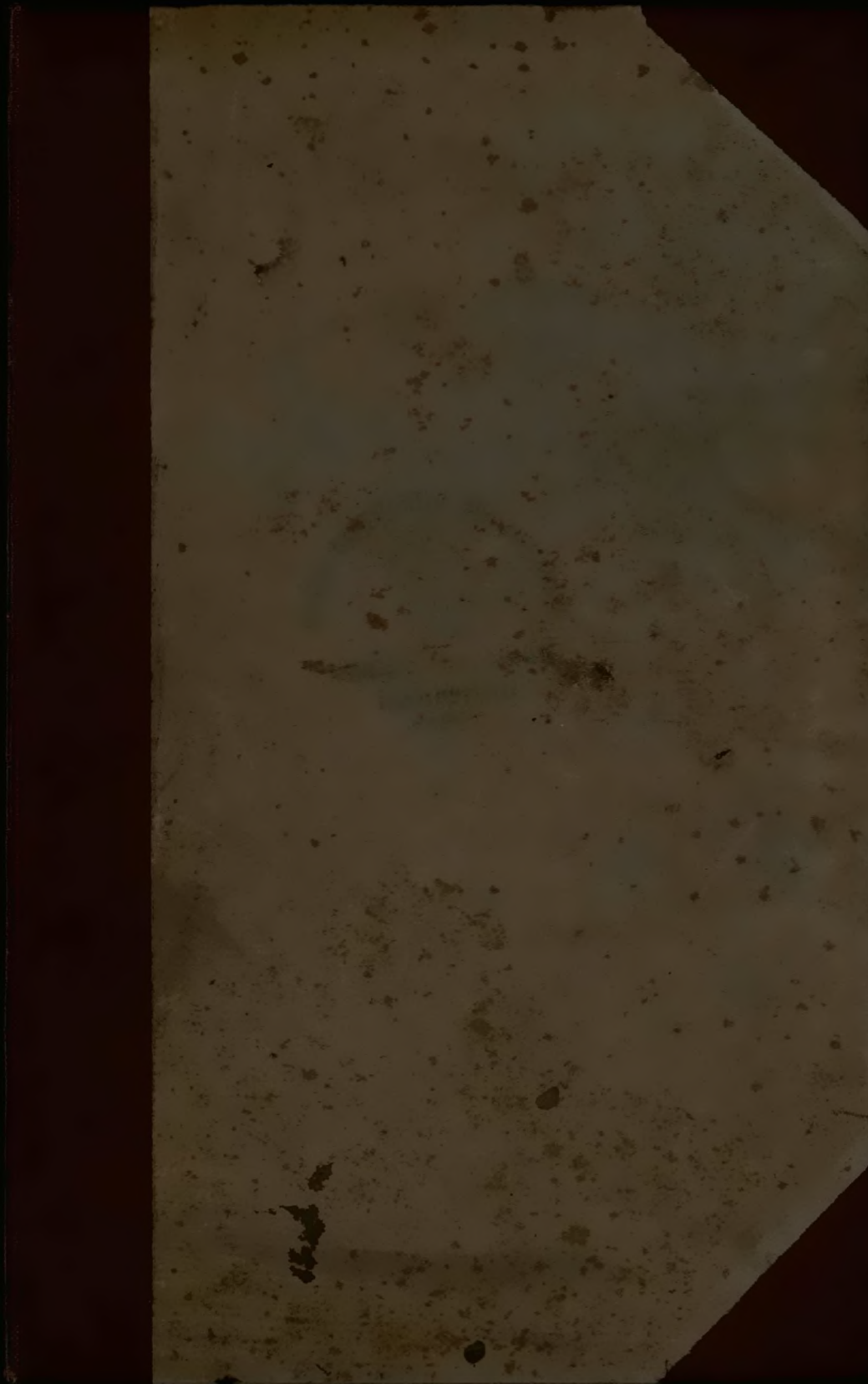




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Alas! your beams are vanish'd from the plain,
As with'ring flow'rets fade in winter's iron reign.

* * * * *
Yet still I turn with anxious eye to view
Where youth's calm joys to ripen'd man-
hood grew;
Still with delight behold that ancient vine,
Whose tendrils round the well-known case-
ment twine;
And those tall lilacs flow'ring near the door,
Where oft I trod, but enter there no more!

