

1786. of six hundred leagues, not being worthy of notice. There is no sign of
April. land so infallible as this variety of winds; yet natural philosophers will find it difficult perhaps to explain, in what manner the influence of a small island, in the midst of an immense ocean, can thus extend itself over a hundred leagues. At the same time it is not sufficient for a navigator to presume that he is at that distance from an island, if nothing indicates the point of the compass in which he may expect to fall in with it. The direction of the flight of birds after sun-set never gave me the slightest information, and I am fully convinced that all their movements through the air are determined by the allurements of their prey. At the fall of night I have seen sea-fowl direct their flight towards ten different points of the horizon, and I should suppose the most enthusiastic augurs would hardly have ventured from their flight to have drawn any conclusion.

4. On the 4th of April, when at the distance of no more than sixty leagues from Easter island, I saw no birds, and the wind was at the north-north-west. It is probable, if I had not known, with certainty, the position of the island, I should have imagined that I had passed it, and should have gone a different course. These reflexions were made on the spot; and I cannot help confessing that the discovery of islands is the result of chance only, and that often inferences and deductions the most sagacious in appearance have no tendency but to mislead the navigator.

8. On the 8th of April, at two in the afternoon, I had sight of Easter island, at the distance of twelve leagues, bearing west 5° south. The sea was high with the wind at north, which had not been steady for four days, but had shifted continually by the west from north to south. The proximity of a small island was not in my opinion the only cause of this inconstancy; and I conceive it probable that in the latitude of 27° the trade wind is not regular at this period of the year. The part which I saw of the island was the eastern point. I was precisely in the place where Davis, in 1686, fell in with an island of sand, and observed, twelve leagues farther, land to the west, which captain Cook and M Dalrymple have supposed to be Easter Island, found again in 1722 by Roggewein. But these two navigators,

1786. though men of enlightened minds, have not sufficiently considered what
April. Wafer relates upon the subject; who says (in page 300 of the Rouen edition) "That captain Davis having taken his departure from the Gallapagos, with the intention of returning to Europe by Cape Horn, and of touching only at Juan Fernandez, felt, in the latitude of 12° south, a terrible shock, which led him to suppose that he had struck upon a rock. He had kept constantly on a southern course, and according to his reckoning was at the distance of a hundred and fifty leagues from the American continent. He afterwards learned, that, precisely at the same time, there had been an earthquake at Lima. Having recovered from his alarm, he continued to run south, south by east and south-east, till he reached the latitude of 27° 20', and he relates, that at two in the morning the people stationed on the fore-castle heard the sea breaking on a beach. He lay to till day-light, when he perceived a small island of sand, but no rock near it, which he approached within a quarter of a mile, and then saw, about twelve leagues farther west, a considerable tract of land, which, from the intervals between the capes, he conceived to be a cluster of islands. Davis continued his course towards Juan Fernandez without examining it; but Wafer says, that this small island of sand is situated at the distance of five hundred leagues from Copiapo, and of six hundred from the Gallapagos." The impossibility of this result has never been sufficiently attended to. If Davis, being in 12° south latitude, and a hundred and fifty leagues from the coast of America, made good a south-south-east course, as Wafer affirms, since it is evident that this captain of freebooters must have steered with an easterly wind, which blows very frequently in those latitudes, in order to accomplish his design of proceeding to Juan Fernandez, we may conclude with M^r Pingre that there is a mistake of a figure in Dampier's quotation, and that Davis's land is only two hundred leagues instead of five hundred from Copiapo. It would then be probable, that Davis's two islands are those of S^t Ambrosio and S^t Felix, a little to the north of Copiapo; but the pilots of the buccaneers were not so nice in their observations, and never obtained a latitude short of 30' or 40'. I would have spared my readers this short geographical discussion, if I had not the opinion to combat of two so justly celebrated navigators. I must

1786. however remark, that Cook himself was in doubt, and that he says he would
April. have decided the question if he had had time to proceed to the eastward of
Easter island. As I have run down three hundred leagues in that parallel,
and did not discover the island of sand, in my opinion no doubt ought any
longer to be entertained upon the subject, and I conceive the problem to
be fairly resolved*.

* In adopting the solution of la Pérouse, I think it necessary to enter more at large into the proofs derived from the journals of the different navigators.

It appears certain, as Pingré, Cook, and la Pérouse remark, that there is a mistake of a figure in Dampier, and that the supposed land of Davis can be only two hundred leagues from the American coast.

I agree with our navigator, that the observations of longitude taken in Davis's time were so erroneous, that the latitudes only can be depended upon. It is accordingly from Wafer's narrative that Davis's route, subsequent to his departure from the Gallapagos, must be traced. Davis, after leaving the Gallapago islands, stretched southward as far as latitude 12°, where he felt a terrible shock, &c. He had constantly steered a south course, and was then a hundred and fifty leagues from the continent of America.

By marking this first point on the chart it will appear, that he was in 87° west longitude, or nearly so.

He continued his course south, south by east and south-east as far as the land which he discovered in latitude 27° 20'.

It appears then from Davis's route, thus traced, that he must really have been about two hundred leagues from Copiapo and six hundred from the Gallapagos, or one degree to the south-east of the southern point of the position assigned in the French charts to the islands of St Felix and St Ambrose: and accordingly, the large tract of land which Davis perceived twelve leagues to the westward must have been these islands.

They are placed by the English charts in 15° of south latitude.

By the French in 25°.

By those of Green, between 26° 20' and 27°.

Cook acknowledges that he missed the true latitude of these islands, by trusting to the tables of latitudes and longitudes in Robertson's Elements of Navigation, rather than to Green's chart. He saw certain signs of land in the vicinity of 25° south latitude.

Cook, when in 25° 50' and 25° 30', could neither see Davis's land, which does not exist, nor the islands of St Felix and St Ambrose, which must be situate in about 27°, and of which he observed some indications.

La Pérouse, in coming from the east; and running down three hundred leagues in the parallel of

1786. During the night between the 8th and 9th of April, I stretched along
April. the coast of Easter island at the distance of three leagues. The weather
was clear, and in less than three hours the wind had veered to every point
from the north to the south-east. At day-break I steered for Cook's Bay,
which of all those in the island is the most sheltered from the easterly
winds. It is open to the west only, and the weather was so fine that I was
in hopes the wind would not blow from that quarter for several days. At
eleven o'clock I was not more than a league distant from the anchorage. The
Astrolabe had already let go her anchor; and I dropped mine very near
her; but the bottom shelved so suddenly that neither of them held, and we
were obliged to heave them up and to tack twice in order to regain the
anchorage.

