

lions of pesos, about three hundred and thirty-four thousand pounds.

The annual crop of hemp may be worth three hundred thousand pesos, at three pesos per *arroba*.

One hundred and forty thousand loads of rice, at ten pesos a load, make one million four hundred thousand pesos.

The vintage of 1767 produced four million three hundred and nine thousand measures of wine, which, at three reals a measure, come to about eight hundred and sixty-one thousand one hundred and thirty-three pesos.

There is also much cotton made in this province, from the cotton-plant, which rises to the height of three feet at most, and very much resembles the raspberry-bush. They make in good years four hundred and fifty thousand *arrobas*, worth one million three hundred and fifty thousand pesos, and in middling years two hundred and eighty-five thousand six hundred *arrobas*.

Notwithstanding all this abundance, nothing can be more wretched than the Valencian peasantry, who can with difficulty procure food to keep their families from starving.

We were last night at the play, which gave us no very respectable opinion of the taste and politeness of a Valencian audience. The house was low, dark, and dirty; the actors execrable; and the pit full of men in cloaks
and

and night-caps, driving such puffs of tobacco out of their *cigarros*, as filled the whole room with smoke, and at last forced us to make a precipitate retreat. We there met with our old acquaintance the duke of C. P. who a few months ago came post from France, to embark for the expedition against Algiers. When he arrived at Valencia, he found the fleet was failed, and an order for him to remain in exile here. The derangement of his finances, and some amorous connections, have procured him this order from court. His fate is truly ludicrous, but he did not drop the least hint to us of this unkind return for his patriotic spirit, and eagerness to serve the king.

L E T T E R XIV.

Alicant, December 8, 1775.

WE set out early on Monday morning, without regretting in the least the rich gardens or brilliant sky of Valencia, which would be an admirable last retreat for our consumptive countrymen, were the approach by sea or land less difficult.

We travelled that day in a plain, as fertile as nature and frequent waterings can render it. At some miles

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distance

distance from the city the soil is a red, sandy loam; near the Albufera, a lake about four leagues long, it is very shallow, and communicates with the sea only as often as they open the sluices, to let in a supply of water in dry seasons, or to give vent to the overcharge of water brought down in winter by the land floods. On the edge of it are salt-pans. It supplies the city with fish and water-fowl. Once or twice in a season all the shooters in the country assemble upon it in boats, and make prodigious havock among the flocks of birds, that almost cover the surface of the pond. Sometimes they meet with flamingos here.

Before we arrived at Alzira, a large town in an island of the Xucar, a deep, muddy river, we crossed a large tract of land astonishingly fruitful. The peas and beans in the fields were very high, and in full blow. The husbandmen use in their tillage a shovel-plough, with which they turn the soil from the roots of the olive-trees, that they may benefit by the moisture of the season. We were stopped several times by long droves of mules, carrying corn to Valencia; their conductors, most savage-looking fellows, all clad in leather; their broad belts were fastened round their waist with seven buckles.

In the afternoon, at the entrance of a more mountainous country, we came to the rice-grounds, now in stubble. The process of that tillage is as follows:—In winter they plow out a piece of land, and sow it with beans
that

that come into blossom about March, when they plow them in for manure ; water is then let in upon the ground about four inches deep. It next undergoes a third ploughing, after which the rice is sown. In fifteen days it comes up about five inches out of the earth, and is pulled up, tyed in bundles about a foot diameter, and carried to another well-prepared field, covered with water to the depth of four inches. Here each planter sets the plants of his bundle in the mud, in rows at about a foot distance one from another. Every stem ought to produce from ten to twenty-four fold, and grow so close, that the ears may touch. When ripe, it is gathered in sheaves, and put into a water-mill, where the lower grinding-stone is covered with cork ; by which means the chaff is separated from the grain without bruising. The rice of Valencia is yellower than that of the Levant, but much wholesomer, and will keep longer without growing musty.

We entered the highlands, and came to lie at Xativa, which was a strong fortress, till destroyed by Philip the Fifth, who ordered it to be rebuilt by the name of San Felipe. That monster Rodrigo Borgia, pope by the name of Alexander the Sixth, was a native of this town. The farmers hereabouts have a very sturdy, good-looking breed of horses.

