in history. It was, however, to Queen Isabella, the munificent patroness of his public-spirited enterprise, that Columbus ultimately owed his success.

Having thus obtained the assistance of the court, a squadron of three small vessels was fitted out, victualled for twelve months, and furnished with ninety men. The whole expense did not exceed £4000. Of this small squadron, Columbus was appointed admiral. The chief articles of his treaty with Ferdinand and Isabella were signed April 17, 1492. These were, that Columbus should be constituted high admiral in the seas, islands, and continent he should discover, with the same powers and prerogatives that belonged to the high admiral of Castile within the limits of his jurisdiction. He was also appointed viceroy in all those countries to be discovered; and the tenth of the products accruing from their productions and commerce was granted to him for ever. All controversies or law-suits with respect to mercantile transactions were to be determined by the sole authority of Columbus, or of judges to be appointed by him. He was also permitted to advance one-eighth part of the expense of the expedition, and of carrying on commerce with the new countries, and was entitled, in return, to an eighth of the profit. But, though the name of Ferdinand was joined with Isabella in this transaction, his distrust of Columbus was still so violent, that he refused

to take any part in the enterprise, as King of Arragon; and as the whole expense of the expedition was to be defrayed by the crown of Castile, Isabella reserved for her subjects of that kingdom an exclusive right to all the benefits which might accrue from its success.

On August 3, 1492, he left Spain in the presence of a crowd of spectators, who united their supplications to heaven for his success. He steered directly for the Canary Islands, where he arrived and refitted, as well as he could, his crazy and ill-appointed fleet. Hence he sailed, September 6th, a due western course into an unknown ocean. Columbus now found a thousand unforeseen hardships to encounter, which demanded all his judgment, fortitude, and address to surmount. Besides the difficulties unavoidable from the nature of his undertaking, he had to struggle with those which arose from the ignorance and timidity of the people under his command. On the 14th of September, he was astonished to find that the magnetic needle in their compass did not point exactly to the polar star, but varied toward the west; and as they proceeded, this variation increased. This new phenomenon, which is now familiar, though the cause remains one of the arcana of nature, filled the companions of Columbus with terror. Nature itself seemed to have sustained a change; and the only guide they had left, to point them to a safe retreat from an unbounded and trackless ocean, was about to fail them. Columbus, with no less quickness than ingenuity, assigned a reason for this appearance, which, though it did not satisfy himself, seemed so plausible to them, that it dispelled their fears, or silenced their murmurs

for some time. The sailors, however, discontented, and alarmed at their distance from land, several times mutinied, and once proposed to throw their admiral overboard. Columbus was now fully sensible of his perilous situation. He had observed, with great uneasiness, the fatal operation of ignorance and of fear in producing disaffection among his crew; and saw that it was now ready to burst out into open mutiny. He retained, however, perfect presence of mind. He affected to seem ignorant of their machinations. Notwithstanding the agitation and solicitude of his own mind, he appeared with a cheerful countenance; like a man satisfied with the progress which he had made, and confident of success. Sometimes he employed all the arts of insinuation to soothe his men.—Sometimes he endeavoured to work upon their ambition or avarice, by magnificent descriptions of the fame and wealth which they were about to acquire. On other occasions, he assumed a tone of authority, and threatened them with vengeance from their sovereign, if, by their dastardly behaviour, they should defeat this noble effort to promote the glory of God, and to exalt the Spanish name above that of every other nation. Even with seditious sailors, the words of a man whom they had been accustomed to reverence were weighty and persuasive; and not only restrained them from those violent excesses which they meditated, but prevailed with them to accompany their admiral for some time longer. As they proceeded, the indications of approaching land seemed to be more certain, and excited hope in proportion. The birds began to appear in flocks, making towards the south-west. Co-