This circumstance did not damp the ardour of the Indians, who swam
after us to the distance of a league in the offing, and came on board with a
smiling countenance and an air of security, which gave me the most favour-
able impression of their character. Men more suspicious, when they saw
us again under sail, would have feared the being carried away from their
native country. But the idea of so perfidious an act appeared not to have
entered their minds. They were in the midst of us naked, and without

Easter Island, could see neither Davis's land, nor the islands of St Felix and St Ambrose, the longitude of which is from 26° to 27° to the eastward of that island.

It is evident then, as Captain Cook and Dalrymple thought, that Easter island, found again by Roggewein in 1722, cannot be Davis's land.

It is evident, that the islands of St Felix and St Ambrose cannot exist in the position assigned them in the English charts; for, as Cook remarks, Davis must have fallen in with them in his way.

It is evident, that the islands of St Felix and St Ambrose cannot exist in the position assigned them in the French charts, a position corresponding with that laid down by Robertson, since they must then have been found by Cook.

And thus it appears demonstrated, that Davis's land does not exist; but that islands exist in the 27° of south latitude, at about two hundred leagues from Copiapo; that these islands are no other than those of St Felix and St Ambrose erroneously laid down in all the charts, and are the supposed land of Davis. Such at least is the opinion I have formed after comparing the journals of the different navigators. It is that also of a much esteemed navigator of modern times; I mean Bougainville.—
(French Editor.)

1786. arms, having a small cord only tied round their loins to keep in it's place a
April. bundle of grass intended to cover what it is usual with all nations to conceal.

Mr. Hodges, the painter, who accompanied Cook in his second voyage, has not given of the physiognomy of these Indians a just delineation. It is generally agreeable, but exhibits considerable variety, and has none of the characteristic traits observable in the Malays, the Chinese, and the natives of Chili.

I made them several presents, and found that they preferred small remnants of printed cotton, about half a yard long, to nails, knives, and beads; but they were still fonder of hats. I had too small a quantity, however, to gratify the taste of more than a few. At eight in the evening I dismissed my new guests, giving them to understand, by signs, that I should come on shore at break of day. They entered their boat dancing for joy, and when at the distance of about two musket-shots from the shore, on which the surf broke with great violence, threw themselves into the sea; but they had taken the precaution of tying up my presents in small bundles, which each placed on his head to preserve them dry.

CHAPTER IV.

Description of Easter Island—Occurrences there—Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants.

COOK's Bay in Easter Island (*Charts and Plates*, N° 10), lies in 27° 11' south latitude, and 111° 55' 30" west longitude. It is the only anchoring-place which is sheltered from the east and south-east winds, which usually blow in these latitudes. With a westerly gale it would be a situation of great danger, but the winds never blow from this quarter till after having passed from the east to the north-east, the north, and successively to the west. There is therefore time to get under way and make sail, and it is sufficient to stand off shore about a quarter of a league to be out of all danger. This bay is easily distinguished. After having doubled the two rocks off the southern point of the island, the shore must be kept at the distance of a mile. A small sandy bay soon appears in sight, and is the most distinguishing and certain mark. When this bears east by south, and the two rocks are shut in by the point, you may come to anchor in twenty fathoms sandy bottom, at a quarter of a league from the shore. At a greater distance soundings are not to be found in less than thirty-five or forty fathoms, and the depth increases so rapidly that the anchor will not hold. At the foot of one of the statues of which I shall shortly speak, the landing is perfectly good.

At day-break I made preparation for our going on shore. I had reason to expect friends, because I had loaded all who came on board with presents; but I was too well acquainted with the narratives of different voyagers not to be aware, that these Indians are only children of a larger growth, in whom the sight of our different moveables excites such strong desires that they would use every effort to get possession of them. I therefore thought it

1786. necessary to restrain them by fear, and gave orders that a small military
April. accompaniment should form part of our landing. It consisted of four boats with twelve armed soldiers. M^r de Langle and myself were followed by all the passengers and officers, except those required for the necessary service on board the two frigates; so that, including our boat's crew, we amounted to about seventy persons.

Four or five hundred Indians waited for us on shore. They were without arms; some of them covered with white or yellow cloths; but the greater number naked. Several were tattooed, and had their faces painted red: their cries and physiognomy were expressive of joy, and they advanced to offer us their hands and assist us in landing.

The island, in this part, is elevated about twenty feet above the sea; the mountains inland are about seven or eight hundred toises distant, and from their feet the land slopes by a gradual descent to the sea. This space abounds with a kind of herbage which I should suppose proper for feeding cattle. It covers large stones lying on the surface, which appeared to me to be exactly the same as those of the Isle of France, called in that country *giraumons* (pumpkins), because most of them are of the size of that fruit. These stones, which we found very troublesome in walking, are a real benefit to the soil, because they preserve the coolness and humidity of the earth, and in part supply the salutary shade of the trees, which the inhabitants have had the imprudence to cut down, no doubt at some very distant period. This has exposed their soil to the burning ardor of the sun, and has deprived them of ravines, brooks, and springs. They were ignorant that in these small islands, in the midst of an immense ocean, the coolness of the earth covered with trees can alone detain and condense the clouds, and by that means keep up an almost continual rain upon the mountains, which descends in springs and brooks to the different quarters. The islands which are deprived of this advantage, are reduced to the most dreadful aridity, which, gradually destroying the plants and shrubs, renders them almost uninhabitable. M^r de Langle as well as myself had no doubt that this people were indebted to the imprudence of their ancestors for their present

unfortunate situation; and it is probable that the other islands of the South sea are supplied with streams merely because they happily possess inaccessible mountains, on which it has been impossible to cut down the wood; so that nature in these last islands has been more liberal under the appearance of greater restraints of her gifts, by reserving certain portions of the surface to which the islanders have been unable to reach. A long residence on the Isle of France, which so strikingly resembles Easter Island, has convinced me that trees never spring up again unless defended from the sea breezes by other trees, or by a walled inclosure; and it is this knowledge which has pointed out to me the cause of the devastation of Easter Island. The inhabitants have less reason to complain of the eruptions of their volcanoes, which have long since been extinguished, than of their own imprudent exertions. But as man, of all living creatures, the most readily habituates himself to his local situation, this people appeared to me less unfortunate than they did to captain Cook and M^r Forster. These navigators arrived at Easter Island after a long and painful voyage, in want of every necessary, and afflicted with the sea scurvy. They found neither water, nor wood, nor swine. A few fowls, bananas, and potatoes, afford very inadequate supplies to men under such circumstances. Their narratives were influenced by their situation. Ours was infinitely better. Our people were in perfect health. We had supplied ourselves at Chili with every necessary for several months, and we had no other wish, as to this people, than to confer benefits upon them. We brought them goats, sheep, and hogs, together with the seeds of the orange and lemon trees, the cotton plant, maize, and generally all the vegetable species capable of thriving upon their island.

