

adopted, and has since, no doubt from the supposed infallibility of the Ancients, been boldly repeated; altho' the Fins of Fish in water, are so far from being likely to strike the attention of a Savage, that they are scarce visible, or their movements discoverable, on close inspection. The Tail was likewise so far from having any connection with the origin of the Rudder, that the Balzas or primitive Rafts were managed, instead of a Helm, by boards placed vertically at the head as well as the stern, and pushed deeper or shallower, as circumstances required, like the Paddles used, subsequently, by the Pilots at the extremities of a Canoe.

Excluding the shorter process of direct Imitation; the gradual discovery of the *Sail*, without any great effort of genius, worthy, either of an *Æolus* or a *Dædalus*, or of a search into another Element for the dorsal Fin of a Fish, as *M. le President de Goguet* supposes requisite, may apparently be traced with equal congruity. A man would hardly have begun to push along his new acquisition of the Raft over a Pool beyond his own depth, when, in the course of standing up to look about him, or whilst pausing for rest, he must have noticed, that the wind, acting upon his body, made the Float glide forward in its own direction. On this being observed, if the wind blew favourably, his love of ease would soon show him that he might save himself the trouble of using his Pole; and that the more he increased his bulk, the more wind he opposed, and the faster the Raft moved. The means and material being at hand, the readiest way of increasing his size was by spreading out his Skin Mantle, so far as to form a kind of Yard of his Arms. This producing the desired effect, he would naturally endeavour to continue it without the necessity of doing duty himself, and it would at once strike him, without much in-

genuity, that his Pole, or another like it, might supply the place of his Body, and a Branch fixed across it, that of his Arms, whilst a larger Skin would collect more Air than his Mantle, and Thongs would do for Ropes and Bindings. Hence by degrees would the most common occurrences lead to the Sail, the Yard, and the Mast. When the wind opposed him he would have recourse to his Pole; and when favourable, would indulge himself with the luxury of rest, by hoisting his Sail, on his Mast and Yard, always kept erected and ready to receive it. The primary Rafts on the River Guaiquil, in Peru, supposed by the ingenious author of the Sketches of the History of Man, to be the first inhabited part of America, were managed by a Sail.

The resemblance between the Guaiquil, and the Nile on the Old Continent, in several particulars, is curious and remarkable. The poor, untaught, scarcely human, natives of Terra del Fuego, carry in their Canoes "large Seal Skins," occasionally to be used for Sails." And even the Vessels of New Zealand in 1770 could "only sail before the wind." It is not, however, by any means clear that "Sails were at last added," agreeable to the theory in the Sketches; since in the natural progress of such events as have been pictured, and were likely to give it birth, it may have been discovered prior to the Oar and the Helm, and only posterior to the Raft and the Pole.

These Inquiries have imperceptibly extended themselves to a much greater length than was expected. They do not pretend to the discovery of the *Origin of Navigation*, but only by ascertaining the *First Appearances* of the Art, and delineating the various Path that have been followed, to endeavour to point out some others leading towards the

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tain Head, attended with fewer obstacles and difficulties than any of the preceding ones. Like those into the place of Homer's birth, such Investigations unquestionably derive much of their consequence from the importance of the subject with which they are connected. In making them, however, a person becomes interested in the authenticated histories of his own species in the earliest stages of Society, and is unavoidably struck with the uniformity of the Contrivances of Mankind in a state of Nature, over the whole Earth; however distant either in time, or place, the different Hordes, Tribes, or Nations, may be from each other. The Log, the Raft, the Tree Boat, and Bark Sail;—the clay, bark, and wicker Hut, thatched with Bark, Leaves, or Straw;—the Bark, or Skin-covering, for a part, or all of the Body;—the Club; the Spear sharpened at the extremity, and hardened by fire, or pointed with bone;—the Bow, and Arrows headed with Flints;—the Stone-Axe;—the Fishing Hook of Shell;—where Trees are fewer and the Climate colder; the Skin Hut Boat, Sail, and Cloathing;—and, in every situation where Wood or Flint is to be had, the production of Fire by friction or collision;—are all so invariably adopted; that one is almost inclined to think, men, in a rude state, are led to these by Instincts, similar to those of the inferior Animals. Rafts sprang up

equally on the Nile and the Guaiquil. Wherever trees are to be met with, even Bows and Arrows, Trough-Boats, and Fires produced by friction, though not the most apt inventions to occur to an uncultivated mind, are to be seen likewise; and the Human Race seem to be instigated to resort to them by a natural Impulse, somewhat resembling that which directs the wonderful operations of the Squirrel, the Bee, or the Beaver.