lumbus, in imitation of the Portuguese navigators, who had been guided in several of their discoveries by the motion of birds, altered his course from due west towards that quarter whither they pointed their flight. But after holding on for several days in this new direction, without any better success than formerly, having seen no object during thirty days but the sea and the sky, the hopes of his companions subsided faster than they had risen; their fears revived with additional force; impatience, rage, and despair, appeared in every countenance. All sense of subordination was lost. The officers, who had hitherto concurred with Columbus in opinion, and supported his authority, now took part with the private men. They assembled tumultuously on the deck, expostulated with their commander, mingled threats with their expostulations, and required him instantly to tack about and to return to Europe. Columbus perceived that it would be of no avail to have recourse to any of his former arts, which having been tried so often had lost their effect; and that it was impossible to rekindle any zeal for the success of the expedition among men in whose breasts fear had extinguished every generous sentiment. He saw that it was no less vain to think of employing either gentle or severe measures, to quell a mutiny so general and so violent. It was necessary, on all these accounts, to soothe passions which he could no longer command, and to give way to a torrent too impetuous to be checked. He promised solemnly to his men that he would comply with their request, provided they would accompany him and obey his commands for three days longer; and if, during that time,

land were not discovered, he would then abandon the enterprise, and direct his course back to Spain. Enraged as the sailors were, and impatient to turn their faces again towards their native country, this proposition did not appear to them unreasonable. Nor did Columbus hazard much in confining himself to a term so short.

The presages of discovering land were now so numerous and promising, that he deemed them infallible. For some days, the sounding-line reached the bottom, and the soil which it brought up indicated land to be at no great distance. The flocks of birds increased, and were composed not only of sea-fowl, but of such land-birds as could not be supposed to fly far from the shore. The crew of the *Pinta* observed a cane floating which seemed to be newly cut, and likewise a piece of timber artificially carved. The sailors aboard the *Nigna* took up the branch of a tree with red berries perfectly fresh. The clouds around the setting sun assumed a new appearance; the air was more mild and warm; and, during night, the wind became unequal and variable. From all these symptoms, Columbus was so confident of being near land, that, on the evening of the 11th of October, after public prayers for success, he ordered the sails to be furled, and the ships to lie by, keeping strict watch, lest they should be driven ashore in the night. During this interval of suspense and expectation, no man shut his eyes; all kept upon deck, gazing intently towards that quarter where they expected to discover the land which had been so long the object of their wishes. About two hours before midnight, Columbus, standing on

the fore-castle, observed a light at a distance, and privately pointed it out to Pedro Gutierrez, a page of the queen's wardrobe. Gutierrez perceived it; and calling to Salcedo, comptroller of the fleet, all three saw it in motion, as if it were carried from place to place. At two o'clock next morning, Roderic Triana discovered land, and the joyful sound of *Land! land!* was heard from the Pinta, which kept always a head of the other ships. But having been so often deceived by fallacious appearances, every man was now become slow of belief; and waited, in all the anguish of uncertainty and impatience, for the return of day. As soon as morning dawned, all doubts and fears were dispelled. From every ship an island was seen about two leagues to the north, whose flat and verdant fields, well stored with wood, and watered with many rivulets, presented the aspect of a delightful country. The crew of the Pinta instantly began the *Te Deum*, as a hymn of thanksgiving to God; and were joined by those of the other ships, with tears of joy and transports of congratulation. This office of gratitude to heaven was followed by an act of justice to their commander. They threw themselves at the feet of Columbus, with feelings of self-condemnation mingled with reverence. They implored him to pardon their ignorance, incredulity, and insolence, which had created him so much unnecessary disquiet, and had so often obstructed the prosecution of his well-concerted plan; and passing, in the warmth of their admiration, from one extreme to another, they now pronounced the man, whom they had so lately reviled and threatened, to be a person inspired by heaven with saga-

city and fortitude more than human, in order to accomplish a design so far beyond the ideas and conception of all former ages.