ACCOUNT of the PORT and TOWN of [MONTE VIDEO, in PARAGUAY.

(*With a View, elegantly engraved.*)

(*From 'Letters from Paraguay,' by John
Constance Davie, Esq.*)

[The late glorious success of the British arms, in the conquest of Buenos Ayres, the capital of Paraguay, by the forces under the command of general Beresford and sir Home Popham, has induced us to give some further extracts from Mr. Davie's judicious letters, which are the latest account of travels in that country.—For a description of Buenos Ayres, the character of the inhabitants, &c. from the same work, see our Magazine for February.]

*Monte Video, on the banks of
La Plata, Jan. 1795.*

IF I surprised you in my last with the intelligence of my new occupation, how shall I astonish you when you perceive from whence this is dated! but it will serve to confirm the old proverb, 'What man appoints, God disappoints.' When I closed my last I was fully persuaded my next letter would be dated from the coast of New South Wales; but I was fated to return to America, though not that part of it I had last inhabited. I shall most assuredly

commence fatalist; for many events of my life, and this not the least, have induced me at times to think that a superior power guides and directs every action and design of man: or in default of this position I shall believe in the power of inferior agents, who are permitted, for some great and wise purpose, to counteract and subvert the intentions of individuals. This latter hypothesis seems most agreeable to my ideas of the Divinity, but I doubt whether it will appear so to you.

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



Merigot sculp.

MONTE VIDEO.

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

This was no sooner decided on than put in practice. The wind, happily for us, a little subsided; and we steered for the largest river in the world, which we were fortunate enough to reach without any fresh disaster.

The accounts which we read of the Plata, so far from being exaggerated, barely convey an adequate idea of its immensity; though I now find that its depth is by no means proportioned to its length and breadth. When we arrived at the mouth of the river—of which if I had not been told I should never

have imagined it—I began to thank God that our perils were over; but I soon found that new ones awaited us, owing to the vast banks of sand dispersed in every direction. At our entrance, under something more than a brisk gale, it was as much as all hands could do to steer the vessel clear of a most dangerous shoal called the English bank, a place as much dreaded in those parts as the rocks of Scilly or the Goodwin Sands in our vicinity; and we had scarcely passed it in safety when we struck upon a smaller one, and thus we continued, for want of a pilot, to run off one sand and on another, shaking, jumbling, working and cursing, for near thirty leagues, with boats a-head sounding the whole of the course which we had to traverse before we could reach a place where we could hope for any assistance: however, by the help of a fresh breeze and constant watching, we made shift in four days to anchor in this harbour. Monte Video is the first port of safety in this wonderful river: it is situated at the foot of a conical mountain of a stupendous height, which serves as a land-mark, for another mountain there is not in a vast tract of country, many hundred miles in extent; and the river, even here, is so wide as to appear to an inexperienced person more in the resemblance of a sea.

We found in this port two Portuguese merchant vessels, three French, and two privateers; which last had, like ourselves, been forced in by stress of weather. On a signal being made by our captain, the commander of the fort sent off a boat with three Spaniards in her to examine our papers; with which being satisfied, we were permitted to enter the harbour, and we immediately received every necessary assistance. It was evening when we arrived; and the next morning captain H—— and we

three passengers went ashore. Myself being an Englishman, and presently known as such, I observed an eye of suspicion glance on me which way soever I turned myself. But this I cared not for; being resolved, since my destiny had landed me in Spanish America, to see as much of their town as I possibly could: though, God knows, besides the river and the mountain there is but little to excite a traveller's curiosity. The fort seems to be the only object on which any attention has been bestowed; it is large, handsomely built, and consists of four bastions, on which are apparently very good brass cannon. Another bastion is begun on the land-side, and when that is finished the fosse is to be extended a much longer way than at present on terra firma. I have not much opinion of the strength of this fort, or the force that might be collected to withstand any determined attack of the British arms. It may, and I doubt not would, resist any effort of the Portuguese or native Indians; but they would not find it so easy a matter to repulse a select body of English soldiers and sailors, determined upon conquest.

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

The country round has nothing interesting; being, I am told, one continued plain every way for many hundreds of miles; and must, therefore, appear with peculiar disadvantage to me, who have been so

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

I am no draftsman; but I have taken a view of Monte Video from the most favourable spot I could select, and remit it for your edification. I am only sorry the subject is not more engaging.

