CHAP. II.

Importance of the Cape of Good Hope considered as a Military Station.

When the Prince of Orange had departed from Holland, and the subsequent affairs of that nation had rendered it sufficiently obvious that the majority of the inhabitants of the United Provinces were inclined to adopt the revolutionary principles of France, it became a measure of precaution, in our government, to take immediate possession of the Dutch colonies. Among these the Cape of Good Hope claimed the earliest attention, being considered as a settlement of too great importance to be trusted in the hands of the Dutch colonists, although it was well known that the principal as well as the majority of the civil and military officers were indebted to their Prince for the situations they enjoyed in that colonial government.

An expedition was accordingly sent out to take possession of the Cape, not however in a hostile manner, but to hold it in security for, and in the name of, the Prince of Orange, who had furnished letters dated from London to that effect. But the misguided people of the colony, having received only imperfect accounts of affairs in Holland, and being led to expect a French force at the Cape, had already embraced the principles of Jacobinism, whose effects were the more to be

dreaded on account of the consummate ignorance of the bulk of the settlers. Some French emissaries, those assiduous disturbers of the peace of mankind, who, snake-like, have crept into every society and corner of the world, poisoning the springs of harmony and good order, found little difficulty in urging a people, already so well disposed, to carry their new principles into practice. The few officers of government who were supposed to be attached to the cause of the Stadtholder, and friends to the old system, were completely subdued; and the weakness of the governor favored the views of the disorderly citizens. They became clamorous to declare themselves, by some public act, a free and independent republic; they prepared to plant the tree of liberty; and established a convention, whose first object was to make out proscribed lists of those who were either to suffer death by the new-fashioned mode of the guillotine, which they had taken care to provide for the purpose, or to be banished out of the colony. It is almost needless to state that the persons, so marked out to be the victims of an unruly rabble, were the only worthy people in the settlement, and most of them members of government.

The slaves, whose numbers of grown men, as I have before observed, are about five to one of male whites who have arrived at the age of maturity, had also *their* meetings to decide upon the fate of the free and independent burghers, when the happy days of their own emancipation should arrive, which, from the conversations of their masters on the blessings of liberty and equality, and the unalienable rights of

man, they were encouraged to hope could not be very distant.

In this state of things the British fleet appeared before the bay. The governor called an extraordinary council to deliberate upon the steps to be taken in this critical juncture. Some were inclined to throw the settlement under the protection of the British flag, but the governor and the greater number, influenced, and perhaps intimidated, by the citizens, listened to the absurd proposals of resisting the English force and, if successful, as they doubted not they would be, of setting up immediately a free and independent republic of their own. They talked of the thousands and ten thousands of courageous boors who, on the signal of alarm being given, would flock to the Batavian standard; so ignorant were they of the nature and the number of their valiant countrymen. The *burgher cavalry*, a militia of country boors, who were then in the vicinity of the town, were immediately called out, and a few hundreds reluctantly obeyed the summons. The conduct and the cowardice of this undisciplined rabble, whose martial spirit had hitherto been tried only in their expeditions against the native Hottentots, might easily have been foreseen. A few shot from the America ship of war, striking the rocks of Muisenberg, soon cleared that important pass, and caused the regular troops to retreat to Wynberg, which is a tongue of land projecting from the east side of the Table Mountain, and about eight miles from Cape Town: the Hottentot corps still loitered about the rocks and did some mischief but, being speedily dislodged, fell back also upon

Wynberg; after which the brave burgher cavalry scampered away to their respective homes without once stopping to look behind them.

The British troops, led on by General Sir James Craig, under the orders of Sir Alured Clarke, marched to attack the enemy on their elevated post; and having, by the assistance of the sailors, brought his guns and artillery to bear upon them, a few shot caused them to retreat within their lines. The English encamped on the spot from which they had dislodged the enemy; who, finding it in vain any longer to oppose a feeble resistance, sent, in the middle of the night, a flag of truce to propose a capitulation, which was acceded to and, the next day, concluded between the two parties. Most of the members of the government that were well disposed to the Prince of Orange, and had conducted themselves with propriety, were continued in office; and thus the plans of the Jacobin party were, for the present, completely defeated.

