

weight is so equally distributed, that every man is very able to bear his part of it, the stories, if I may so call them, growing less and less as they advance higher and higher. A little boy represents the point of the pyramid, who, after a short space, leaps off, with a great deal of dexterity, into the arms of one that catches him at the bottom. In the same manner the whole building falls to pieces. I have been the more particular on this, because it explains the following verses of Claudian, which shew that the Venetians are not the inventors of this trick.

“Vel qui more avium sese jaculantur in auris,
 “Corporaque ædificant, celeri crescentia nexu,
 “Quorum compositam puer augmentatus in arcem
 “Emicat, et vinctus plantæ, vel cruribus hærens,
 “Pendula librato figit vestigia saltu.

CLAUD.

“Men, piled on men, with active leaps arise,
 “And build the breathing fabric to the skies;
 “A sprightly youth above the topmast row
 “Points the tall pyramid, and crowns the show.”

ADDISON.

SECTION LXV.

*Account of a dreadful Inundation of the Sea at Ingeram,
 on the coast of Coromandel, in the East Indies.*

[In a letter from Mr. William Parson to Alexander Dalrymple, Esq.]

My dear Friend,

Ingeram, June 7, 1787.

YOU wish to have a just and circumstantial account of the late calamity we have sustained. It is no wonder the accounts you have seen should be incoherent and imperfect; for, while the misfortune was recent, our minds were distracted with a thousand fears and apprehensions for the consequences: indeed, people less alarmed and less gloomy than ourselves might have admitted the apprehension of pestilence and famine; the former, from the air being tainted from some thousands of putrid carcasses both of men and cattle; and the latter, from the country around us being destroyed, as well as our stock of provisions and the fruits of the earth.

From the 17th of May, it blew hard from the N. E. but as bad weather is unusual at such a season, we did not apprehend that it would become more serious; but on the 19th at night, it increased to a hard gale; and on the 20th, in the morning, it blew a perfect hurricane, insomuch that our houses were presently tilted, our doors and windows beat in, and the railing and part of the wall of our enclosures, blown down. A little before eleven it came with violence from the sea, and I presently perceived a multitude of the inhabitants crowding toward my house, crying out

that the sea was coming in upon us. I cast my eyes in that direction, and saw it approaching with great rapidity, bearing much the same appearance as the bar in Bengal river. As my house was situated very low, I did not hesitate to abandon it, directing my steps towards the old Factory, in order to avail myself of the Terrace; for in that dreadful moment I could not so far reflect upon causes or effects, as to account for the phœnomenon, or to set bounds to its increase. I had indeed heard of a tradition among the natives, that about a century ago the sea ran as high as the tallest Palmyra trees, which I have ever disregarded as fabulous, till the present unusual appearance called it more forcibly to my mind. In my way to the old Factory, I stopped at the door of Mr. Boures's house, to apprise the rest of the gentlemen of their danger, and the measures I had concerted for my safety. They accordingly joined me; but before we attained the place of our destination, we were nearly intercepted by the torrent of water. As the house is built on a high spot, and pretty well elevated from the ground, the water never ran above a foot on the first floor, so we had no occasion to have recourse to the Terrace. Between one and two o'clock, the water began to subside a little, and continued gradually decreasing till the body of it had retired; leaving all the low places, tanks, and wells, full of salt water. I think the sea must have risen fifteen feet above its natural level. About the time of the water subsiding, the wind favoured it by coming round to the southward, from which point it blew the hardest. As the Factory house was in a very ruinous state, and shook exceedingly at every gust, we were very anxious to get back to Mr. Boures's house. I attempted it twice, but found I had neither power nor strength to combat the force of the wind, getting back with the greatest difficulty to my former station. About five o'clock, during a short lull, we happily effected our remove. It blew very hard the greatest part of the night: at midnight it veered to the westward, and was so cold, that I thought we should have perished as we reclined in our chairs.

The gale broke up towards the morning. I shall not attempt to describe to you the scene that presented itself to our view, when day-light appeared: it was dreary and horrid beyond description. The trees were all blighted by the salt water; and the face of the country covered with salt mud; yet it had more the appearance of having suffered by a blast of wind, or by the eruption of volcanoes, than by an inundation of water; such an effect had it in destroying the herbage and foliage of every description. Our houses were found full of the inhabitants, who had taken refuge therein, stripped of doors and windows, and quite open to the weather at top: the go-downs* mostly carried away, and several substantially tiled houses so completely levelled, as scarcely to afford a mark of

* Stairs at the backs of the houses to descend, in order to take water.

