The iſland of Eſcombrera blocks up the entrance, and ſhelters it from the violence of wind and waves. High, bare mountains riſe very ſteep, from the water-edge, on the eaſt and weſt. On the north, a narrow, low ridge of hills, on which the city ſtands, ſhuts out the view of the inland country. We firſt rowed by the arſenal, and under the mountains on the right hand, the deepeſt and ſafeſt poſition in the whole bay, where a large fleet may lie in the utmoſt ſecurity, out of the ſight of all ſhips that may be at ſea, or even in the narrow part of the entrance of the harbour. There are at preſent two frigates and four chebecs in port. As we came along-ſide of the St. Joſeph, the commodore, ſhe fired a gun, which our ſteerſman informed us was the ſignal for weighing anchor and getting under ſail, orders being come from court for them to leave Carthagena this day. As we were deſirous of learning a little of the method and ſkill of the Spaniſh ſeamen, we deſired our maſter (who, from having been long employed in the ſervice of the Engliſh merchants, has contracted the habit of looking upon himſelf as an Engliſhman) to lie upon his oars and remain along-ſide, that we might have the pleaſure of ſeeing the men of war move out. The old ſailor laughed heartily at our requeſt, and, after reminding us that we were not at Portſmouth, nor theſe ſhips Engliſh men of war, bade his men row away, as he was very certain none of the veſſels would be ready to depart for three days at leaſt,

and

and that the gun was fired merely in compliance with the letter of the orders.

On our approach to the mouth of the harbour, we got out of the calm, ſtill water we had hitherto glided upon, and began to be toſſed about with great violence. The day grew cold, and the ſky looking lowering towards the ſea, we ſtruck directly acroſs the paſſage, in order to return to the town by the eaſt ſide of the bay. This entrance is much wider than I had any idea of; the forts on the rocks, on each promontory, ſeem to be too far diſtant from the middle to do any damage to an enemy that might think it neceſſary to puſh through; but without a ſkilful pilot, I doubt a ſtranger would pay dear for his temerity; for directly in the center of the haven, in a line between the mouth and the mole-gate, lies a ledge of rocks, only five feet under water, without any breakers or rippling near it.

The eaſt ſide of this port is much ſhallower than the weſt ſide, and the anchorage is looſe and ſandy. Veſſels have been frequently forced from their anchors, and daſhed to pieces againſt the rocks, by the ſtorms from the ſouth-weſt. However, with good cables, I was aſſured there is no great danger to be apprehended. In any other part of the harbour, the waters are perfectly dormant, never ruffled by wind or tides. There is ſo little agitation in them, that, during the ſtay of the many hundreds of veſſels deſtined for the Algerine expedition, they became

came abſolutely putrid and infectious, from the filth thrown out of the ſhips. Juſt as we landed on the pitiful platform called the mole, we had an opportunity of knowing the exact ſpot where the rocks lie. An Engliſh merchantman coming in at a great rate before the wind, but unfortunately without a pilot, ſtruck upon the ledge, and was not got off without ſome damage.

We are now going to the play, where we are not to expect any ſcenes, as it is a working-day; and the actors come out from behind a bit of red curtain hung acroſs the ſtage, and never move far from it, as a file of prompters are drawn up behind, whoſe ſhadows and motions are not unlike that kind of entertainment called *Italian ſhades*. Though there are three regiments here in garriſon, beſides engineers and naval officers, you can ſcarce imagine any thing ſo dull as this town. Except the wretched comedy, and the coffee-houſe, there is not the leaſt life or amuſement going forward. This city is large, but has very few good ſtreets, and ſtill fewer grand or remarkable buildings. The hoſpital is a large ſquare houſe, round two courts, three ſtories high towards the ſea, and only one towards the land: the architecture, and method of laying out the plan, are good; but the ſtone is of ſo ſoft and friable a contexture, that the ſea air has corroded it, and made it crumble away more than half: there is no probability of any care being taken to repair the injury.

Farther

Farther eaſt, at the foot of the ſummer-evening walk, is a ſmall church, erected in honour of St. James, the patron of Spain, who is piouſly believed to have landed here, when he came from Paleſtine to convert this country to Chriſtianity.

LETTER XVIII.

Carthagena, December 18, 1775.

I HAVE been buſy all morning walking about the fields near the town, in ſearch of ſpecimens of the various plants, that produce the falſe and true barilla; but the ſeaſon of the year is unfavourable to my reſearches, and I have only been able to meet with two ſorts. Mr. James Macdonnel, a young gentleman lately ſettled in buſineſs here, has been ſo obliging as to furniſh me with ſome notes on that head, which contain the reſult of many obſervations made on theſe plants in their vegetable ſtate, and on the different modes of cultivating and preparing them for ſale. The following pages convey the ſubſtance of his memorandums.