When the news of this event first reached England, the acquisition of so valuable a settlement was considered of the utmost importance to the British empire, and particularly to the East India Company, as being the grand out-work and a complete barrier to their vast possessions in India. So forcibly was the public mind impressed with an opinion of the great advantages that would result to the nation at large from the possession of the Cape, that the question was immediately started and discussed among persons entrusted with

the management of the first political and commercial interests of the empire—Under what tenure it should be held? Whether the Cape should be considered as a foreign dependency of the crown, and subject to the same regulations as all the other colonies are; or, as a post to be annexed to the possessions which are under the administration of the East India Company? Those who held the latter opinion as a matter of right quoted the charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, by which the Company are allowed the privilege of a free and sole trade into the countries of Asia, Africa, and America, or any of them beyond the Cape of Buona Esperanza, to the Streights of Magellan. Those, who were inclined to think that the charters of the East India Company gave them no claim to the Cape, brought forward the charter they received from Charles the Second, in which no mention whatever is made of Africa.

While these questions were in agitation, two general plans floated in the mind of Mr. Dundas (now Lord Melville); both of which were so conceived as to combine the interests of the public with those of the East India Company. One of these plans supposed the Cape to be a foreign dependency of the Crown, and included such provisions and regulations as were compatible with the interests and the chartered privileges of the East India Company: the other invested the territorial possession in the East India Company, but proposed such regulations as were calculated to promote the general commercial prosperity of the British empire. And, in the mean time, until one or other of these plans should be

adopted, the settlement was to be considered as dependent on the Crown, and to be administered by the executive power, as constitutionally responsible to Parliament.

Every precaution was also taken that the rights and privileges of the East India Company should suffer no infringement. The exclusive advantage of supplying the Cape with India and China goods was immediately and unconditionally granted to them. And the regulations adopted in consequence by the Earl of Macartney, and the vigilance that was constantly employed under his government, prevented and defeated every attempt to undermine their interests, and were productive of a source of considerable profit to the Company.

It was, in fact, the well known integrity of his Lordship's character, and the able and decided measures employed by him, on various trying occasions, for promoting and combining the interests of the East India Company with the honor of the Crown, and the commercial prosperity of the British empire, that determined the minister in his choice of him as governor for this important acquisition: and his Lordship was accordingly nominated, without his knowledge, whilst absent on public service in Italy.

As little doubt was entertained, at that time, either by his Majesty's ministers or the public, that the Cape would become, at a general peace, a settlement in perpetuity to England, great pains were employed in drawing up instructions

and in framing such regulations as appeared to be best calculated for promoting the prosperity of the colony, securing the interests of the East India Company, and extending the commerce and navigation of Britain. Its importance, in fact, was deemed of such magnitude, that it was a resolution of the minister from which he never meant to recede, "That "no foreign power, directly or indirectly, should obtain pos- "session of the Cape of Good Hope, for, that it was the "*physical guarantee* of the *British territories* in India." Its political importance, indeed, could be doubted by none; its commercial advantages were believed by all.

Yet, after every precaution that had been employed for securing the privileges, increasing the conveniency, and promoting the interests, of the East India Company in this settlement, it was but too apparent that an inclination prevailed in some of the Directors to disparage or undervalue it. What their motives may have been, I do not pretend to determine; nor will I suppose that a body of men, who have always been remarkable for acting upon the broad basis of national prosperity, could, in the present instance, so far deviate from their usual line of conduct, as to bend to the influence of any little jealousy about patronage or prerogative, when the welfare of the public was so nearly concerned. The opinions of men, it is true, when grounded on moral events, are sometimes fugitive, and yield to circumstances: it were difficult, however, to assign any event or circumstance that could have operated so as to produce any reasonable grounds for a change in the opinion of the Directors of

the East India Company, in the course of the last twenty years, with regard to the value of the Cape of Good Hope: many have occurred to enhance its importance.