Our first care after landing was to form an inclosure by ranging our armed men in a circle; and, having directed the natives to leave this space empty, we pitched a tent in it. I had landed the presents I intended to make, as well as the different animals; but as I had expressly forbidden my men to fire, or even to keep at a distance by blows of their muskets such of the Indians as might be troublesome, the soldiers themselves very speedily became objects of the rapacity of these islanders, who soon became

1786.
April.

1786. very numerous. We were surrounded by at least eight hundred, among
April. whom there were certainly a hundred and fifty women. The faces of many of these females were agreeable, and they offered their favours to every one who would make them a present. The Indians solicited us to accept their offers, and some among them gave us an exhibition of the pleasures they were capable of affording. The agents in these transactions were no otherwise concealed than by a simple covering of cloth, the manufacture of the country. While our attention was attracted to these tricks of the women, our hats were taken from our heads, and our handkerchiefs stolen out of our pockets. The whole multitude appeared to be accomplices in these thefts; for upon the commission of each individual act, they all fled like a flock of birds when suddenly alarmed. Perceiving, however, that we had no disposition to make use of our muskets, they returned in a few minutes, renewed their caresses, with a sharp look out for the opportunity of committing a new theft. This succession of manœuvres continued the whole morning. As we were to leave the island in the evening, and our short stay would consequently not allow us to attend to their education, we determined to divert ourselves with the stratagems and tricks they were continually putting in practice to rob us; and to remove every disposition to resentment on the part of my people, which might have been followed by unpleasant consequences, I declared that I would make good the losses they might sustain on this occasion. The Indians were without arms, except that three or four out of this great number had each a wooden club of no formidable magnitude. Some among them appeared to exercise a small degree of authority over the others. I supposed these to be chiefs, and I distributed among them medals, which I hung to their necks with a chain; but I soon perceived that their pre-eminence consisted in nothing but their superiority of talents, and greater dexterity in promoting the pillage; and though they pretended to defend us, and actually ran after those who stole our handkerchiefs, it was very easy to perceive that they had not the least intention of overtaking the delinquents.

As we had only eight or ten hours to remain on the island, and were not

1786. willing to lose any time, I committed the care of the tent and our effects
April. to M^r d'Escures, my first lieutenant, to whom I also gave the command of all the soldiers and sailors who were on shore. We afterwards divided ourselves into two bodies; the first, under the orders of M^r de Langle, was directed to penetrate as far as possible into the island, to sow grain in all such places as appeared proper for that purpose, to examine the soil, plants, culture, population, and monuments of this island, and generally every other thing which might appear interesting among this very extraordinary people. Those who thought themselves capable of walking over a great extent of ground were of his party. He was accompanied by M^{esses} Dagelet, Lamanon, Duché, Dufresne, de la Martinière, father Receveur, the abbé Mongès, and the gardener. The second party, of which I was one, contented itself with visiting the monuments, platforms, houses, and plantations, at the distance of a league round our tent. The drawings of these monuments by M^r Hodges give but a very imperfect notion of what we saw. M^r Forster thinks them the work of a people much more considerable than at present exists on the island, but his opinion does not appear to me to be well founded. The largest of the rude busts which are upon these platforms, was not found by actual measurement to be more than fourteen feet six inches in height, seven feet six inches broad at the shoulders, three feet thick at the belly, six feet broad and five thick at the base; and these busts might well be the work of the present generation, which I think I may estimate without exaggeration at two thousand persons. The number of women appeared nearly equal to that of the men; the children in the same proportion as in other countries; and though, out of about twelve hundred inhabitants collected in the neighbourhood of the bay, on account of our arrival, there were certainly not more than three hundred females, I could deduce no other inference than that the islanders from remoter situations had come to see our vessels, while their women, either more delicate or busied with their household concerns and families, had remained in their houses, so that we saw only those who lived near the bay. The account of M^r de Langle confirms this opinion, who saw in the interior part of the island a great many women and children. We all entered into those caverns in which M^r Forster and some officers of

1786.
April. captain Cook had first supposed the women might have been concealed. They are subterraneous dwelling-places, of the same form as others which I shall describe hereafter, and in which we found small faggots, the largest not exceeding five feet in length, and six inches in diameter. That the inhabitants however concealed their women, when captain Cook visited them in 1772, there can be no doubt; but it is impossible for me to ascertain the cause. It is probable, that to his generous conduct with regard to this people we were indebted for the confidence they showed us, which enabled us to judge more accurately of the state of their population.

All the monuments which at present exist, and of which M^r Duché has given a very exact drawing, (*Charts and Plates*, N^o 11.) appeared to be very ancient. They are placed in morais, or burying-places, as may be judged from the great quantity of bones which we found near them. The form of their present government has no doubt rendered their condition so equal, that no chief at present exists of sufficient consideration for a number of men to employ themselves in erecting a statue to preserve his memory. Instead of these colossal monuments, they have substituted small pyramidal heaps of stones, the top stone of which is white-washed with lime. These monuments, which may be constructed in the course of an hour by a single man, are abundant on the sea-shore; and an Indian, by lying along upon the ground, made us clearly understand that they covered a grave; and afterwards, by raising his hands towards the sky, he appeared evidently desirous of expressing to us that he believed in another life. I was cautious at first of admitting this opinion, and I must confess that I thought them very far from entertaining such a sentiment; but, having seen them repeat this sign to many other persons, and M^r de Langle, who travelled into the interior parts of the island, having reported the same fact, I had no further doubt respecting it, and I believe that all our officers and passengers were of the same opinion. We did not however observe any traces of religion; for I cannot imagine that any person could take these statues for idols, though the Indians showed a kind of veneration for them. These colossal busts, of which I have before given the dimensions, and which prove the small progress this people have made in the art of