There are four plants, which in the early part of their growth bear ſo ſtrong a reſemblance to each other, as

would deceive any but the farmers, and very nice obſervers. Theſe four are, *barilla*, *gazul* (or, as ſome call it, *algazul)* *ſoza*, and *ſalicornia* or *ſalicor*. They are all burnt to aſhes, but are applied to different uſes, as being poſſeſſed of different qualities. Some of the roguiſh farmers mix more or leſs of the three laſt with the firſt; and it requires a compleat knowledge of the colour, taſte, and ſmell of the aſhes, to be able to detect their knavery.

The 1ſt, Barilla, is ſown afreſh every year. The greateſt height it grows to above ground is four inches: each root puſhes out a vaſt number of little ſtalks, which again are ſubdivided into ſmaller ſprigs, reſembling ſamphire, and all together form a large, ſpreading, tufted buſh. The colour is bright green; as the plant advances towards maturity, this colour dies away, till it comes to a dull green tinged with brown.

The 2d, Gazul, bears the greateſt affinity to barilla, both in quality and appearance; the principal difference conſiſts in its growing on a ſtill drier, ſalter earth, conſequently it is impregnated with a ſtronger ſalt. It does not riſe above two inches out of the ground, ſpreading out into little tufts. Its ſprigs are much flatter, and more pulpy, than thoſe of barilla, and are ſtill more like ſamphire. It is ſown but once in three, four, or five years, according to the ſoil.

The 3d, Soza, when of the ſame ſize, has the ſame appearance

pearance as gazul, but in time grows much larger, as its natural ſoil is a ſtrong ſalt-marſh; where it is to be found in large tufts of ſprigs, treble the ſize of barilla, and of a bright green colour, which it retains to the laſt.

The 4th, Salicor, has a ſtalk of a green colour, inclining to red, which laſt becomes by degrees the colour of the whole plant. From the beginning it grows upright, and much reſembles a buſh of young roſemary. Its natural ſoil is that on the declivities of hills, near ſalt-marſhes, or on the edges of the ſmall drains or channels cut by the huſbandmen for the purpoſe of watering the fields: before it has acquired its full growth, it is very like the barilla of thoſe ſeaſons in which the ground has been dunged before ſowing. In thoſe years of manuring, barilla, contrary to its nature, comes up with a tinge of red; and when burnt, falls far ſhort of its wonted goodneſs, being bitter, more impregnated with ſalts than it ſhould be, emitting a diſagreeable ſcent if held near the noſe, and raiſing a bliſter if applied for a few minutes to the tongue. The other three ſpecies always have that effect. Barilla contains leſs ſalts than the others; when burnt, it runs into a maſs reſembling a ſpungy ſtone, with a faint caſt of blue.

Algazul, after burning, comes as near barilla in its outward appearance, as it does while growing in its vegetable form; but if broken, the inſide is of a much deeper

and more gloſſy blue. Soza and Salicor are darker, and almoſt black within, of a heavier conſiſtence, with very little or no ſign of ſpungineſs.

All theſe aſhes contain a ſtrong alkali; but barilla the beſt and pureſt, though not in the greateſt quantity. Upon this principle, it is the fitteſt for making glaſs, and bleaching linen; the others are uſed in making ſoap: each of them would whiten linen, but all, except barilla, would burn it. A good crop of barilla impoveriſhes the land to ſuch a degree, that it cannot bear good barilla a ſecond ſeaſon, being quite exhauſted. To avoid this inconvenience, the richer farmers lay manure upon the ground, and let it lie fallow for a ſeaſon; at the end of which, it is ſown afreſh without danger, as the weeds that have ſprung up in the year of reſt, have carried off all the pernicious effects of the dung. A proper ſucceſſion of crops is thus ſecured by manuring and fallowing different parts of the farm, each in its turn. The poorer tribe of cultivators cannot purſue the ſame method, for want of capital, and are therefore under the neceſſity of ſowing their lands immediately after manuring, which yields them a profit juſt ſufficient to afford a preſent ſcanty maintenance, though the quality and price of their barilla be but trifling.

The method uſed in making barilla, is the ſame as that we follow in the north of England, in burning kelp. The plant, as ſoon as ripe, is plucked up and laid in heaps,

heaps, then ſet on fire; the ſalt juices run out below, into a hole made in the ground, where they conſolidate into a black vitrified lump, which is left about a fortnight to cool. An acre may give about a tun. I was told, that there is a ſpecies of *Scarabaeus*, or beetle, that burrows in the root of the barilla, and there depoſits its eggs, which foxes are ſo fond of as to dig up the plant to come at this favourite morſel. To gratify this appetite, they would in one night lay waſte a whole plantation, if the peaſants did not keep a ſtrict watch with guns to deſtroy or drive them away. Nevertheleſs, I cannot depend enough upon my information, to vouch for its authenticity.

Not far from Carthagena, is a place called Almazaron, where they gather a fine red earth called Almagra, uſed in the manufactures of Saint Ildephonſo, for poliſhing looking-glaſſes. In Seville, it is worked up with the tobacco, to give it a colour, fix its volatility, and communicate to it that ſoftneſs, which conſtitutes the principal merit of Spaniſh ſnuff.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

Iſnallos, 7 at Night, December 24, 1775.