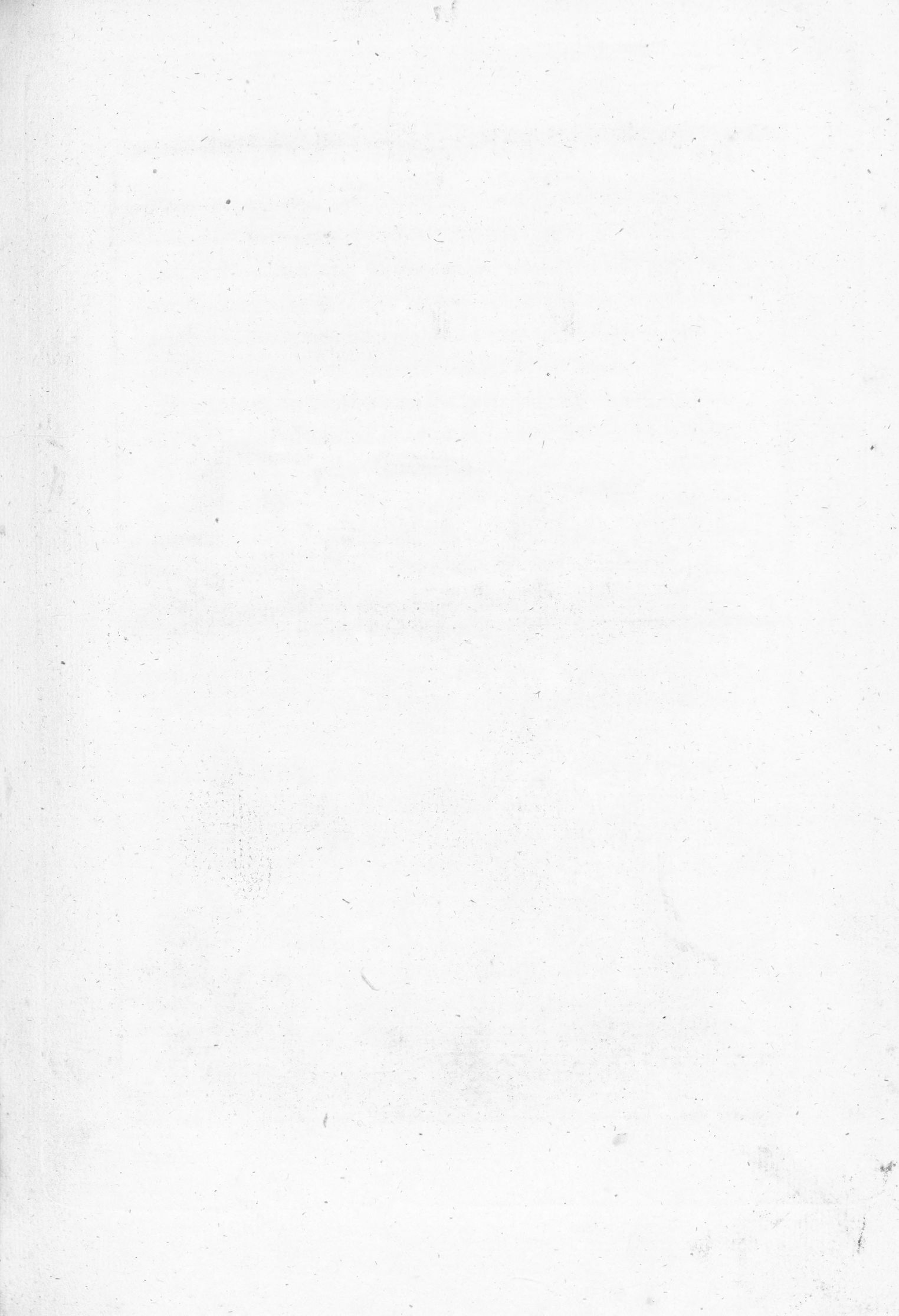
Our route from San Felipe lay up long winding vales, between ridges of high bleak mountains. On the right

hand stands the castle of Montesa, head of the military order of Montesa, instituted in 1317, by James the Second king of Arragon, after he had driven the Moors as far back as the territories of Granada. All the possessions of the knight-templars in the province were bestowed upon the new order, into which none but natives of Valencia were to be admitted. They wear a plain red cross. The commanderies belonging to the foundation are thirteen in number; and their yearly income, according to the king's books, where they are very low rated, amounts to four hundred and four thousand one hundred and twelve reales de vellon. In 1748, an earthquake overthrew the castle, and all the adjacent buildings; burying under the ruins the greatest part of the chaplains, servants, &c. belonging to the congregation. The remainder were removed to Valencia, where a new church is building for their use.