1786.
April. sculpture, are formed of the volcanic production known by naturalists under the name of *lapillo*. It is so easily crumbled and so extremely light that some of captain Cook's officers supposed it to be artificial, and composed of a kind of mortar which hardened in the air. It only remains to explain how so considerable a weight should have been raised without any point of support. But as we are certain that it is a very light volcanic stone, it would be easy, with levers five or six toises long, and a stone placed underneath as the fulcrum, to raise a still more considerable weight. A hundred men would be sufficient for this operation, and the space does not allow room for more. Thus the wonder disappears; we restore to nature its stone of *lapillo*, which is not factitious, and there is reason to believe, that, if there are no other more modern monuments in the island, it is because all conditions are equal; because a man finds little temptation to become king of a people almost naked, and who live upon potatoes and yams; and because, as these Indians cannot make war from the want of neighbours, they have no need of a chief.

I can offer nothing but conjectures respecting the manners of this people, of whose language I knew nothing, and whom I only saw for a single day. But, possessed of the experience of former navigators, I was perfectly acquainted with their situation, to which I could apply my own reflections.

Scarcely a tenth part of the island is cultivated, and I am persuaded that three days' labour of each Indian is sufficient to procure subsistence for a year. This facility of supplying the wants of life induced me to think, that the productions of the earth were in common; and the more so, as I am almost certain that the houses are common, at least to a whole village or district. I measured one of these houses near our tent*. It was three hundred and ten feet long, ten feet wide, and ten feet high in the middle. Its form was that of a canoe reversed. Its only entrance was by two doors, two feet high, through which it was necessary

* As it was not yet finished, captain Cook could not have seen it.

1786. to crawl on all fours. This house is large enough to contain upwards of
April. two hundred persons. It is not the dwelling of a chief, for it is without furniture, and so great a space would be useless to him. It forms a village by itself, with the addition of two or three other small houses at a little distance.

There is probably a chief in each district, who looks more particularly after the plantations. Captain Cook imagined that this chief was the proprietor; but, if this celebrated navigator found any difficulty in procuring a considerable quantity of potatoes and yams, it must be attributed less to the want of these vegetables, than to the necessity of obtaining almost a general consent for selling them.

With regard to the women, I dare not venture to affirm, that they are common to a whole district, and the children to the republic: but it is certain, that no Indian appeared to possess the authority of a husband over any of the women; and if it be true, that they are the property of the men, it must be confessed that it is a property of which they are very prodigal.

Some of the habitations are subterraneous, as I have already remarked, but others are formed of rushes, which proves that there are marshy places in the island. These rushes are very skilfully arranged, and are a perfect defence against the rain. The edifice rests on a low wall of cut stone* eighteen inches thick, in which holes are made at equal distances to receive the poles, which form the framing and are bended over into an arch. Mats of rush fill up the space between these poles.

It cannot be doubted, as captain Cook observes, that these people have had the same origin with those of the other islands of the South sea. Their colour, features, and language are the same, and their clothes are likewise fabricated out of the bark of the mulberry; but they are very scarce, because the want of humidity has destroyed these trees. The few which

* These are not free-stone, but solid lava.

remain, are only three feet high, and it is even necessary to surround them with a wall to defend them from the winds. It is observable that these trees never grow higher than the walls by which they are sheltered. I have no doubt that in former times these islanders must have possessed the same productions as those of the Society Isles. Their fruit-trees must have perished by the drought, as well as the dogs and swine, to whom water is absolutely necessary. But man, who in Hudson's strait drinks the oil of the whale, becomes accustomed to every thing; and I have seen the natives of Easter Island drink sea-water, like the albatros of Cape Horn. It was the rainy season, and a small quantity of brackish water was found in cavities near the shore. They offered it to us in calabashes, but it disgusted the most thirsty. I do not flatter myself, that the hogs I gave them will multiply; but I hope that the goats and sheep, which drink but little, and are fond of salt, will thrive in the island.

At one in the afternoon I returned to the tent, with the intention of going on board, in order that Mr Clonard, my second, might come on shore in his turn. Arrived there, I found almost every one without either hat or handkerchief. Our forbearance had encouraged the pilferers, and I had shared myself no better than the rest. An Indian who assisted me to descend from a platform, after rendering me this service, took away my hat and fled with the utmost speed, followed as usual by all the others. I did not suffer him to be pursued, not being desirous of the exclusive privilege of defence from the sun, as we were almost all without hats. I continued to examine this platform, which is the monument most expressive of the ancient talents of this people for building; for the pompous title of architecture cannot be applied here with any propriety. They appear never to have had the least knowledge of any cement, but they cut and fashion the stones in perfection, and have placed them according to the regular rules for joining masses of this material.

I collected specimens of these stones, and found them to consist of lavas of different density. The lightest, which must consequently be the soonest decomposed, forms the upper soil of the interior of the island.

1786.
April.

1786. That which is nearer the sea is constructed of a lava infinitely more compact; and I do not know of any instrument or substance in the possession of these islanders sufficiently hard to cut these last stones: a longer residence in the island might perhaps have afforded some explanation of this subject.

At two in the evening I returned on board, and M^r de Clonard went on shore. Soon afterwards two officers of the *Astrolabe* came to inform me, that the Indians had committed a new theft, which had occasioned a quarrel rather of a serious nature. Certain divers had cut the hawser of the *Astrolabe's* boat under water, and carried off her grapnel. This was not perceived till the thieves had advanced to some distance inland. As the grapnel was an article we could not dispense with, two officers and several soldiers pursued them; but they were assailed by a shower of stones. A musket loaded with powder and fired in the air had no effect, so that they were obliged at length to discharge a single piece with small shot, some grains of which no doubt struck one of the Indians; for they refrained from throwing stones, and our officers returned unmolested to the tent: but it was impossible to overtake the thieves, who must have been astonished at not having been able before to weary our patience.

They soon however returned and surrounded our residence, where they repeated the offer of their women, and we were as good friends as at first. At six in the evening every thing was re-embarked, the boats returned on board, and I made the signal for weighing. Before we set sail M^r de Langle gave me an account of his journey into the interior of the island, which I shall relate in the next chapter. He had sown various seeds during his excursion, and had shown marks of the most extreme kindness to the natives. I must observe, however, as the finishing stroke to their portrait, that a kind of chief, to whom M^r de Langle made a present of a he and a she goat, received them with one hand, and robbed him of his handkerchief with the other.