As soon as the sun arose, all their boats were manned and armed. They rowed towards the island with their colours displayed, with warlike music, and other martial pomp. As they approached the coast, they saw it covered with a multitude of people whom the novelty of the spectacle had drawn together, whose attitudes and gestures expressed wonder and astonishment at the strange objects which presented themselves to their view. Columbus was the first European who set foot in the New World which he had discovered. He landed in a rich dress, and with a naked sword in his hand. His men followed; and, kneeling down, they all kissed the ground which they had so long desired to see. They next erected a crucifix; and, prostrating themselves before it, returned thanks to God for conducting their voyage to such an happy issue. This island was one of the Bahama Islands; to which he gave the name of *San Salvador*, and took possession of it in the name of their Catholic Majesties.

The naked and painted natives, when they had recovered from their fright at hearing the discharge of the artillery, regarded the white men, by whose confidence they were soon won, as visitors from the skies which bounded their horizon; they received from them, with the greatest transport, toys and trinkets, fragments of glass and earthenware, as celestial presents possessing a supernatural virtue. They brought, in exchange, cotton-yarn and cassava bread, which, as it keeps longer

than wheaten bread, was highly acceptable to the Spaniards.

On the 24th of October, Columbus set out in quest of gold, which he thought was the only object of commerce worth his attention. After discovering Conception, Exuma, and Isla Larga, Cuba broke on him like an elysium. He next took Hayti, or Santo Domingo, for the ancient Ophir, the source of the riches of Solomon, but he gave it the name of Hispaniola, from its resembling the fairest tracts of Spain. Leaving here the germ of a future colony, he set sail homeward on January 4, 1493. A dreadful storm overtook him on the 12th of February. Columbus, fearing the loss of his discovery more than the loss of life, retired into his cabin, and wrote two copies on parchment of a short account of it. He wrapped them in wax, enclosed them in two separate casks, one of which he threw into the sea, and the other he placed on the poop of his vessel, that it might float in case she should sink. Happily the storm subsided, but another drove him off the mouth of the Tagus on the 4th of March; and although distrustful of the Portuguese, he was constrained to take shelter there. At last, he landed triumphantly at Palos, March 15, 1493. As soon as the ship was discovered approaching, all the inhabitants ran cagerly to the shore, where they received the admiral with royal honours. The court was then at Barcelona, and Columbus immediately acquainted their Majesties of his arrival. They were no less delighted than astonished with this unexpected event. They gave orders for conducting him into the city with all imaginable pomp. In his journey through

Spain, he received princely honours all his way to Barcelona. His entrance here, with some of the natives, and with the arms and utensils of the discovered islands, was a triumph as striking and more glorious than that of a conqueror. Ferdinand and Isabella received him clad in their royal robes, and seated on a throne under a magnificent canopy. When he approached, they stood up; and, raising him as he kneeled to kiss their hands, desired him to take his seat upon a chair prepared for him, and to give a circumstantial account of his voyage. When he had finished his oration, which he delivered with much modesty and simplicity, their Majesties, kneeling down, offered up solemn thanks to God for the discovery. Every possible mark of honour that could be suggested by gratitude or admiration, was conferred on Columbus; the former capitulation was confirmed, his family was ennobled, and a fleet was ordered to be equipped, to enable him to go in quest of those more opulent countries which he still confidently expected to find.

On the 25th of September 1493, Columbus left Cadiz, on a second expedition, with seventeen ships and 1500 men. He discovered the Caribbee Islands, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica; and after repeated mutinies of his colonists, and great hardships, he returned against the trade-winds to Cadiz, June 11, 1496. Having dispelled all the calumnies that had been accumulated upon him, Columbus embarked the 30th of May 1498, at San Lucar de Barra-meda, on a third expedition, with only six vessels. On the 1st of August, he attained the great object of his ambition, by discovering the continent of America, near the mouth of the