But, whether *Accident*;—*Invention*, the offspring of Necessity;—*Instinct*;—or the imitation of Instinct; has given rise to them: Such were the Rudiments, the small beginnings, of *Navigation*! an Art which has given a New character to the Modern World, by which it has risen to an infinitely higher degree of civilization, ingenuity, and happiness; and which has shielded the independence, and produced the supereminent wealth and glory of Great Britain in particular!—"C'est à l'invention de cet art," says *M. le President de Goguet*, "que le commerce doit ses plus grands progrès. De tous ceux que l'esprit humain a enfantés, il n'y en a point dont il doive à plus juste titre se glorifier. On pourroit dire même de la Navigation, qu'elle paroît en quelque sorte surpasser les bornes de notre intelligence, et les ressources de notre sagacité." (L. 4. c. 1.)

ON A CRITERION OF PERFECTION IN WRITING.

From Aikin's Letters from a Father to his Son.

YOU must frequently, I doubt not, have felt equal surprise and disgust at the dogmatism with which the most opposite opinions relative to the comparative merit of authors are laid down in writing and conversation; and you must have wished for some positive criterion to apply

to these opinions, in order to ascertain their solidity, at least to your own satisfaction, if not to the conviction of the disputants themselves. Attempts have been often made, in the walks both of literature and the fine arts, to establish such a criterion, and to reduce to precise rules the determinations

terminations of what is called *taste*; but the wide differences still subsisting among those who lay claim to this quality, sufficiently prove the ill success of these efforts. Sensible as I am, that diversities either in original conformation, or in early associations, must ever prevent mankind from feeling exactly alike with respect to the objects presented to them, I have no sanguine expectations of a near approach to uniformity in their judgments; yet I conceive it possible that a train of thought may be suggested by which a tolerably unprejudiced mind may make some progress towards the attainment of rational principles in matters hitherto left to the decision of vague sentiment. I do not see why it should be less practicable to state the grounds of our preference of one work of genius to another, than of one moral action to another; and I conceive the same general method may be applied in both cases; namely, to consider what was the *end* in view, and how far the *means* employed have accomplished their purpose. All the works of human art may be examined upon this principle; but I shall at present confine myself to the noblest of all, that of *writing*, or *literary composition*.

The first and most obvious purpose of writing is to communicate with all possible force and precision the ideas of the writer to the mind of the reader. This effect is absolutely indispensable; and therefore every failure arising from the feeble, the inadequate, the embarrassed, the ill-arranged expression of thoughts, is absolutely contrary to the perfection of a writing. I will not stop to particularize instances of this defect; yet I cannot forbear observing that many works which bear a high character, if judged of by the difficulty found in developing their meaning, the ambiguities and perplexities remaining after every effort of learn-

ing and sagacity to elucidate them; and the feebleness with which they at last strike the mind of the reader, must be very short of that perfection which prejudiced admirers attribute to them. Great allowances, doubtless, ought to be made in favour of works composed in a language long extinct, and referring to modes of thinking or living long obliterated. Yet some of the works to which I allude are known to have presented these difficulties from the time of their first appearance; and a comparison with others of the same period will show that the faults belonged to the individual, not to the age.