It is certain that these people have not the same notions of theft as we

1786. have. It is probable that they attach no ideas of shame to this action; though they very well know that it is an act of injustice, since they take flight on the instant of committing it, to avoid the punishment which they no doubt fear, and which we should not have failed to have inflicted in proportion to the offence, if we had intended to have made any stay upon the island: for our extreme lenity must otherwise have produced the most serious mischief.

No person who reads the narratives of modern navigators can imagine the Indians of the South sea to be in a savage state. On the contrary, they must have made very great progress in civilisation, and I believe them to be as corrupt as the circumstances in which they are placed will allow them to be. My opinion in this respect is not founded on the various thefts they committed, but on the manner in which they effected them. The most daring rascals of Europe are less hypocritical than the natives of these islands. All their caresses were false. Their physiognomy does not express a single sentiment of truth. The object most to be suspected is he who has just received a present, or who appears to be the most earnest in rendering a thousand little services.

They committed an act of violence on two young girls of about thirteen or fourteen years of age, by bringing them near us, in hopes of receiving a reward. The repugnance of these young Indians was a proof that the law of the country was violated in their persons: None of our people availed themselves of the barbarous right thus attempted to be conveyed to them; and if certain moments were devoted to nature, the desire and consent were mutual, and the women made the first offers.

I found in this country all the arts of the Society Islands, but with much less power of exercising them, for want of the raw materials. Their canoes are also of the same form, but they are composed of very narrow planks, four or five feet long, and at most will carry only four men. I saw but three of these boats in this part of the island, and should be little surprised if, for want of wood, they were soon to be reduced to none.

786. But they have learned to do without them. For they swim so well, that
April. they will leave the shore to the distance of two leagues in the roughest
sea; and by preference, for the sake of pleasure, land on their return at
the place where the surf beats the strongest.

The coast seemed to me to afford few fish, and I believe that most of
their articles of food are of the vegetable kind. They live on potatoes,
yams, bananas, sugar-cane, and a small fruit which grows on the rocks on
the sea-coast, resembling the grapes which are found near the tropic in
the Atlantic ocean. A few fowls, which are very scarce upon this island,
cannot be considered as any resource. Our party in their excursion saw
no land bird, and even those of the sea are not very common.

The ground is cultivated with great skill. The natives collect the
grass and other vegetables, which they heap together and burn for the
sake of the ashes, as a manure. The banana trees are planted in lines.
They likewise cultivate the solanum or night-shade, but I am ignorant to
what use they apply it. If I knew them to possess vessels capable of re-
sisting fire, I should conclude that, as is done in Madagascar and the Isle
of France, they dress and eat it in the same way as spinach; but they
have no other means of cooking their victuals than the one practised at the
Society Islands, by digging a hole in the earth and covering their po-
tatoes or yams with ignited stones or coals mixed with earth; so that all
their food may be said to be baked, as in an oven.

The care they took to measure our vessel convinced me, that they had
not contemplated our arts with stupidity. They examined our cables,
our anchors, our compass, and our steering wheel; and in the evening
they returned with a string to take their measure over again; which
showed that they had had some discussions upon the subject on shore,
and that doubts had remained in their mind. I esteemed them the less
from their appearing to be capable of reflection; and I left them one
subject to reflect upon, which will probably escape their notice; namely,
that we made no use of our power against them, which they did not mis-

understand, for the mere motion of a musket levelled in sport put them
to flight. On the contrary we have landed in their island merely to do them
service. We have loaded them with presents. The feeble and the weak,
particularly children at the breast, were the marked objects of our caresses.
We have sown in their fields every kind of useful grain. We have left
hogs, goats and sheep in their habitations, which will probably multiply;
in exchange for all which we demanded nothing. Nevertheless they
threw stones at us, and robbed us of every thing which it was possible
for them to carry off. I must again remark, that it would have been im-
prudent in other circumstances to have behaved with so much mildness;
but I was determined to depart in the night, and flattered myself that
at day-break, when they no longer saw our vessels, they would attribute
our speedy departure to the just discontent we must entertain at their
proceedings, and that this reflection would render them better. How-
ever chimerical this notion may be, it is of very little consequence to na-
vigators, as the island itself offers scarcely any supply to vessels, and is be-
side at a small distance only from the Society Islands*.

* Easter Island, discovered in 1722, by Roggewein, appears, as la Pérouse observes, to have un-
dergone a revolution in its population and the productions of its soil: at least it is probable from the
difference in the narratives of these two navigators. The reader who may wish to make the com-
parison may consult the Voyage of Roggewein, printed at the Hague in 1739, or the Abridgement,
by the President de Brosses, in his work entitled *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes*,
Vol. II. p. 226, and following. (French Editor.)

1786.
April.

CHAPTER V.

Excursion of M^r de Langle into the interior Parts of Easter Island.—New Observations on the Manners and Arts of the Natives, the Quality and Culture of their Soil, &c.

“ I SET off at eight in the morning, accompanied by M^{esses} Dagelet, de Lamanon, Dufresne, Duché, the abbé Mongès, father Receveur, and the gardener. We first proceeded inland to the eastward, over hills covered with volcanic stones, which rendered our walk very laborious; but I soon perceived that there were paths of easy communication between house and house, of which we took the advantage, and visited several plantations of yams and potatoes. The soil of these plantations was a very fat vegetable earth, which the gardener judged proper for the culture of our seeds. He sowed cabbage, carrots, beet, maize, and pumpions; and we endeavoured to make the natives comprehend, that these grains would produce fruits and roots proper for food. They understood us perfectly, and in consequence showed us the best grounds, and the places where they were desirous of seeing our new productions. To the leguminous plants we added the orange, the lemon, and the cotton trees, explaining to them that these were trees, and that what we had sown before were plants.