Captain H—— requested permission to lodge us in the house of a wine-merchant whom he had known at the Canaries, which place his friend left about two years since, to settle at Monte Video. The

request was granted, and I was received with great hospitality. My not understanding the Spanish language was rather an awkward circumstance: but the Canarian, though he did not understand English, had a smattering of French, and contrived to make us comprehend that we should all be treated as part of his family. He has a wife, and two daughters, sprightly lasses both: but our communication is all in dumb shew; very agreeable though, for all that.

We had not been settled above an hour when an order came for the three passengers to attend the governor. We immediately complied, and were conducted thither by a guard of one subaltern and six soldiers, all very slovenly accoutred, and distinguished by nothing but the extraordinary length of their swords and whiskers, and a most ludicrous affectation of majestic gravity. We found the governor, don Blas D'Hinojosa, taking a refreshment of fruit and coffee, attended by two negroes: he arose as we entered, and, slightly bowing in a very stately manner, immediately reseated himself, and gave some orders to one of the slaves, who left the apartment; and presently returned with two Spanish gentlemen and an officer very splendidly dressed, who, I observed, regarded me, during the whole time I remained in the apartment, with a stern and scrutinising eye. After a short conversation with the governor, one of the gentlemen, in tolerable English, asked us several questions; as, who we were—whither we were going when we left New York—and what had occasioned our arrival at Monte Video. As the discourse was chiefly addressed to me, I answered for myself and companions, who were both New Yorkists, and going on a voyage of speculation to Port Jackson. When their

curiosity was satisfied we were permitted to retire, and were conducted back in the same state as we had been brought thither. The governor appeared to be about forty years of age, of a pleasant aspect; and though he assumed a gravity, there was a playfulness about the mouth that indicated it was not natural to him. He is married, I find, and has a son and two daughters; the former is at present at Cordova in the province of Tucuman, where there is a fine college for education. On our return we found a plentiful repast provided by our hospitable host; consisting of new cakes, fruit, coffee, and several sorts of wine. When we had refreshed ourselves, I proposed to my companions that we should walk out to survey the town, and if possible ascend the conical mountain, being desirous to make the most of our short stay, and see as much of their country as possible: but our host, with concern in his countenance, informed me my desire could not be gratified; a Spanish soldier had been stationed at his door, and he had been ordered to consider me only as a prisoner of war during the remainder of my stay at Monte Video. My companions, however, not being Englishmen, were at perfect liberty to go wheresoever they thought proper. I cannot but say that this circumstance greatly chagrined me: not that I felt any great disappointment in not being permitted to go abroad; but I felt like a Briton, and could not digest the idea of coercive confinement. My fellow-passengers, finding that I was thus laid under an embargo, very quietly relinquished the idea of visiting the mountain, being blest with too great a share of American philosophy to feel greatly interested in the beauties of nature; and we set about making ourselves as comfortable as our situation would admit.

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

In our way up the river, I noticed, as we passed, an island that glowed with all the colours of the rainbow, being decked with, I think, every flower that art or nature hath produced in any part of the terrestrial globe. Such a prospect must be extremely grateful to the eye; and the sweet scents they emit when a fresh breeze agitates them, and bears their fragrance towards the land, would induce one to imagine that all the odours of Arabia were transplanted to this beautiful spot, which is with singular propriety called the Isle of Flowers. There is

likewise another island of a very different description in the Plata, which is called the Isle of Wolves, from being inhabited only by those animals; but of that I saw nothing, for I was below deck when we passed it.

[In another part of these letters the author makes the following reflections, which the recent success of our troops has shewn to be perfectly well founded.]

THE dispersion, or rather expulsion, of the crafty Jesuits was become an act of state necessity, since they had established in the very centre of the southern provinces an immense theocracy, which even threatened to overturn, at some future period, the power of the crown, if the various accounts I have received may be relied on; for at the time of their expulsion, they could command, as spiritual guides, several hundred thousand families, and among them no less an army of well-disciplined troops than from eighty to a hundred thousand men, all properly trained, clothed, and accoutred, and ready to follow wherever their pastors should think fit to lead them.