Orinoco. He then coasted along westward, making other discoveries for 200 leagues, to Cape Vela, from which he crossed over to Hispaniola, to recruit his health. The dissensions which arose here, the calumnies of miscreants who had been shipped off to Spain, countenanced as they were by envious courtiers at home, the unproductiveness of the new settlement, and regret at having vested such high powers in a subject and a foreigner, who could now be dispensed with, induced Ferdinand, in July 1500, to dispatch Francisco de Bovadilla, a knight of Calatrava, to inquire into the conduct of Columbus, with orders, in case he found the charge of maladministration proved, to supersede him, and assume the office of governor of Hispaniola. The consequence of this was, that Columbus was sent to Spain in chains. Valjejo, the officer who had him in charge, and Martin, the master of the caravel, (or light barque, no better than our river and coasting craft,) would have taken his chains off; but Columbus proudly said, "I will wear them till the king orders otherwise, and will preserve them as memorials of his gratitude." He hung them up in his cabinet, and requested that they should be buried in his grave. The general burst of indignation at Cadiz, which was echoed throughout Spain on the arrival of Columbus in fetters, compelled Ferdinand himself to disclaim all knowledge of the shameful transaction. But still the king kept Columbus in attendance for nine months, wasting his time in fruitless solicitations for redress; and at last appointed Nicholas Orando, governor of Hispaniola, in his place.

With restricted powers and a broken frame,

but with his ever-soaring and irrepressible enthusiasm, Columbus sailed from Cadiz, on his fourth voyage, on May 9, 1502, with four caravels and 150 men, in search of a passage to the East Indies near the Isthmus of Darien, which should supersede that of Vasco de Gama. Being denied relief and even shelter at Santo Domingo, he was swept away by the currents to the NW. ; he, however, missed Yucatan and Mexico, and at last reached Truxillo, whence he coasted Honduras, the Mosquito-Shore, Casta Rica, Veragua, as far as the point which he called El Retrete, where the recent westward coasting of Bastides had terminated. But here, on the 5th of December, he gave up his splendid vision, and yielded to the clamorous outbreakings of his crews to return in search of gold to Veragua, a country which he himself mistook for the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients.

The fierce resistance of the natives and the crazy state of his ships forced him, at the close of April 1503, to make the best of his way for Hispaniola, with only two crowded wrecks, which, being incapable of keeping the sea, came, on the 24th day of June, to anchor at Jamáica. After famine and despair had occasioned a series of mutinies and disasters far greater than any that he had yet experienced, he at last arrived, on the 13th of August, at Santo Domingo. Here he exhausted his funds in relieving his crews, extending his generosity even to those who had been most outrageous. Sailing homewards on the 12th of September, he anchored his tempest-tossed and shattered bark at San Lucar, November 7, 1504. From San Lucar he proceeded to Sevilla, where he

soon after received the news of the death of his patroness, Isabella. He was detained by illness till the spring of 1505, when he arrived, wearied and exhausted, at Segovia, to have only another courtly denial of redress, and to linger a year longer in neglect, poverty, and pain, till death gave him relief at Valladolid, on the 20th of May 1506, in the 59th year of his age. He died with a composure of mind suited to the magnanimity which distinguished his character, and with sentiments of piety becoming the sincere respect for religion which he manifested in every occurrence of his life. He was grave though courteous in his deportment, circumspect in his words and actions, irreproachable in his morals, and exemplary in his religious duties. The king was so just to his memory, notwithstanding his ingratitude during his life, that he buried him magnificently in the Cathedral of Seville, and erected a tomb over him with the following inscription :

A CASTILLA Y A LEON
NUEVO MUNDO DIO COLON ;

the meaning of which is—Columbus has given a New World to Castile and Leon.

Although Sebastian Cabot, in the service of Henry VII. of England, discovered Newfoundland and Labrador in June 1497, and Columbus did not touch the American continent till he visited the coast of Paria in August 1498, Columbus, however, first reached Guanahani, and what may properly be denominated the Columbian Archipelago, and was really the discoverer of the New World.