That they did consider it of the utmost consequence, towards the end of the American war, is sufficiently evident from the conduct they adopted at that time. The moment that a Dutch war was found to be inevitable, towards the close of the year 1780, Lord North, whose sentiments on this point were in perfect agreement with those of the Directors, lost no time in communicating to the secret committee of the East India Company the information of it; in order, that they might take or suggest such measures, without delay, as the event might render most conducive to their interests. The chairman and deputy chairman, who, if I mistake not, at that time, were Mr. Devaynes and Mr. Sullivan, lost not a moment in consulting with such of their officers as happened to be then in London, and were supposed to be qualified to give good information. The result of their deliberations was a proposal, in the event of a Dutch war, to take possession of the Cape of Good Hope, as a measure of the utmost importance to the East India Company's concerns; and as this proposal met the concurrence of the minister, a squadron was immediately dispatched under the command of Commodore Johnston, who carried under his convoy their outward-bound fleet. Having anchored for refreshments in Porta Praya Bay, he was overtaken by Suffrein, with whom he fought an indecisive battle, which enabled the French to reach the Cape of Good Hope, and to place it in such a state of security that

the Commodore did not think it prudent to make the attack, but contented himself with the capture of a few Dutch Indiamen in Saldanha Bay; whilst the French Admiral, having refitted and refreshed his squadron at the Cape, proceeded to Mauritius, and from thence to the Indian Seas with his ships and men in the highest order; a circumstance that was attended with no small degree of detriment and annoyance to the trade and possessions of the East India Company, as well as of expence and inconvenience to the Crown. For the failure, in the grand object of this expedition, not only gave the enemy the vast advantage of landing and refreshing their seamen and troops, who were soon recruited by the invigorating effects of a temperate climate and abundance of fresh provisions, fruits, and vegetables, but it likewise enabled him to keep a fleet almost constantly at sea, by the provisions and naval stores it received from the Cape through Mauritius by agents residing at the former place. Their own islands of Mauritius and Bourbon furnish no such supply, their productions not being adequate to the consumption of the inhabitants and the garrisons.

The French, in fact, have always contrived to refit and provision their ships, and to send their armaments supplied with stores to the Indian Seas from the Cape of Good Hope. Had it not been for the supplies furnished from this settlement, together with the possession of the harbour of Trincomalée, it would have been utterly impossible for Suffrein to have supported his fleet, or maintained the contest with us in the manner he did.

It was not, indeed, without a full conviction of its great utility to England, as well as of encumbrance to the Dutch, by the enormous expence it occasioned, that Mr. Dundas was induced, in the considerations on the treaty between Great Britain and Holland, transmitted to the British ambassador at the Hague in 1787, to propose to them the cession of certain stations in India, which were to them of little weight, either in a political or commercial point of view. The reasoning employed on this occasion was, "That the "Cape was invaluable in the hands of a maritime power, be- "ing really and truly the key to India, which no hostile fleet "could pass or repass, as the length of the previous voyage, "either from India or Europe, must have disabled such a "fleet, in a certain degree, before it could reach the Cape— "that it was the interest of Holland itself that the Cape and "Trincomalée should belong to Great Britain; because Hol- "land must either be the ally of Britain or of France in "India; and because Great Britain only can be an useful "ally of Holland in the East—that the Dutch were not able "to protect their settlements in that quarter, and Britain "fully competent to their protection—that the Cape and "Trincomalée were not commercial establishments, and that "the maintenance of them was burthensome and expensive "to the Dutch—but that the force required to protect the "British Indian possessions would render the defence of the "Dutch settlements much less so to Britain."

The Earl of Macartney was not less convinced of the policy, nor less persuaded of the readiness, of the Dutch to leave the Cape in our hands, provided they were allowed to

have a choice of their own. In his letter to Mr. Dundas, dated October 1797, he observes, "The power and influence "of Holland appear to me so irretrievable, that it is impos- "sible she can ever again hold an independent possession of "the Cape. Indeed, before the war, she was neither rich "enough to maintain its establishments, nor strong enough "to govern its people, and, I believe, had it not been for our "conquest of the country, it would soon have attempted to "become independent. As Holland is likely to be in future "less powerful at home, and consequently less respectable "abroad, and as the Cape would be a burthen to her, not "easy to bear, it would not be against her interest to leave it "in our hands, for in such case she might derive, without any "expence, all the advantages of its original intention, which "was that of a place of refreshment for her commerce to "the eastward; and there are other circumstances which, "were she now in a situation dispassionately to consider, I "have reason to imagine, would lead her to adopt this sen- "timent. The French (who, to speak of them in the lan- "guage of truth and experience, and not in the jargon of "pretended Cosmopolites, are, and ever must be, our natural "enemies) can only wish to have the Cape either in their "own hands, or in those of a weak power, that they may use "it as an instrument towards our destruction; as a channel "for pouring through it an irresistible deluge upon our "Indian possessions to the southward of the Guadavery. Of "this I am so perfectly convinced, that if it shall be found "impracticable for us to retain the sovereignty of the Cape, "and the French are to become the masters of it, either "*per se, aut per alium*, then we must totally alter our present