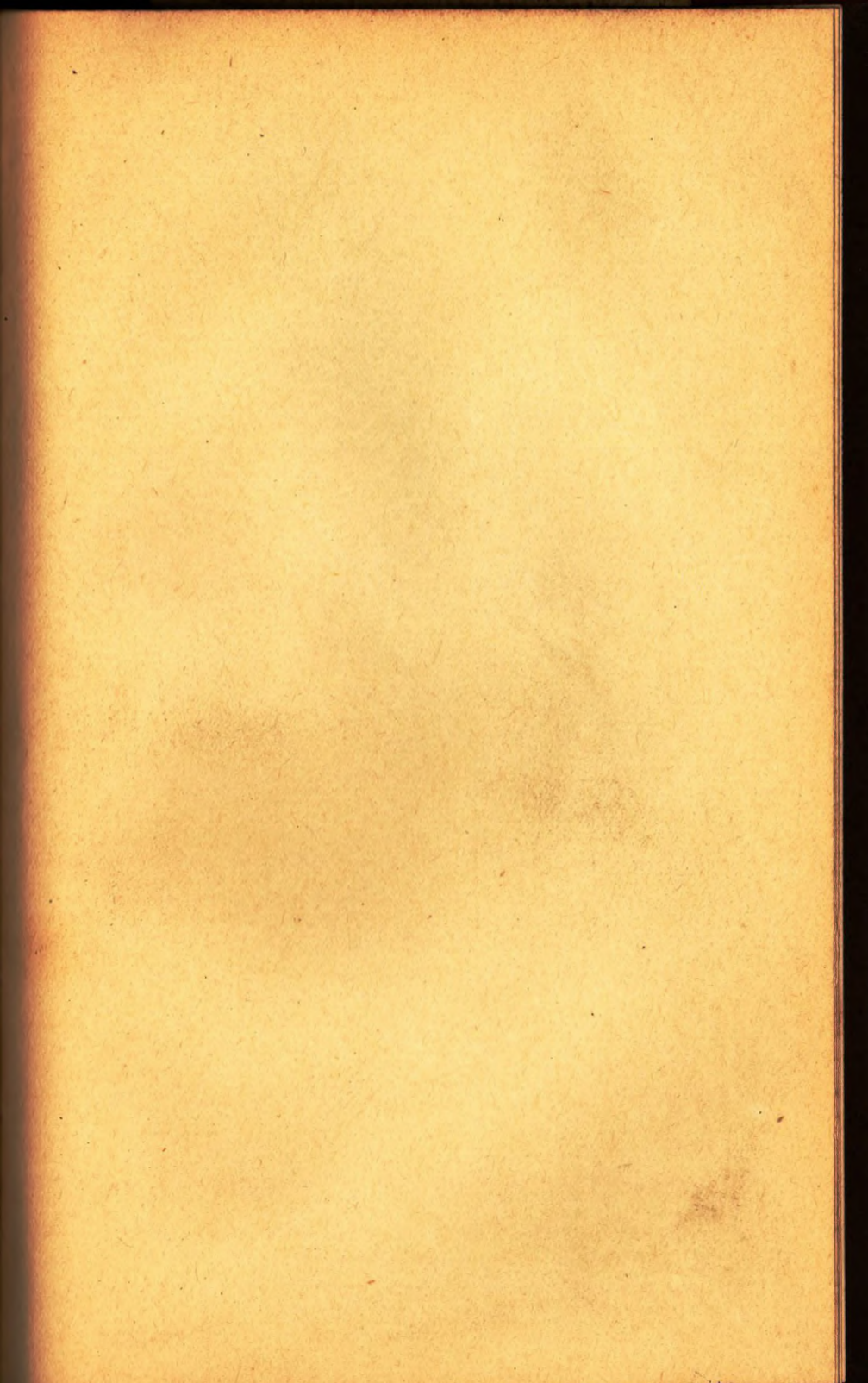
How far this estimate may be true I know not; I give it you on the report of father Hernandez; and I have heard the same confirmed by don Manuel, who is of opinion that the *present* race of ecclesiastics have not at all mended the condition of the Indians, who are in fact worse off and more oppressed than before. He thinks, and says, that were the English to make a spirited attack on Buenos Ayres in conjunction with the Portuguese on the side of the Brazils, there is not a doubt of the Indians joining them; the face of things being so materially changed





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