The voyage of Don Antonio Sanchez from the

Canaries to Hayti in 1484, mentioned by the Inca Garcilaso and some other Spanish writers, is regarded as a fable. The accounts, however, of Spaniards and Portuguese who had sailed westward so far as to perceive indications of land, were useful to Columbus, according to his own avowal. Ferdinand and Isabella, in a written declaration of the 4th of August 1494, ascribe the new discoveries to Columbus.

It is only necessary to add, that, among the other adventurers to the New World in pursuit of gold, was Americus Vesputius, a Florentine gentleman, whom Ferdinand had appointed to draw sea-charts, and to whom he had given the name of chief pilot. This man, as a pilot, accompanied Ojeda, an enterprising Spanish gentleman, to America; and having, with much art, and some degree of elegance, drawn up an amusing history of his voyage, he published it to the world. It was circulated rapidly, and was read with admiration. In his narrative, he had insinuated that the glory of having first discovered the continent in the New World belonged to him. This was in part believed, and the country began to be called after the name of its supposed first discoverer. The unaccountable caprice of mankind has perpetuated the error; so that now, by the universal consent of all nations, this new quarter of the world is called AMERICA. Thus, the name of Americus has supplanted that of Columbus; and mankind are left to regret an act of injustice, which, having been sanctioned by time, they can never redress.

AMERICA is universally allowed to be the largest quarter or grand division of the globe, and is

supposed to be surrounded on all sides by the ocean, stretching in an extensive range through every inhabited latitude in the world. It may convey a general idea of its situation, with regard to Europe, to say, that New Britain lies nearly parallel with Great Britain; that Newfoundland, the Bay of St Lawrence, and Cape Broton, lie opposite to France; Nova Scotia and New England are on a parallel with the Bay of Biscay; and New York and Pennsylvania are opposite to Spain and Portugal.

This vast continent is washed by the two great oceans; being bounded on the E. by the Atlantic, which divides it from Europe and Africa; and on the W. by the Pacific, or Great South Sea, which separates it from Asia. It extends from Cape Horn, its most southern extremity, in latitude 56° S. to the North Pole; and spreads between the 40th degree E. and the 100th W. longitude from Philadelphia; and from the 35th to the 136th degree W. longitude from London. It is nearly 10,000 miles in length from N. to S. Its average breadth, from E. to W., is about 1400 or 1500 miles; but at its broadest part it measures 3690 miles. This extensive continent lies between the Pacific Ocean on the W., and the Atlantic on the E. It is said to contain upwards of 14,000,000 square miles.

As America lies in both hemispheres, it possesses all the varieties of soil, climate, and productions, which the earth affords. It stretches through all the five zones, and has two summers as well as two winters in the year. The most remarkable difference between the New and Old World, is the general predominance of cold throughout the whole extent of Ame-

rica, for which various causes have been assigned. The following is the opinion of the late learned Dr Robertson on this subject:—“Though the utmost extent of America towards the north be not yet discovered, we know that it advances nearer to the pole than either Europe or Asia. The latter have large seas to the north, which are open during part of the year; and, even when covered with ice, the wind that blows over them is less intensely cold than that which blows over land in the same latitudes. But, in America, the land stretches from the river St Lawrence towards the pole, and spreads out immensely to the west. A chain of enormous mountains, covered with snow and ice, runs through all this dreary region. The wind, passing over such an extent of high and frozen land, becomes so impregnated with cold, that it acquires a piercing keenness, which it retains in its progress through warmer climates; and is not entirely mitigated, until it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Over all the continent of North America, a north-westerly wind and excessive cold are synonymous terms.—Even in the most sultry weather, the moment that the wind veers to that quarter, its penetrating influence is felt in a transition from heat to cold no less violent than sudden. To this powerful cause we may ascribe the extraordinary dominion of cold, and its violent inroads into the southern provinces in that part of the globe. Other causes, no less remarkable, diminish the active power of heat in those parts of the American continent which lie between the tropics. In all that portion of the globe, the wind blows in an invariable direction from E. to W. As this wind