What has been said above refers to *style* in its most confined sense, or the manner in which a writer gives enunciation to his ideas; and the point of perfection thus far is that the language should be an exact transcript of the thought. This alone includes many of the first qualities of writing. It supposes in the writer a perfect knowledge of the value and import of all the words he uses, as well singly as in combination; a knowledge which forms no mean part of philosophy, and cannot be attained without much reflection and research. It supposes him master of the art of combining clauses and sentences so as to exhibit in the clearest manner the dependence of ideas one upon another, and the train or succession in which the process of argumentation consists. It requires him to have at hand a sufficient store of expressions, and yet to be possessed of judgment enough not to run into prolixity; to know how long he may dwell upon an idea with advantage, and when its further repetition would be wearisome tautology. It may likewise be extended to include that sense of propriety and decorum, that air of good company, which prevents an author from shocking his reader by vulgarisms, or disgusting him by singularities. By these, which

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I think are intelligible and positive requisites, a criterion may be established of writing, as far as it is the dress or image of thought.

But the merit of the *thoughts* themselves cannot be separated from our notion of good writing; and many of its qualities must have a reference to the *powers of conception* in the mind whence the ideas proceed. Here, it must be confessed, our criterion becomes more vague; and we are in danger of being thrown into all the fluctuation of opinion attendant upon subjects of mere taste. Our only resource in this case is a comparison between the effects apparently intended to be produced by the writer, and those really produced;—in other words, what he has attempted, and what he has done.

The attempt in some cases is so simple that it is not difficult to pronounce concerning its success. The enunciation of a truth, and the statement of a plain argument, as in scientific topics, are complete with respect both to conception and expression, when all that is wanted, and no more, is communicated to the reader in its most precise and intelligible form. Clear notions, in subjects of this kind, almost necessarily clothe themselves in proper language; and no one, while receiving the whole instruction he seeks for, feels a want of any thing more perfect. Mathematical demonstrations, and didactic lessons of art or science, are of this kind. In these, if the writer is methodical, clear, and concise, he has done his part.

The narration of a matter of fact perhaps comes next in point of simplicity; but here, diversity of conception has a much wider scope. Circumstances strike different persons so differently, that two are rarely found to agree in their account of the same transaction, if in any degree complicated. Independently of the propensity to alter and exaggerate,

the selection of incidents varies much in different narrators. Some dwell minutely upon what to others would appear frivolous and uninteresting. Some dramatise a story by assigning to each actor his own peculiar language; others relate the whole in their own words. In general, he is the most perfect narrator, who puts his reader most completely in the state of a spectator; who transports him to the very spot, marks out to him all the personages by their characteristic features, and fills the scene with manners and action. For success in such an attempt, nothing is so necessary as an imagination capable of receiving and retaining strong impressions. Where this exists, and the subject of description is an interesting one, no great artifice of language is requisite for producing a complete effect: and frequently, the most perfect simplicity, and the absence of all design, prove most successful. The story of Joseph in the Old Testament is manifestly written without the least art or effort, yet a more affecting one is perhaps no where to be met with. Many other narrations in the Jewish scriptures are equally unpretending and equally excellent; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that the oriental style, so strained and figurative in lyrical, prophetic, and even didactic compositions, should be so simple in the description of facts. But this kind of negative merit is almost all that is wanted in the species of writing in question; and if the relator has taste enough to abstain from affected phraseology, unreasonable digressions, and impertinent remarks, he can scarcely fail, with a selection of striking incidents, to produce the desired effect.

The next in order of simplicity seems to be, an attempt to convince by a process of argumentation addressed to the reason. When a person is master of his subject, and has it laid up in his mind in its proper ordonnance

ordonnance of gradation, proceeding from the simplest propositions to the more complex, and establishing a regular series of deduction till he arrives at the intended conclusion, it may be thought that his power of communicating to others the notions he himself entertains, will follow almost of course. Yet, I believe, experience has shewn that men of undoubted intellectual sagacity have not always been happy in attempts of this kind; and on reflection it will be seen that literary talents, if not of the highest class, yet rare and respectable, are required for attaining the first rank as a logical or argumentative writer. Great precision in the use of words, clear arrangement of all the members of a sentence, closeness of method, strength and conciseness of expression without harshness or obscurity, are essential to perfection in this department of writing; and if somewhat of the grace and amenity of language be added, which is not incompatible with the other requisites, the effect of conviction may be promoted, by leading on the reader, pleasantly through a topic perhaps naturally dry and unalluring. I conceive Cicero and Hume to be examples of this union of every useful and agreeable quality in discourses purely philosophical.