“ We found no other shrub but the paper-mulberry* and the mimosa, but there were fields of considerable extent of night-shade, which these people appeared to me to cultivate in grounds exhausted by yams and po-

* *Morus papyrifera*, abundant in Japan, where the bark is made into paper. This very ligneous bark serves the women of Louisiana for different works made of the silk which is derived from it. The leaf affords excellent nourishment for the silk-worm. This tree is at present cultivated in France. (French Editor.)

tatoes. We continued our journey towards the mountains, which, though considerably elevated, all terminate in an easy slope, and are covered with grass. We perceived no trace of any ravine or stream. After having proceeded about two leagues to the east, we returned by the south-east coast, along which we had sailed the day before in our ships, and upon which, by the help of our telescopes, we had perceived a great number of monuments. Of these some were fallen down, the natives taking no care to repair them, and others standing, with their platforms half gone to decay. The largest of those which I measured was fifteen feet high, including the capital, which was three feet and an inch, and consisted of a very light porous lava. It's breadth at the shoulders was six feet seven inches, and it's thickness at the base two feet seven inches.

“ Having afterwards observed some habitations collected together, I directed my course towards this kind of village, of which one of the houses was three hundred and thirty feet long, and of the form of a canoe reversed. Close by this dwelling we observed the foundations of several others, no longer in existence; they are composed of the stones of lava, cut into form, in which there are holes about two inches in diameter. This part of the island appeared to be better cultivated and more populous than the vicinity of Cook's Bay. The monuments and platforms were also more numerous. Upon different stones which composed these platforms, we observed the rude outlines of skeletons, and certain openings closed with stones, which we imagined might communicate with caves containing the bodies of the dead. An Indian explained to us, by very expressive signs, that this was a place in which they were deposited, and that they afterwards ascended to heaven. We found on the sea-shore some pyramids of stones, piled nearly in the same manner as cannon-balls in a park of artillery, and some human bones in the neighbourhood of the pyramids and statues, of which the backs of the latter were all turned towards the sea. In the course of the morning we visited seven different platforms, on which were statues, erect or reversed, and differing from each other only in their size, and the greater or less decay they had undergone from the duration of their exposure. Near one of the latter we found a kind

1786.
April.

1786. of mannequin of rushes, which exhibited a human statue six feet in height, covered with a white cloth of the fabric of the country; the head of the natural size, the body thin, and the legs in a tolerably exact proportion. To the neck hung a net or basket, covered with white cloth, and which appeared to be filled with grass. By the side of this bag was the figure of a child two feet in length, with the arms crossed, and the legs pendent. This mannequin could not have existed for a great number of years, and it was, perhaps, a model of the statues erected at present to the chiefs of the country. Close by this platform two parapets were seen, which formed an inclosure of three hundred and eighty-eight feet in length, and three hundred and twenty-four in breadth. We could not determine whether it was a reservoir for water, or the commencement of a fortress; but the work appeared never to have been finished.

“ Continuing our excursion to the west, we met about twenty children, who were walking under the care of some women, and appeared to direct their course towards the houses I have already mentioned.

“ At the extremity of the southern point of the island we saw the crater of an ancient volcano, of which the magnitude, the depth, and the regularity, excited our admiration. It has the shape of a truncated cone; its superior or largest base appeared to be more than two-thirds of a league in circumference; and the extent of the inferior base may be estimated, by supposing that the side of the cone forms an angle of about 30° with the perpendicular. This inferior base is a perfect circle; the bottom is marshy, and contains several large pools of fresh water, the surface of which appeared to be above the level of the sea. The depth of this crater is at least eight hundred feet.

“ Father Receveur, who descended to the bottom, informed us, that the marsh is surrounded with the finest plantations of bananas and mulberry trees. It appears, as we observed while sailing along the coast, that a considerable subsidence towards the sea has taken place, which has occasioned a great breach in the crater. The height of this breach is one-

third of the entire cone, and its width one-tenth of the upper circumference. The vegetation which has taken place on the sides of the cone, the marsh at the bottom, and the fecundity of the neighbouring grounds prove, that the subterraneous fires have long been extinguished*. At the bottom of the crater we observed the only birds we had seen on the island, which were tern. The approach of night obliged me to return to the ships. Near one of the houses we saw a great number of children, who fled at our approach. It seemed probable to us, that this was the residence of all the children of the district. Their age differed too little for them to have belonged to two women, who appeared to have the charge of them. Near this house was a hole made in the earth for cooking yams and potatoes, according to the method practised in the Society Islands.

“ On my return to the tent I gave to three different natives the three kinds of animals which we had appropriated for them; and I made choice of such as appeared to me most likely to breed.

“ These islanders are hospitable. They several times presented us with potatoes and sugar-canes; but they never suffered an opportunity to escape in which they could rob us with impunity. Scarcely the tenth part of the island is cultivated. The cleared grounds have the form of a regular long square, but without any kind of enclosure. The rest of the island, to the very summit of the mountains, is covered with a very coarse grass. It was the wet season, and we found the earth moistened to the depth of a foot. Some cavities in the hills contained a small quantity of fresh water, but we no where observed any running stream. The earth appeared to be of a good quality, and would exhibit stronger vegetation if it were watered. We did not see any instrument in the hands of the people with which they could cultivate the ground. It is probable that, after clearing the land, they make holes with pickets of wood, and in this manner plant their potatoes and yams. Some bushes of mimosa are seen, though rarely, the strongest stems of which are not more than three inches in diameter.

* On the edge of the crater next the sea there is a statue almost entirely destroyed by time, which is a proof that the volcano has been extinguished for several centuries.

1786.
April.

1786. The conjectures which may be formed respecting the government of these islanders are, that they compose a single nation, divided into as many districts as there are morais; because it is to be remarked, that the villages are built near these burying places. It appears that the productions of the earth are common to all the inhabitants of the same district; and as the men offer their women to strangers without any delicacy, it may be supposed that they do not belong to any individual in particular, and that when the children are weaned, they are delivered to other women, who, in each district, take charge of their physical education.

“ The number of men we met was twice that of the women; and if in reality the number of the latter be not the smallest, this circumstance must have arisen from their remaining more within doors. The whole population may be estimated at two thousand persons. Several houses which were building, and the number of children, afford reason to think that it is not diminishing, though it is probable that it may have been more considerable when the island was furnished with woods. If the natives possessed sufficient industry to construct reservoirs for water, they would by that means remedy one of the greatest misfortunes of their situation, and perhaps prolong their lives. We did not see a single man on the island who appeared older than sixty-five, if we may be allowed to form a judgment of the age of a people so little known, and whose manner of living differs so essentially from our own.”

CHAPTER VI.