their ever existing; but our sufferings were light, when compared with those of *Coringa*, and the rest of the villages nearer the sea. At *Coringa*, out of four thousand inhabitants, it is said not more than twenty were saved, and those mostly on Mrs. Corsar's Terrace, and on the beams of Captain Webster's house. Mr. Gideon Firth, Mr. George Day, and the Portuguese Padré were, I believe, the only Europeans that were drowned. At first the sea rose gradually, and as it came in with the tide, the people were not much alarmed; but when they found it still increase so as to render their situation dangerous, they mounted on the top of their Cadjan-houses, till the sea, impelled by a strong easterly wind, rushed in upon them most furiously, when all the houses at the same awful moment gave way, and nearly four thousand souls were launched into eternity. This tremendous scene was visible from Mrs. Corsar's Terrace, over which the sea sometimes broke, and they were frequently in great danger from the drifting of vessels and other heavy bodies, which must inevitably have brought down the house, had they come to contact. At the Dutch village of *Jaggeraickporan*, I hear the distress was very great, and that about a thousand lives were lost; many of the villages in the low country between *Coringa* and *Jaggeraickporan*, were totally destroyed, and the inundation carried its dreadful effects as far to the northward as *Apporah*; but I do not hear that many lives were lost at that place. The inundation penetrated inland about ten coss from the sea, in a direct line; but did little more damage to the westward of us than destroying the vegetation. It would be very difficult to ascertain with any precision the number of lives lost in this dreadful visitation; the most intelligent people I have conferred with on the subject, state the loss at from ten to twenty thousand souls. This is rather an indefinite computation; but I think, if the medium be taken, it will then rather exceed than fall short of the real loss. They compute that a lack of cattle were drowned, and from the vast numbers I saw dead at *Nel-lapilla*, I can easily credit their assertion. For two or three days after the calamity, such was the langour of the inhabitants, not a Cooley or workman was to be procured at any price; it required our utmost exertion to get the dead bodies and the dead cattle buried with all possible speed, to prevent the air being impregnated with putrid effluvia. This, to be sure, was a task we could not fully execute, except just in the villages. However, no bad effects have ensued; which I impute to the continual land winds that have blown strongly for some time past. These have the property of drying up the juices of dead bodies, and preventing putrefaction, which must necessarily have been the consequence in a damp air. It is extraordinary, that the vast tract of low ground on the south side of *Guadavery* from *Gotendy* to *Bundarmalaka*, suffered very little from the inundation, and scarcely a person perished. This country lies so exceedingly low, as to be flooded

in many places by the common spring tides; and a great deal of it is in consequence covered with salt jungle. It is probable they owe their safety to those small islands at the mouth of the *Guadavery*, as well as *Point Guadavery* itself, which must have both contributed to break the force of the sea.

When we had recovered from our consternation, on the 21st, we began to consider how we should be able to exist in such a field of desolation, as our wells were filled with salt water, our provisions destroyed, and we found, by digging in different places, that no sweet water was to be procured; when it was discovered that providence had so far interfered in our favour, as to bring down the freshes at a very early and unusual season. From what accounts we could hastily gather, we were apprehensive that the stores of rice were either much damaged or totally destroyed, as the rice go-downs and go-marks are generally secured against an accident less formidable than this. However, the event has happily falsified our surmises, and proved our information fallacious, for rice has hitherto been plentiful and not dear. The generous supplies that have been sent us from the Presidency, will, I trust, secure us from serious want. Our markets have not yet been attended by a person with an article for sale; but this is not to be wondered at, as our supplies were generally furnished by the villages at no great distance inland; and these countries have been drenched sufficiently in salt water to destroy their produce. The fishermen, a most useful body of people, inhabiting chiefly by the sea-side, have been almost totally extirpated; and we are thereby deprived of a very material part of our subsistence. Time alone can restore us to the comforts we have lost, and we have reason to be thankful that things have not turned out so bad as we apprehended. I have tired myself in attempting this narration, and I fear I have almost tired you in the perusal of it. A great deal more might be said upon the subject, in a flowery garb: if it yields a moment's amusement to my friend, my end is fully answered. The greatest part of this intelligence you have already had, in detail; but it is your desire I should bring it to one point of view. It is hastily written, and very inaccurate; but you will remember I was in a good deal of pain at the time of writing it, from an inflammation in my legs, so I had not sufficient ease or leisure to correct or transcribe it. Yours affectionately. WILLIAM PARSON.

SECTION LXVI.

Of Montpellier in the South of France. A. D. 1775.

MONTPELIER is a delightful place of residence. I staid there four days, and left it with excessive regret. The town itself is by no means beautiful, the streets being almost all narrow, winding,