If the manner of the former of these writers in his stricter philosophical works be compared with that in his popular ethical pieces, and his orations, a just idea may be formed of the progress from an address to the reason alone, to an attempt to persuade by addressing the affections likewise. This combination is *oratory* or *eloquence*; and there are few occasions of importance in human life in which the possession of this quality, either in speech or writing, is not felt as a high degree of superiority. Its field, too, is so large, that its point of absolute perfection is scarcely assignable; and *genius*, that celestial

faculty, to the powers of which no limits can be assigned, finds in it sufficient play for all its energies. Rhetoric has long ago been defined "the art of persuasion;" its end, therefore, is sufficiently obvious; and it may be said, in a general way, to be perfect when it attains that end. But there will commonly be room to ask, Would not something more excellent have answered it better? might not a more skilful orator gain over conviction to the opposite side of the question? Reason, by itself, is a principle of tolerably equal operation in minds properly disposed to receive it; but where the passions are of the party, no one can be sure of the event. Taste also assumes great sway where appeals are made to the imagination or to the finer feelings; and admiration may contribute to bias the decisions of the judgment. The perfection of oratory, then, will be seen to be a very complicated consideration, referring not only to the subject treated of, but to the persons to whom it is addressed. Let us, however, limit the case to an address to persons prepared by a certain degree of refinement in manners, and of acquaintance with the beauties of literature; to persons, also of sense and knowledge of the world, and under no immediate impression of enthusiasm. In these circumstances, I conceive that argument should be the staple, the main body, of the discourse; and that the appearance of a declamatory effusion of common-place rhetoric should by all means be avoided. But argument may be greatly assisted by the variety of lights in which it is placed—by strong descriptions, pathetic or humorous, resulting from real or hypothetical consequences of the matter in debate—by drawing to a luminous point or focus all the inferences and deductions flowing from the train of reasoning—and by a style of language animated with energetic expressions and

and lively images. In these particulars consists the true art of oratory, an art which it is in vain to teach by formal rules, enjoining certain divisions and subdivisions of a subject, and directing the orator when to be warm, and when to be cool, when simple, and when metaphorical. Such systematical rhetoric produces nothing but pedantic and tedious harangues, which weary the patience of every hearer, and though they may be applauded in the schools, are of no use or effect in real life. The orator who wishes to persuade, must take his rules from his subject, his audience, his own feelings, and his own peculiar talents; for talents of very different kinds may by proper management be made equally to concur in the grand effect of persuasion. In some, a rapid strain of argument, strictly deduced from the matter in debate, delivered in earnest, glowing, but not choice or ornamented language, and dwelling long and fully upon the same topics, has proved highly successful. Such appears to have been the eloquence of the Grecian Demosthenes; and such is that of a speaker; certainly not his inferior in powers of mind, the English Fox. This species, however, seems better adapted for oral delivery, than for writing. To the hearer its effect is enhanced by the accompaniments of voice and action; nor is he liable to be offended with negligencies or tautologies which might give disgust in the leisurely survey of a reader. On the contrary, the wide reach and compass of thought, the splendour and copiousness of illustration, the profuse imagery and poetical conceptions of a Burke (a man whom I know not where to parallel,) might often bewilder and fatigue the hearer, while to the reader they have afforded the highest gratification, and often proved irresistibly convincing. The strong, pointed, homely sense of a Paine, however, has not been inferior. *Ed. Mag. April 1800.*

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rior in efficacy to his antagonist's profusion of excellencies; and thus every different mode of oratory, if practised by a master, may produce in its favour the criterion of perfection. This is, to convince the reason in the very face of prepossession; to wield at will the passions; to calm the furious and rouse the torpid: in short, to effect by the mere power of persuasion, all that can be done by brute force or all-subduing gold.