" system, and adopt such measures as will shut them out of " India entirely, and render the possession of the Cape and " of the isles of France and Bourbon of as little use to them " as possible."

Whatever might have been the feelings of the Dutch with regard to the Cape, under the old government, I have high authority in saying that Holland never did expect, and indeed had scarcely a wish for, the restoration of this colony at a peace; well knowing that they would be allowed by the English to enjoy the advantages of refreshing and provisioning their ships, without the expence of maintaining it. In fact they are utterly unable to support a garrison sufficient for its defence; and so conscious were they of it that a proposition was made, on the part of Schimmelpenninck, to declare the Cape a *free port*, to be placed under any flag except their own. But the only power that Holland possessed, in framing the treaty of peace, was a mere name; and all the territories that were nominally restored to the Batavian Republic were virtually given up to France. As a proof of the superior light in which the Dutch consider their settlements in the East, from which they draw their coffee, pepper, and other spices, it may be observed that they have completely stripped the Cape of every ship of war, which, with seven or eight hundred troops, have proceeded for the defence of Java and the Molucca Islands; from these they draw a considerable revenue, but the Cape is a burden which their finances are little able to support.

I have stated thus much with regard to the opinions that have hitherto been held of the importance of the Cape of Good Hope to the British trade and settlements in India, at a time when we were made to feel the inconvenience of its being in the possession of an enemy, or even of a neutral power, because a very sensible change of opinion appears to have taken place from the very moment it became a dependency on the British Crown. For it is very certain that the Directors of the East India Company did not only assume an affected indifference, with regard to this settlement, but employed agents to depreciate its value in the House of Commons, and endeavoured to discourage the retention of it in the most effectual manner they possibly could have thought of, by shewing and proving to the world, as they imagined they had done, that the possession of the Cape was of no use whatsoever to their commerce, or their concerns in India. With this view the commanders of all the ships in their employ were forbidden, in the most positive terms, to touch at the Cape, either in their outward or their homeward bound passage, except such, on the return voyage, as were destined to supply the settlement with Indian goods.

But this ill-judged and absurd order defeated itself. Though the strength and constitution of English seamen, corroborated by wholesome food, may support them on a passage from India to England, shortened as it now is by the modern improvements in the art of navigation, without the necessity of touching at any intermediate port, yet this is not the case with regard to the Lascars, or natives of India who,

in time of war, constitute frequently more than two-thirds of the crew. These poor creatures, whose chief sustenance is rice, oil, and vegetables, are ill calculated to suffer a long privation of their usual diet, and still less so to bear the cold of the southern ocean, especially in the winter season. By them the Cape was looked up to as a half-way house, where a stock of fresh supplies was to be had, and where the delay of a few days had a wonderful effect in recruiting their health and spirits. And the event very soon shewed that such a half-way house, to such people, was indispensably necessary; for the Directors were obliged to countermand their order as far as it regarded those ships that were navigated by the black natives of India.

Whenever it has happened that government was under the necessity of sending out troops in ships navigated by Lascars, a greater degree of sickness and mortality has prevailed than in ships entirely manned by Europeans; and under such circumstances it would be highly criminal to attempt to run from Europe to India without stopping at some intermediate port, not only to procure refreshments for the troops and Lascars, but to clean and fumigate the ships in order to prevent contagious diseases. The two Boy regiments, as they are usually called, the 22d and 34th, which it was necessary to send to the Cape as a reinforcement of the garrison, after the able and effective men had been sent away to Madras, who soon after so materially assisted in the conquest of Seringapatam, arrived in a dreadful state at the Cape; the disease had gained such a height, that if the Cape had not at that time been in our possession it was universally be-

lieved not an officer nor a man could possibly have survived the voyage to India. Yet the same ships, after being properly washed, scoured, and fumigated, and the crews completely refreshed, carried on other troops to their destination without the loss of a single man.