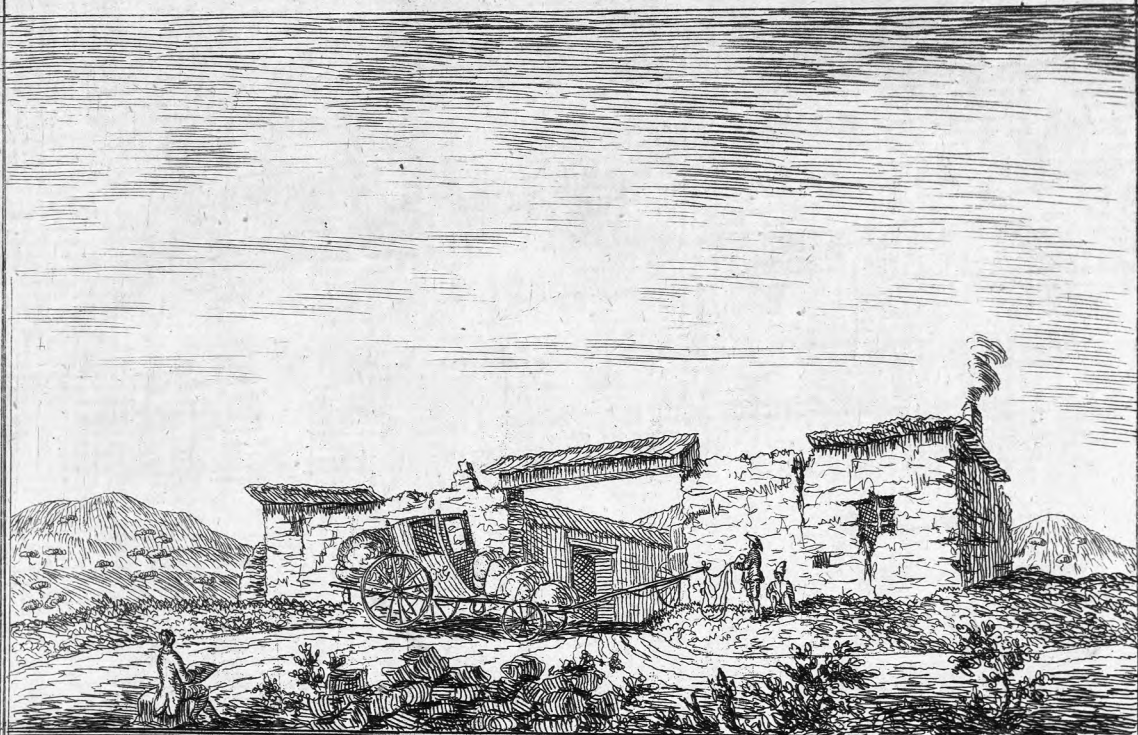
We did nothing the whole day but ascend through olive plantations, pine forests, and bare chalky hills, up the course of a little brook, till we came to its source, which breaks out in the middle of a town on the confines of Castille. Hitherto, the olives I have seen are all of the smaller sort.

Next morning the frost was very smart on the high, bare hills, where there is much corn-land, but no trees; the farm-houses are scattered about pretty much as they are in the uninclosed parts of England.