Departure from Easter Island—Astronomical Observations—Arrival at the Sandwich Islands—Anchor in the Bay of Keriporepo in the Island of Mowee—Departure.

AFTER leaving Cook's Bay in Easter Island at ten in the evening, I stood to the northward, and coasted along the shore of that island at the distance of a league by moon-light. We did not lose sight of the land till the next day at two in the afternoon, at the distance of twenty leagues. The winds were constantly at south-east and east-south-east. The weather was extremely clear, and did not change till the wind came round to the east-north-east, where it continued from the 17th to the 20th, when we began to catch bonetas, which constantly followed our frigates as far as the Sandwich islands, and afforded us almost daily, for six weeks together, a complete supply for our people. This excellent food preserved them in the best state of health, and after ten months' navigation, during which we were no more than twenty-five days in port, we had not a single sick person on board either of the vessels. Our course lay through unknown seas, and was nearly parallel to that of captain Cook, in 1777, when he sailed from the Society Islands for the north-west coast of America; but we were about eight hundred leagues more to the east. I flattered myself, that in a traverse of near two hundred leagues we should make some discovery. Men were constantly at the mast head, and I had promised a reward to the first who should discover land. To overlook a greater space, our two frigates sailed abreast of each other during the day, with an interval of three or four leagues between them.

1786.
April.

In this, as in all the rest of our traverses, Mr Dagelet lost no opportunity of making observations of lunar distance. Their agreement with the time-

1786. keepers of M^r Berthoud was so exact, that the difference never exceeded ten or fifteen minutes of a degree; and they served to prove the accuracy of each other. M^r de Langle's calculations were equally satisfactory, and we knew every day the course of the currents, by the difference between the longitude by reckoning and that by observation. They carried us to the west as far as one degree of south latitude with a velocity of about three leagues in twenty-four hours, after which they carried us to the east with the same velocity as far as seven degrees north, where they resumed their course to the west; and, on our arrival at the Sandwich Islands, our longitude by account differed nearly 5° from that by observation; so that if, like the ancient navigators, we had possessed no method of ascertaining the longitude by observation, we should have placed the Sandwich Islands 5° more to the eastward. It is undoubtedly from this direction of the currents, formerly but little observed, that the errors in the Spanish charts have arisen. For it is remarkable, that most of the islands discovered by Quiros, Mendaña, and other navigators of that nation, have been re-discovered in the modern times, and have always been too near in their charts to the coast of America. I must also add, that if the vanity of our pilots had not been a little mortified at the difference which was daily found between the longitude by account and that by observation, it is very probable that we should have had error of eight or ten degrees in making the land, and consequently that in a less enlightened age we should have placed the Sandwich Islands ten degrees more to the eastward.

These reflections left me considerably in doubt respecting the existence of a cluster of islands called by the Spaniards *La Mesa*, *Los Majos*, and *La Disgraciada*. In the chart which admiral Anson took on board the Spanish galleon, and of which the editor of his voyage has given an engraving, this cluster is placed exactly in the latitude of the Sandwich Islands, but 16 or 17 degrees more to the eastward. My daily differences or errors of longitude induced me to think that these islands were absolutely the same*;

* In the course of the years 1786 and 1787, captain Dixon anchored three times at the Sandwich Islands, and having the same doubt as La Pérouse respecting the identity of these islands, and those called *Los Majos*, *La Mesa*, &c. he made researches in consequence. His conclusion was absolutely the same, as may be seen from the following extracts from his voyage.

but what completed my conviction was the name of *Mesa*, which signifies *Table*, given by the Spaniards to the island of *Owhybee*. I had read in the description of this same island by captain King, that, after having doubled the eastern point, a mountain appears in sight called *Mowna-roa*, which is visible at a great distance. "It is flat," he says, "at the top, making what is called by mariners table-land*." The expression in the English, therefore, corresponds with that in the Spanish.

1786.
April.

Though the season was far advanced, and I had not a moment to lose, in order to reach the American coast, I determined to shape a course that should bring my opinion to the proof. The result, if I were in an error,

"The islands *Los Majos*, *La Mesa*, and *S^t Maria la Gorta*, laid down by Mr. Roberts, from 18° 30' to 28° north latitude, and from 135° to 149° west longitude†, and copied by him from a Spanish manuscript chart, were in vain looked for by us, and, to use Maurelle's words, "it may be pronounced, that no such islands are to be found; so that their intention has uniformly been to mislead rather than be of service to future navigators." Introduction, page xiv.

"Our observations at noon, on the 8th of May, gave 17° 4' north latitude, and 129° 57' west longitude. In this situation we looked for an island called by the Spaniards *Roco Partida*, but in vain; however, we stood to the northward under an easy sail, and kept a good look out, expecting soon to fall in with the group of islands already mentioned.

"From the 11th to the 14th we lay to every night, and when we made sail in the morning, spread at the distance of eight or ten miles, standing westerly: it being probable, that though the Spaniards might have been pretty correct in the latitude of these islands, yet they might easily be mistaken several degrees in their longitude: but our latitude on the 15th, at noon, being 20° 9' north, and 140° 1' west longitude, which is considerably to the westward of any island laid down by the Spaniards, we concluded, and with reason, that there must be a gross mistake in the chart." Voyage, page 49.

"On the 1st of November we looked out for *S^t Maria la Gorta*, which is laid down in Cook's chart in 27° 50' north latitude, and in 149° west longitude; and, the same afternoon, sailed directly over it. Indeed, we scarcely expected to meet with any such place, as it is copied by Mr. Roberts into the above chart from the same authority which we had already found to be erroneous, respecting *Los Majos* and *Roco Partida*." *Ibid.* page 85. (French Editor.)

* Cook's Third Voyage, Vol. III. p. 103.

† It is to be observed, that Dixon reckoned his longitude from the west, and Cook, in his third voyage, from the opposite quarter. Dixon's reason no doubt is, that, having shaped his course to the westward in doubling Cape Horn, this way of reckoning was more natural and more convenient to him.