The perfection of historical composition demands a still greater assemblage of literary qualifications. Oratory, in the direct form of harangues, once constituted a part of it; and some of the best specimens of eloquence of this kind are to be found in histories. But though this practice is now abolished (I think, judiciously, as it injured the most essential of all impressions, that of veracity,) yet occasions continually occur in an interesting narrative in which scope is given for the most genuine eloquence. And notwithstanding it may be true, that authentic history, however written, is capable of giving pleasure, yet I presume there are few readers to whom it would be indifferent whether they took the relation of Agrippina's landing at Brundisium, of the trial of Strafford, of the death of Mary queen of Scots, from a Tacitus, Hume, or Robertson, or from one of the vulgar chroniclers of the time. Moreover, we expect from the complete historian a lucid arrangement and skilful development of facts, often involved and perplexed with contradictions; sagacity to trace the connexion of causes and effects; penetration to detect the motives and true characters of men, however disguised by artifice; together with that philosophical spirit and freedom from prejudice which entitle the writer to assume the office of an instructor, and point the great lesson of human events. Possessed of these requisites, the

the historian may be allowed considerable latitude in his style. If he is merely perspicuous, correct, and elegant, he will avoid blame; but he will not attain the praise of a fine writer without the power of enriching his language, when the subject favours him, with every figure that can give it force, majesty, and beauty. Historical writing is in prose, what the epic is in verse—a field for every varied exertion of which the composer's mind may be capable.

This observation leads me to the species of composition with which I mean to conclude; Poetry—the most difficult of all to reduce to the laws of critical judgment. The distinguishing purpose of poetry has often been stated to be that of *pleasing*; but various explanations seem necessary before this principle can be adapted to use. Perhaps the whole business of *versification* may at once be referred to the *pleasure* it is by experience found capable of giving to the ear; an idea I should willingly admit, as it would establish an easy discrimination between poetry and prose by a single characteristic, which otherwise is not to be found. But in order to estimate the value of the other ingredients of which poetry is composed, we ought, I conceive, to proceed beyond the simple notion of *pleasing*, and expand our idea of the art to the comprehension of *all that in writing is capable of imparting to the mind every impression in its most exquisite degree*. It would lead me too far were I to enumerate the various figures of poetry, and attempt to show how each contributes to the augmentation of *impression*. It is obvious, however, that the figures of comparison illustrate and enforce the original idea; and that prosopopœia and personification bring the scene directly before the eye, and bestow on it life and action. That the peculiarities of poetical language also give *pleasure* I mean not to deny;

and perhaps poets have in some cases more attended to the amusement of their readers, than to the enforcement of a particular subject. This seems especially to be with some writers the intention of *simile*, which, if pursued to minuteness, as many of Homer's, substitute a new picture to the imagination, often to the temporary obliteration of the original one. But this is really a fault when it interrupts the course of a narrative of itself highly interesting.

The poetry of description and of sentiment is no other than *eloquence in verse*; and the advantage of this form over that of prose arises from the pleasure, and indeed, in some cases, the consonance of effect, obtained by measured harmony, together with the licence of using without restraint those figures which give glow and animation to language. One of the most perfect examples of the efficacy of these means is Pope's epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, of which the thoughts are almost all to be found in the real correspondence between those celebrated characters: but how are they heightened, how adorned, how animated by the rich melody and vivid expression of that great master! Compare, too, the sketch given by Virgil of the battle of Actium with any prose relation of the same event. With how much more force and distinctness is the scene brought to view! how is it aggrandized by a selection of great incidents, and the suppression of every thing petty and trivial; above all, what dignity is thrown about it by the introduction of fictitious personages, superior to human! It is this use of *fiction* that many critics have regarded as the principal characteristic of true poetry; and doubtless, when it contributes to enhance the desired impression, it is the noblest exertion of poetical genius. But how frequently is it found that the introduction of celestial beings only tends

tends to degrade the human; and that the mixture of preternatural events *unrealizes* (if I may use the expression) the natural part of the fable? The mere production of wonder and surprise, which some have represented as the most essential business of poetry, is often attempted with at least as great success in prose; witness the Arabian Nights, and the whole class of novels and romances. On the other hand, force of the finest poems are limited to what is strictly natural in description, only heightened by a selection of the most striking circumstances and the most perfect specimens, and set off with all the glow and relief of strong colouring.