How far the conduct of the Directors was compatible with the interests of the East India Proprietors, who have consigned them to their management, I shall endeavour to point out in the subsequent pages, and to state some of those advantages that would have resulted to the British nation in general, and to the East India Company in particular, by annexing the Cape to the foreign possessions of England; and the serious consequences that must infallibly ensue from its being in the possession of an enemy. Opinions on this subject, it would seem, are widely different; on which account a fair and impartial statement of such circumstances as may tend to elucidate a doubtful point, may not be deemed impertinent, and may ultimately be productive of good, by assisting those, to whose care the best interests of the country are committed, to form their judgment on facts locally collected, and brought in some order together under one point of view. It is not unimportant to premise that such facts were either taken from authentic and official documents, or fell immediately under my own observation.

I proceed then, in the first place, to consider the Cape of Good Hope in the view of a military station; by which term I do not mean to confine myself to the mere garrison that may be considered necessary for the defence of the settle-

ment, but to extend the acceptation of the word to that of a military depôt, or place suitable for collecting and forming, so as always to have in readiness, a body of troops, either belonging to his Majesty's regular regiments, or to the armies of the East India Company, fitted and prepared for foreign service, and seasoned for the climates either of the East or the West Indies.

A very general notion seems to have been entertained in this country in all our former wars, by people who consider only the outlines or superficies of things, and such, by the way, constitute by far the largest portion of mankind, that if the minister can contrive to furnish money, the money will supply men, and these men will form an army. It is true they will so; just as a collection of oak timber brought to a dock-yard will form a ship. But a great deal of labor is necessary in the seasoning, hewing, and shaping of such timber, and a great deal of judgment and practice still required to arrange and adapt the several parts to each other, so that they may act in concert together, and form a complete whole that shall be capable of performing all the effects that were intended to be produced. Thus is it also in the formation of an army. It is not enough to collect together a body of men and to put arms into their hands. They must be classed and arranged, seasoned and inured to a certain way of life; exercised in certain motions and positions of the body, until long practice has rendered them habitual and easy; they must be taught to act in an uniform and simultaneous movement, and in such a manner that the separate action of the individuals shall form one united impulse, producing the greatest

possible effect of aggregated strength. They must also be taught to preserve their health and strength by habits of temperance and cleanliness, and to take care of themselves in the various circumstances that may occur of situation and climate.

Such a body of men, so formed and prepared, may properly be called soldiers. And no small degree of attention and judgment is required to bring a body of men to such a state of discipline. Yet it is highly important that all troops, intended to be sent on foreign service, should at least be partly formed, and instructed in the art of taking proper care of themselves, previous to their embarkation. Being once accustomed to habits of cleanliness and regularity, they are less liable to fall a sacrifice to the close confinement and want of room in a ship; and the inconveniencies of a long sea voyage will always be less felt by persons thus prepared than by raw undisciplined recruits, who are apt to be heedless, slovenly, and irregular.

But even old seasoned troops, after a long sea-voyage, are generally found to be disqualified, during a considerable time, for any great exertion. The tone or elasticity of the mind has become relaxed as well as the habit of body. Let any one recollect how he felt after a long sea-voyage, and ask himself if he were capable of the same exertion, and of undergoing the same fatigue, immediately after landing as before his embarkation. The answer, I fancy, will be in the negative. The limbs, in fact, require to be exercised in order to regain their usual motions, and the lungs must have

practice before they will play with their usual freedom in the chest. And these effects, adverse to prompt and energetic action, will generally be proportioned to the length of the voyage, and the privations to which men must necessarily submit.

The very able and intelligent writer of the *Précis des evènemens militaires*, or *Epitome of military events*, seems to ascribe the defeat of the Russian column, commanded by General Hermann, in the affair at Bergen where it was almost cut to pieces, to their marching against the enemy immediately after landing from a sea-voyage, although it had not been very long. He observes that, "by being crowded on board "transports, and other inconveniencies experienced at sea, "not only a considerable number of individuals are weak-"ened to such a degree that they are incapable of any ser-"vice, but whole corps sometimes present the same disad-"vantages—the extreme inequality of strength that, in such "cases, prevails between the individuals or constituent parts "of corps, is, at once, destructive of their aggregated and "combined impulse."