1786.
April. must necessarily have been, that I should discover a second cluster of islands, forgotten by the Spaniards for perhaps more than a century, and should determine their position and their exact distance from the Sandwich Islands. Those who know my character will not suspect, that in this research I could be guided by any wish to rob captain Cook of the honour of this discovery. Full of respect and admiration for the memory of this great man, he will ever be considered by me as the first of navigators, as the individual who has determined the exact situation of these islands, explored their coasts, ascertained the manners, usages, and religion of the inhabitants, and who has paid with his life for all the information we at present possess respecting them. This man, I say, is the true Christopher Columbus of these countries, of the coast of Alashka, and of almost all the islands of the South-sea. Chance has given the discovery of islands to the most ignorant; but the honour belongs only to great characters like him, to leave nothing to be regretted or desired respecting the countries they have explored. Seamen, philosophers, naturalists, find alike in his Voyages that information which their respective pursuits may lead them to demand. All men, perhaps, and most assuredly all navigators, owe the tribute of praise to his memory; and shall I be thought to withhold my portion at the moment of my arrival at the group of islands, where his career was so unfortunately terminated?

May.
7. On the 7th of May, in 8° north latitude, we saw many birds of the petrel kind, with some man of war and tropic birds. These two last species are said to fly but a small distance from the land. We likewise saw a great many turtle pass by our ships. The Astrolabe caught two, which we shared, and which proved excellent. The birds and the turtle were in sight as far as 14°, and I have no doubt but that we passed near some island, probably uninhabited; for a rock in the middle of the sea would serve as the retreat of these animals rather than a cultivated country. We were then very near Rocca Partida and La Nublada. I directed my course so as to have passed almost in sight of the former, if its longitude had been accurately determined; but I would not run into its latitude, because I had not, from my other projects, a single day to spare for this research. It was pro-

bable I might not meet with it, and I was little surprised at finding no signs of its appearance. When I had passed its latitude the birds disappeared, and, till my arrival at the Sandwich Islands, through a space of five hundred leagues, we never saw more than two or three in a day.

1786.
May.

On the 15th I was in 19° 17' north latitude and 130° west longitude; that is to say, in the same latitude as the cluster of islands in the Spanish charts, as well as in that of the Sandwich Islands, though a hundred leagues more to the eastward than the former, and four hundred and sixty to the eastward of the latter. As I thought it would render an important service to geography if I could succeed in erasing from the charts those idle names, denoting islands which have no existence, and perpetuating errors extremely injurious to navigation, I wished, in order to remove every doubt, to continue my course as far as the Sandwich Islands. I even formed the project of passing between the islands of Owhyhee and Mowee, which the English were not so situated as to be able to explore; and I purposed to land at Mowee, to obtain some provisions, and then depart without losing an instant. I knew, that by following my plan only in part, and exploring no more than two hundred leagues on this parallel, there might still be unbelievers; and I was desirous that there should not remain against my conclusions the slightest objection.

15.

On the 18th of May I was in latitude 20° north and 139° longitude west, precisely upon the island Disgraciada of the Spaniards, but had no signs of land.

18.

On the 20th I had passed through the middle of the supposed cluster of los Majos, and had yet met with no indication of the vicinity of any island. I continued to run to the west, on the parallel between 20° and 21°, and at length, on the 28th in the morning, I was in sight of the mountains of Owhyhee, which were covered with snow, and soon afterwards saw those of Mowee, somewhat less elevated than the former. I made a press of sail to approach the land, but was still, when night closed in, at the

20.

28.

1786.
May. distance of seven or eight leagues. I therefore stood off and on in expectation of day-break, to enter the channel between these two islands, and to seek an anchoring place to the leeward of Mowee near the island of Morokinne. Our longitude by observation agreed so perfectly with that of captain Cook, that, having traced our bearings upon the English charts, we found only 10' difference, which we were more to the eastward.

At nine in the morning the point of Mowee bore west 15° north, and a small island also appeared, bearing west 22° north, which the English could not see from any of their positions, and consequently it does not appear on their chart, which in this part is very defective; whereas every thing which they have laid down from their own observations deserves the highest encomium. The aspect of the island of Mowee was delightful. I coasted along its shore at the distance of a league. It projects into the channel in the direction of south-west by west. We beheld water falling in cascades from the mountains, and running in streams to the sea, after having watered the habitations of the natives, which are so numerous that a space of three or four leagues may be taken for a single village: but all the huts are on the sea-coast, and the mountains are so near, that the habitable part of the island appeared to be less than half a league in depth. To form a conception of what we felt, it is necessary to be a seaman, and to be reduced, as we were, in a burning climate to a single bottle of water a-day. The trees which crowned the mountains, and the verdure of the banana plants that surrounded the habitations, produced inexpressible charms to our senses; but the sea beat upon the coast with the utmost violence, and kept us in the situation of Tantalus, to desire and devour with our eyes what it was impossible for us to attain.

The breeze had freshened, and we were running at the rate of two leagues an hour, which encouraged me in an endeavour before night to explore this part of the island as far as Morokinne, near which I hoped to find an anchoring place sheltered from the trade winds. This plan, dictated by the imperious necessity of circumstances, did not permit me to

1786.
May. shorten sail, in order to wait for about a hundred and fifty canoes which put off from the shore with hogs and vegetables, which the Indians proposed to exchange with us for pieces of iron.

Almost all these canoes boarded one or the other of the frigates; but our velocity was so great that they filled with water alongside, and the islanders were under the necessity of quitting the rope which we had thrown out to them, and swim away. They first hastened after their hogs, which they brought back in their arms, lifted them on their shoulders into their boats, out of which they emptied the water, and cheerfully entering them again, endeavoured by every exertion to recover the position they had lost near our frigates, and which had been instantly occupied by others that also met with the same accident. Of these canoes, forty at least were upset, and, though the commerce between us and these honest Indians was infinitely agreeable to both parties, it was impossible for us to procure more than fifteen hogs and some fruits, and we lost the opportunity of bargaining for more than three hundred others.

These canoes had outriggers; each contained from three to five men; and those of middling size might be twenty-four feet long, a single foot only in breadth, and nearly the same in depth. We weighed one of this dimension, which did not exceed fifty pounds. With these frail vessels it is that the inhabitants of these islands make excursions to the distance of sixty leagues, traverse through straits twenty leagues in width, such as that between Atooi and Wohao, where the sea is extremely high. But they are such excellent swimmers that they will almost bear a comparison with the natives of the watery element.

In proportion as we advanced, the mountains seemed to withdraw to a distance within the interior of the island, which exhibited the form of an amphitheatre of considerable magnitude, and of a yellow green. No cascades were to be seen; the trees were less crowded together in the plain, and the villages composed of ten or twelve huts only, very remote from each other. At every instant we had just cause to regret the country we