WE are juſt arrived at this diſmal ruinous village of mud walls, after the hardeſt day's labour of our whole journey, benighted, our baggage-vehicle broken to pieces, and every bone about us aching. We have been fourteen hours on the road without unharneſſing the mules. I have walked many miles to-day, which has tired my legs; but at leaſt my ſpirits are leſs jaded than they would have been had I remained locked up in the chaiſe, through the dangerous paſſages and dreadful precipices of this day. I am happy to hear that from hence to Cadiz is almoſt all level road, and, if it does not rain, not very bad; if there ſhould fall a great quantity of rain, I doubt we may come to ſtick in the clays of Andaluſia. One cook is hard at work below ſtairs, making us a diſh of ſomething warm to cheer our drooping hearts; with that help, a bottle of wine, and a tolerable clean room, we hope ſoon to drive away all remembrance of our diſtreſſes and fatigues.

On the 19th, we left Carthagena, and for two long days travelled up the plain, 'till the two ridges of mountains, that run on each ſide of it, unite at its head.

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The firſt part of this plain is very naked, but well cultivated, the laſt two-thirds are as compleat a deſart as any in the ſands of Africa; not a buſh, tree, or houſe, to be ſeen in all the vaſt expanſe of level ground; the mountains are as bare as the low lands. The want of water, productive of a want of inhabitants, accounts for this prodigious deſolation; for the ſoil ſeems very fit for tillage. One of the days we dined at Lorea, a large town at the foot of the hills. I ſaw nothing in it to make a note of, but the dreſs of a gipſy, daughter to the innkeeper. Her hair was tied in a club, with a bunch of ſcarlet ribbons; large drops hung from her ears; and on her breaſt ſhe wore a load of relics and hallowed metals; the ſleeves of her gown were faſtened together behind by a long blue ribbon, that hung to the ground. I could not prevail upon her to explain the uſe of this laſt piece of ornament.

On the 21ſt, the ſcene changed, but did not improve upon us; the dry bed of a torrent was our highway for half the day, and ſteep barren mountains for the remainder. This proved the firſt day of diſagreeable weather we had met with on the road ſince we left France. It blew a perfect hurricane, and rained very heavily, with a ſharp biting wind.

The next morning brought us back ſunſhine and genial warmth; the road grew mountainous, and more diſguſtingly bare, except for a mile or two, while we paſſed through

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an uneven country pretty well tilled, and planted with large buſhy evergreen oaks, exactly in the manner of ſome of our Engliſh parks. We ſaw this day many vultures on wing, but they never came within reach of our guns. I can give you no information concerning the town of Baça, as we entered it after it was dark, and left it before break of day. It ſtands quite in a bottom, ſurrounded by high mountains, over which we, next morning, found the paſſage both difficult and frightful. Not the leaſt agreeable patch of country on the heights, except ſome poor remains of ancient foreſts of evergreen oaks. We dined at a venta near ſome mountains, where we were told of mines of gold having been wrought in days of yore, but now long loſt and forgotten; the little brook that runs down from them abounds in many metallic particles, which appeared to the eye lead and copper. Much *gypſum*, or plaiſter-ſtone, is alſo to be found in this torrent.

Yeſterday afternoon, we had nothing but rapid aſcents and deſcents, rendered incredibly greaſy and fatiguing by the heavy rain of the foregoing night. Guadix, an epiſcopal ſee, is exactly ſituated in the ſame kind of gully as Baça; a narrow valley worn down by the river. The clay-hills, that encompaſs it on every ſide, are the moſt extraordinary in nature; they are very high, and waſhed into broken maſſes, reſembling ſpires, towers, and miſhapen rocks. Whole villages are dug in them, the windows

windows of which appear like pigeon, or rather marten holes. The paſſage through is remarkably ſingular, winding for half a mile between two huge rugged walls of earth, without the leaſt mixture of rock or gravel.

The Cueſta yerma, which with the utmoſt difficulty we climbed up this morning, is perhaps not to be matched for badneſs on any carriage-road in the world. All our mules yoked together were ſcarce able to wrench either of the carriages out of the narrow paſs between the rocks, or drag them up the almoſt perpendicular parts of this abominable mountain. After this happy deliverance from our well-grounded fears of paſſing the whole day, and perhaps night, in fruitleſs endeavours to extricate ourſelves, we travelled along a high level country, winding round the mountains of Granada. The wind was very loud, but the air warm and pleaſant, though the ſnow lay in view along the top of that high ridge of mountains called, from their covering of ſnow, *ſierra nevada.*

Thus, methinks, I have brought you very fairly as far as myſelf on our dreary journey; and am of opinion, that neither the beauties of nature, nor thoſe of art, to be met with in this kingdom, can be deemed an equivalent for the tedioufneſs of travelling, the badneſs of the roads, or the abominable accommodations of the inns: certain it is, that no man has as yet undertaken this tour a ſecond