If then such be the effects produced on seasoned troops, on a sea-voyage of a moderate length only, they must be doubly felt by young recruits unaccustomed to the necessary precautions for preserving their health. In fact, a raw recruit, put on board a ship in England, totally unformed and undisciplined, will be much farther from being a soldier, when he arrives in India, than when he first stepped on board. The odds are great that he dies upon the passage, or that he

arrives under incurable disease. I think I have heard that not more than three out of five are calculated upon as able to enter the lists on their arrival in India; and that of those who may chance to arrive in tolerable health, a great proportion may be expected to die in the seasoning, from the debilitating effects of a hot climate. India is, perhaps, the worst place in the whole world for forming an European recruit into a soldier. Unable to bear the fatigue of being exercised, his spirits are moreover depressed by observing how little exertion men of the same rank and condition as himself are accustomed to make. It cannot, therefore, be denied that, as long as it shall be found necessary to recruit our large armies in India with European troops, it would be a most desirable object to be in possession of some middle station to break the length of the sea-voyage; a station which at the same time enjoys a middle temperature of climate, between the extremes of heat and cold, to season the body and adapt it to sustain an increased quantity of the one or the other

The Cape of Good Hope eminently points out such a station. Its geographical position on the globe is so commanding a feature, that the bare inspection of a map, without any other information, must at once obtrude its importance and value in this respect. Its distance from the coast of Brazil is the voyage of a month; from the Dutch colonies of Surinam, Demarara, Berbice, and Essiquebo, with the West India islands, six weeks; the same to the Red Sea; and two months to the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel. With the east and the west coasts of Africa and

the adjacent islands, it commands a ready communication at all seasons of the year. A place so situated, just half way between England and India, in a temperate and wholesome climate, and productive of refreshments of every description, would naturally be supposed to hold out such irresistible advantages to the East India Company, not only by its happy position and local ascendancy, but also by the means it affords of opening a new market and intermediate depository for their trade and commodities, that they would have been glad to purchase, at any price, an acquisition of such immense importance; and that such great advantages as it possessed, however they might be blinked by some or unknown to others, would speedily have forced a general conviction of their value, in spite of real ignorance or affected indifference.

One might also have supposed that the possession of the Cape of Good Hope would have suggested itself to the East India Company as a place which would have removed many, if not all, of the difficulties that occurred to them, on the renewal of their privileges in 1793, when a depôt for their recruits in Britain was in contemplation. The principal regulations proposed for such depository of troops, as contained in "*Historic View of Plans for British India*," were the following:—"That the age of the Company's recruits should "be from twelve to fifteen or twenty, because, at this period "of life, the constitution was found to accommodate itself "most easily to the different variations of climate—that the "officers of the police should be empowered to transfer to "the depôt all such helpless and indigent youths as might

" be found guilty of misdemeanors and irregularities ap-
" proaching to crimes—that the said officers of police and others
" should be authorized to engage destitute and helpless young
" men in a service, where they would have a comfortable sub-
" sistence, and an honourable employment—that the young
" men so procured should be retained in Great Britain, at the
" depôt, for a certain time, in order to be instructed in such
" branches of education as would qualify for the duty of a non-
" commissioned officer, and in those military exercises which
" form them for immediate service in the regiments in India."

Now of all the places on the surface of the globe, for the establishment of such a depôt, the Cape of Good Hope is pre-eminently distinguished. In the first place, there would be no difficulty in conveying them thither. At all seasons of the year, the outward bound ships of the Company, private traders, or whalers, sail from England, and the more they were distributed among the ships the greater the probability would be that none of them died on the passage. There is not, perhaps, any place on the face of the earth which in every respect is so suitable as the Cape for forming them into soldiers. It possesses, among other good qualities, three advantages that are invaluable—healthiness of climate—cheapness of subsistence—and a favourable situation for speedy intercourse with most parts of the world, and particularly with India. I shall make a few remarks on each of these points.