holds its course along the ancient continent, it arrives at the countries which stretch along the western shore of Africa, inflamed with all the fiery particles which it hath collected from the sultry plains of Asia, and the burning sands in the African deserts. The coast of Africa is accordingly the region of the earth which feels the most fervent heat, and is exposed to the unmitigated ardour of the torrid zone. But this same wind, which brings such an accession of warmth to the countries lying between the river of Senegal and Caffraria, traverses the Atlantic Ocean before it reaches the American shore. It is cooled in its passage over this vast body of water; and is felt as a refreshing gale along the coasts of Brazil and Guiana, rendering those countries, though amongst the warmest in America, temperate, when compared with those which lie opposite to them in Africa. As this wind advances in its course across America, it meets with immense plains covered with impenetrable forests; or occupied by large rivers, marshes, and stagnating waters, where it can recover no considerable degree of heat. At length, it arrives at the Andes, which run from N. to S. through the whole continent. In passing over their elevated and frozen summits, it is so thoroughly cooled, that the greater part of the countries beyond them hardly feel the ardour to which they seem exposed by their situation. In the other provinces of America, from Terra Firma westward to the Mexican Empire, the heat of the climate is tempered, in some places, by the elevation of the land above the sea; in others, by their extraordinary humidity; and in all, by the enormous mountains scattered over this tract. The

islands of America, in the torrid zone, are either small or mountainous, and are fanned alternately by refreshing sea and land breezes. The causes of the extraordinary cold towards the southern limits of America, and in the seas beyond it, cannot be ascertained in a manner equally satisfying. The most obvious and probable cause of this superior degree of cold towards the southern extremity of America, seems to be the form of the continent there. Its breadth gradually decreases as it stretches from St Antonio southwards, and from the Bay of St Julian to the Straits of Magellan, its dimensions are much contracted. From its southern point, it is probable that an open sea stretches to the antarctic pole. In whichever of these directions the wind blows, it is cooled before it approaches the Magellanic regions, by passing over a vast body of water; nor is the land there of such extent, that it can recover any considerable degree of heat in its progress over it. These circumstances concur in rendering the temperature of the air in this district of America, more similar to that of an insular than to that of a continental climate; and hinder it from acquiring the same degree of summer heat, with places in Europe and Asia, in a corresponding northern latitude. The north wind is the only one that reaches this part of America, after blowing over a great continent. But, from an attentive survey of its position, this will be found to have a tendency rather to diminish than augment the degree of heat. The southern extremity of America is properly the termination of the immense ridge of the Andes, which stretches nearly in a direct line from north to south,

through the whole extent of the continent. The most sultry regions in South America, Guiana, Brazil, Paraguay, and Tucuman, lie many degrees to the east of the Magellanic regions.—The level country of Peru, which enjoys the tropical heats, is situated considerably to the west of them. The north wind, then, though it blows over land, does not bring, to the southern extremity of America, an increase of heat, collected in its passage over torrid regions; but, before it arrives there, it must have swept along the summit of the Andes, and come impregnated with the cold of that frozen region.” Another peculiarity in the climate of America, is its excessive moisture. In some places, indeed, on the western coast, rain is not known; but, in all other parts, the moistness of the climate is as remarkable as the cold. The most prevalent cause is the vast quantity of water in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, with which America is environed on all sides. Hence, those places where the continent is narrowest are deluged with almost perpetual rains, accompanied with violent thunder and lightning, by which some of them, particularly Porto Bello, are rendered in a manner uninhabitable. This extreme moisture of the American climate is productive of much larger rivers there than in any other part of the world. The Danube, the Nile, the Indus, or the Ganges, are not comparable to the Mississippi, the river St Lawrence, or that of the Amazons; nor are such lakes to be found any where as those which North America affords. To the same cause we ascribe the excessive luxuriance of all kinds of vegetables in almost all parts of this country.