Just

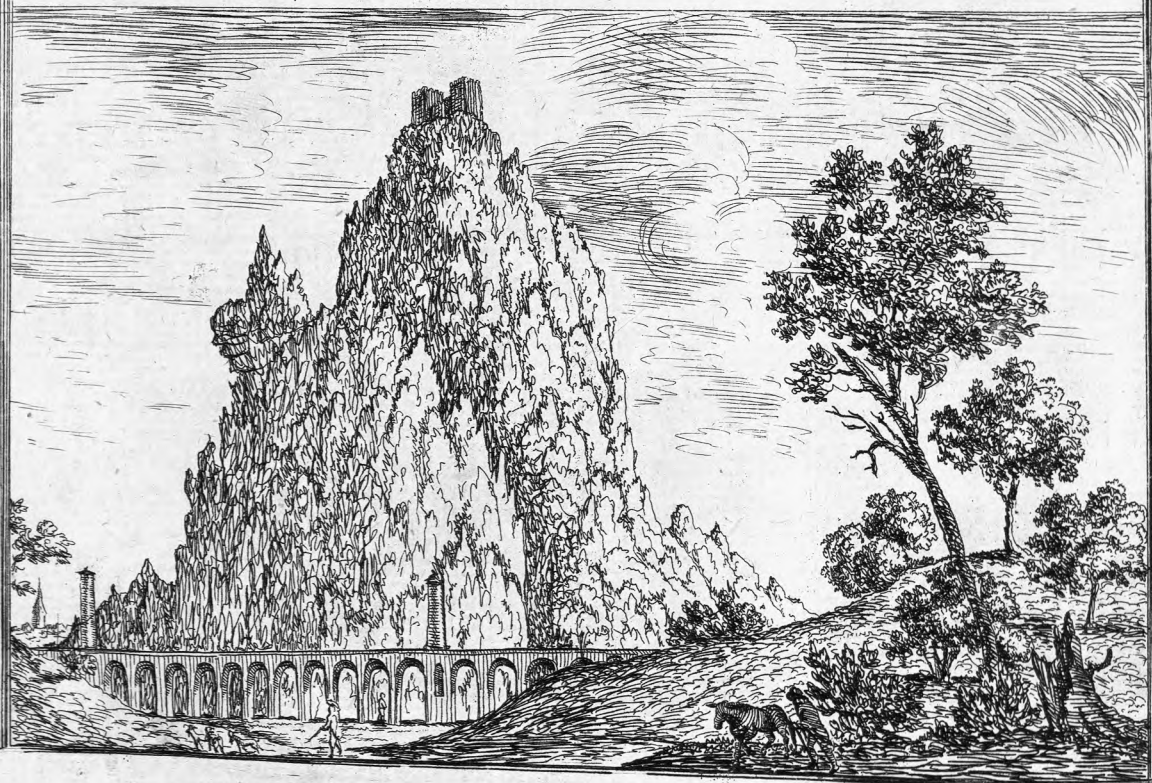


Venta del Platero. in Catalonia ~



Castle of Saxe in Valencia.

H. G. Del. & sc. 1775.



Just as we were going into Villena, a little, round, squat figure, in a brown montero cap, jacket, and breeches, with a yellow waistcoat, caught my eye. It is not possible to paint a better Sancho Pança; and we were actually in a corner of the country of that 'squire, which makes me conclude Cervantes drew the picture from real life, in some of his journies through La Mancha. All the inhabitants of the town wear the same dress, which is neat enough. The castle of Villena is large, well situated, and has been strong. I never saw a country so full of ruined towers, as these skirts of Valencia and Castille; not a village without its rocca perched upon some almost inaccessible cliff; none more singular than that of *Sax*. The hills here are broken, the landscape bleak; but about Elda the plain is improved to the best advantage. We passed by a string of ponds and caves, where the inhabitants of that town keep their provision of ice, for the summer's consumption. As there was a thin coat of ice on the surface of the water, they were very busy carrying it off with the greatest expedition, lest a sudden thaw should deprive them of it.

Before we came into the plain of Montfort, we had a vile piece of road, through a broken range of marly hills. We now found the style of salutation quite altered. Hitherto the peasants were wont to accost us as they passed, with a *Dios guarde usted*: "God keep your worship;" but here they begin, twenty yards before they come up to you,
and

and bawl out as loud as they can, *Ave Maria purissima*; to which you are expected to answer, either *Sin pecado concebida*, or *Deo gratias*.