I return then to the criterion of perfect poetry, and venture to suggest that it consists in the *force* with which it impresses the hearer or imagination, joined to the *pleasure* it affords by the artifice of its numbers, and by the variety and splendour of its diction. The number of subjects on which poetry is employed, and the different forms it is made to assume, will ever allow a wide scope to the diversities of taste in selecting its favourites; nor can any general rules controul the effect of partial associations. It is, however, desirable that the mind should acquire a sensibility to excellence of as many kinds as possible; and he is the happiest reader of poetry who can enjoy the masterpieces of every age and country, and in every species of poetical composition. There seems to be a greater propensity to make comparisons of merit in this, than in any other department of literature; and in none does dogmatism of opinion so much prevail. It is an usual thing for those who are the most rapturous admirers of one author, to affect the profoundest contempt for another, perhaps his rival in general fame. Yet I imagine the criterion above mentioned, if fairly applied, will afford as

decisive a test of poetical merit, as exists for many other kinds of literary excellence. One exception, however, must be admitted. It is impossible for any one to acquire an adequate feeling of the beauties of *versification* in a foreign language; and therefore he should decline all comparisons in this point except between the writers in his own.

From the notion above given of the perfection of poetry, I think it will follow as a corollary, that true taste cannot approve any of those devices for making it easier to the composer which have been lately practised, consisting of loose versification, the absence of rhyme where expected, prosaic simplicity of language, and the like; for, that the real purpose of such liberties is to favour the laziness of the writers, and not to add an agreeable variety to their performances, I am well convinced. As poetry is a luxury and not a necessity, its multiplication is not an object to be studied at the expense of its excellence; and a little of it, of the finest kind and the richest flavour, answers its purpose much better than an abundance of ordinary growth.

What, then, after these particular inquiries, shall we say constitutes the general perfection of writing? I can discover no other universal principle in this case, than that which is applicable to every effort of art—the degree in which it accomplishes the purpose intended. This consideration will, no doubt, ever leave room for some diversity of judgement; since neither the purpose, nor its attainment, will appear exactly in the same light to all. Yet I cannot but think that it offers a more promising access to uniformity, than might be conceived by one who had never seriously dwelt upon it. Erroneous judgments, especially of the unfavourable kind, are often made from the unreasonable expectation of what

was never designed—of what was impossible to be effected.

Let the critic then begin with obtaining a clear idea of what he ought to look for in a work of literature, and not pronounce its condemnation because he does not find what ignorance alone could have led him to

expect. With a judgment so prepared, and a mind free from ordinary prejudices and partialities, he will probably seldom fail of deciding rightly concerning that *approach* to perfection, which is all that the condition of human nature will permit to the most exalted genius.

CURIOUS PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO THE CAPTURE OF SERINGAPATAM.

From the Asiatic Annual Register.

WE entered the territories of Tippoo Saib, from Ryacottah, on the 5th of March, and encamped before Seringapatam on the 5th of April; and it may be considered as a fortunate circumstance that the Sultaun did not employ his whole force against us, instead of turning his attention to the Bombay army.

The numerous baggage and numerous attendants on the Nizam force, as well as that of the European troops, the immense quantity of public stores and provisions, the long train of ordnance, with above forty thousand Benjarries, formed, altogether, such an host as not to admit of being covered by our army; so that if Tippoo had employed his powers, with the military skill which he was supposed to possess, he might, without hazarding an engagement, by desultory skirmishes, distant cannonades, and other hostile movements, have so harassed our infantry and weakened our cavalry, that a great part of our baggage, stores, and ammunition would probably have fallen into his hands, and the army greatly impeded in its march to the place of its destination: and, moreover, as the rainy season was approaching, there is reason to believe, that had the Sultaun employed the force he possessed with equal judgment and activity, the immediate object of the campaign might have been defeated.