Late in the evening, we passed a large encampment of carriers of salt-fish. Their carts formed an outer circle, and their oxen a smaller one, round a roaring fire, where some of the men were cooking, others working at their tackle, but the greater part stretched out fast asleep. The moon shone very bright, and all was soft and still; I quite envied the pleasant sensations of those fellows.

Our road this morning was bad, the country abominable, a white clay in powder, and not a stick of wood. In rainy years the crops of corn are extremely plentiful. Though it was a bitter cold day, the clouds of dust almost stifled us.

We got in here very early, and took up our lodgings at an inn, which hangs over the sea; the waves beat gently against the walls under our windows, and the whole road and harbour lie beautifully stretched out before us. Unfortunately, the warmth and stillness of the situation tempt the boat-men to make use of this part of the beach as a necessary, and we cannot venture to lean out, and feast our eyes with the fine prospect of the sea, without suffering exceedingly in another sense. The landlord endeavours to comfort us, by assuring us that to-morrow's sun will dry all up.

I begin to have my apprehensions, that my letters, instead

stead of acquiring life and spirit from our progress in this kingdom, have, on the contrary, betrayed of late a great propensity towards stupidity. Heaven forbid, the enfeebling air of Valencia should have settled upon my pen! I must shake it off, and strive to afford you better entertainment.

L E T T E R XV.

Alicant, December 11, 1775.

WE have been received with the usual politeness by the British subjects residing here, whose hospitality knows no bounds, when any of their wandering countrymen appear to lay claim to it. The factory, which consists of five houses, lives in a style of elegance we did not expect to meet with any where out of a capital; every circumstance attending our reception here, is beyond measure agreeable. After so warm an acknowledgment of our obligations to the inhabitants, you will naturally suppose I shall launch out in praise of the town, and varnish over every defect; but there you will find yourself mistaken. I confess it has neither buildings nor streets to recommend it to notice; though the houses in
 general

general are solidly built, with flat roofs, covered with cement; their walls are plaistered, and every thing as white as the soil of the adjacent country; which fatigues the eye most cruelly in sun-shiny weather, that is, almost every day in the year. Then the dust flies about in whirlwinds; if it rains, there is no possibility of making one's way through the streets without boots, the *Calle-mayor* being the only paved street in the whole town. In the hot months, this place is a very furnace, its form being the best calculated in the world for intercepting the rays of the sun, and collecting them as in one focus; the mountain behind shuts out the winds, that, blowing from the cool quarters, might refresh the atmosphere; but I believe the sea-breeze must occasionally contribute to the cooling of the air. In such mild winter weather as we have felt here, it is impossible not to be delighted with the climate, and the beauties of situation that the port of Alicant affords. It stands on the middle of a narrow neck of land, that runs out into the sea a considerable way, and almost comes round in a semi-circular form; in the center of which ships ride with as much safety as in a harbour; a rocky mountain rises directly behind the town; on its summit is the castle, now fortified after the modern method, and extended far beyond the limits of the old fortrefs, great part of which was blown up, with a fragment of the rock, in the war with the allies, in the reign of our queen Anne. The English
garrison

garrison refused to capitulate, though the French gave them notice of the mine being ready to be sprung. A well that communicated with the mine, gave it some vent, and prevented the rest of the mountain from being shivered to pieces by the explosion; however, most of the officers were blown up, and the remainder of the troops so stunned by the shock, as to be many hours deprived of all power of motion.

Behind the castle-hill, is a plain some leagues in circumference, called *Las buertas*; the gardens of Alicant lying along the sea-shore, surrounded on three sides by very lofty mountains. It is a very beautiful vale, thickly studded with villages, villas, farms, and plantations of all kinds of fruit-trees; but in the hot part of the year the air is very unwholesome, and few or none escape agues or fevers. Here the fine Alicant and Tent wines are made. Only two, of the great number of proprietors of vineyards, make a practice of keeping their wine to a proper age. As the value is enhanced many-fold by keeping, the high price they get for their wines amply repays them for the time they are out of their money. Of the common sorts, about five thousand tun may be the amount, most of which is destined for the Bourdeaux merchants.

Water is the great agent, the primum mobile of all productions in this country; every thing languishes, and soon is parched up, without an ample supply of it; abundance