It had, indeed, been for some time reported, that Tippoo was become

subject to fits of mental derangement, and the whole of his conduct seems to justify that opinion. He had dismissed all his faithful friends, who had served him long, and had served him well, from his councils; and had called into his service men of little experience or capacity, who won his favour by flattering his caprices, and practising an unresisting submission to his will. The former had always discouraged their master's disposition to connect himself with France, as pregnant with the mischief it has since produced; while the latter promoted it for no other reason, but because it flattered his hopes of gratifying his resentment against the British power in India. His treasures were immense, and his army was not only numerous, but in a high state of discipline and equipment. However, by not employing the one, and misemploying the other, his fall has been precipitated, his capital taken, and his country conquered, in a manner, and with a rapidity of good fortune, which was equally improbable and unexpected.

His powerful empire, which had been shaken and diminished by the military skill and political sagacity of the Marquis Cornwallis, is now raised, as it were, to its foundations, and the house of Hyder Ally degraded from the usurped power which it had maintained during a period of forty years. The importance of this event to the power and commerce of

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Great Britain in the East, is not within the reach of ordinary calculation.

From every appearance of the improving state of Seringapatam, the cultivation of the country, the number of its inhabitants, and the advancing progress of its military establishment, that capital would, in a short time, have been impregnable; and the power of Tippoo Saib would have been at least equal to the combined strength of the European settlements in India.

The Sultaun, certainly was not inactive; but his activity was misguided, and became inadequate to its object. He destroyed the villages, and laid waste the country in front of the army; but by not sufficiently spreading the tracks of devastation, his purpose for distressing our army was defeated, as General Harris, by a slight deviation from the common road, reached his destination at the time he wished, and without any material interruption. From the late plentiful rains, and the peculiar construction of the tanks, which could not be entirely drained, there was no deficiency of water: and though the usual attempts had been made to poison it, by steeping in it the bruised branches of the milk hedge-tree, no very obnoxious effect was produced: for though no prohibition, or bodies of guards, could prevent the men or cattle from slacking their thirst at these tanks, very little inconvenience was felt: very few of the people suffered any disorder whatever from the poisonous impregnation. The sickness that did, at any time, appear among the troops, arose from the heat of the sun, extreme fatigue, irregular refreshment, and especially among the common men, from the imtemperate use of every species of vegetable they could find, and particularly of the sugar cane.

The action which Tippoo risked on the 27th March at Malavelle,

with the right wing of our army, was ill conceived, as it was ill conducted; because, having the choice of his ground, he ought either to have received us with his whole force, or to have avoided every kind of regular engagement.

By turning to the left on the second day after this action, instead of crossing the river, as Tippoo appears to have expected, we gained a flourishing and highly cultivated country, which, most fortunately, his destroying hand had not touched. After a march of about fourteen miles, we reached the Cavary, without the least molestation, and got possession of the large fort Soocilly, which was full of cattle, grain, and forage; and commanded an excellent ford, which the army, with all its equipment, passed in one day, without any loss or interruption. Even to the very vicinity of Seringapatam, General Harris had the choice of his route; so that he was enabled to sit down before it, with all his resources for the siege undiminished.

The evil most to be dreaded on this service, and a tremendous evil it is, was famine; and which the Sultaun had the means of producing, if he had been wise enough to have employed them. The whole of our draft and carriage bullocks, public and private, died, and rice had risen to three rupees the pound, on the day when the city was stormed. It was not till nine days after that event, that the detachments, commanded by Colonels Read and Brown, could arrive with supplies; notwithstanding all the cavalry, and a brigade of native infantry, had been detached under the command of General Floyd, to favour their junction; so that if we had not succeeded in our attempt, the consequence would have been fatal to the army; and that we were not repulsed, was owing to the incomparable conduct and intrepidity of the troops, as well as by the judicious