To establish the fact of the healthiness of its climate, I do not consider it as necessary to produce copies of the regular returns

of deaths in the several regiments that, for seven years, have been stationed at the Cape of Good Hope. Such dry details furnish very little of the useful and less of the agreeable. They might, indeed, serve to shew, on a comparison with other returns sent in from different foreign stations, how very trifling was the mortality of troops in this settlement. It will be sufficient, however, for my purpose to observe, that Lord Macartney, in order to save a vast and an unnecessary expence to the public, found it expedient to break up the hospital staff, which, in fact, was become perfectly useless, there being at that time no sick whatsoever in the general hospital, and so few as scarcely worth the noticing in the regimental hospitals; and the surgeons of the regiments acknowledged that those few under their care were the victims of intemperance and irregularity. At this time the strength of the garrison consisted of more than five thousand men.

Shortly after the capture, it is true, a considerable sickness prevailed among the British troops, and great numbers died, a circumstance that was noticed, and at the same time fully explained, by General Sir James Craig in his letter to Mr. Dundas, about three months after the cession of the colony. He observes that the soldiers of the Dutch East India Company were obliged to furnish their own bedding and blankets, as well as the necessary garrison and camp furniture; so that, when the Dutch entered into the capitulation, not a single article of garrison furniture could be claimed; and as the shops, at that time, furnished no such materials, the men were obliged to sleep on the bare flag-stones in the great barrack,

until a supply of blankets and camp utensils of every kind could be sent out from England.

Invalids from India recover very quickly at the Cape. The servants of the East India Company are allowed to proceed thus far on leave of abſence without prejudice to their rank; and here they generally experience a speedy recovery. The two Boy regiments, whom I have already mentioned to have suffered severely on the passage from England in ships navigated by Lascars, and who landed in fact at the height of a malignant and contagious disease, rapidly recovered; and, in the course of two years, from being a parcel of weakly boys, unable to carry their musquets, became two very fine regiments, fit for service in any part of the world. When the orders, indeed, for the final evacuation of the Cape were countermanded, the 84th regiment, which two years before had excited the pity of every one who saw them, enfeebled as they were by disease, and unfit, from their tender years, for the fatigues of soldiers, was now a very essential part of the strength of the garrison.

It may, therefore, I think, be safely concluded, that the climate of the Cape is not only salubrious, but that it is particularly favourable for forming young and raw recruits into soldiers. And it would appear, moreover, that the salutary effects of this climate are not merely local, but that their seasoning efficacy is extended beyond the hemisphere of Southern Africa, and qualifies, in a very remarkable manner, the raw recruit and the seasoned soldier for the climate of

India, and the still more trying situation of the voyage thither. The constitution would seem to acquire, by a few years residence at the Cape, a strength and vigour which not only enable it to surmount the inconveniencies of the sea, but, contrary to what usually happens, to sustain the fatigue of long and continued marches in a hot climate, immediately after disembarkation.

The truth of this observation was made evident by a number of instances which occurred during the seven years that the Cape remained in our possession; but in none more strongly than that, in the government of Lord Macartney, when three almost complete regiments of infantry, the 84th, the 86th, and the Scotch brigade, were embarked and sent off, at a few days' notice, under the command of Major-General Baird, to join the army of India against Tippoo Sultaun. This reinforcement, consisting of upwards of two thousand men in their shoes, arrived to a man, and in the highest state of health; took the field the day after their landing; marched into the Mysore country; co-operated with the Indian army, and contributed very materially towards the conquest of Seringapatam. The very man (Major-General Baird), under whose command they sailed from the Cape but a few months before, led them on to storm this celebrated capital of the Mysore kingdom.

One might have supposed that the facility and success of throwing reinforcements into India, exemplified in this remarkable instance, would have stamped on the minds of the Directors of the East India Company an indelible value on

the Cape. "By possessing and improving the advantages of "seasoning and preparing our troops at the Cape," observes Lord Macartney in his letter to Lord Melville on the importance of the settlement, dated April the 25th, 1801, "I had "it in my power, almost at a moment's notice, to send to "Madras, under the command of Major-General Baird, "about two thousand effective men in the highest health, "vigor, and discipline, who eminently contributed to the "capture of Seringapatam, and the total subversion of the "power of Tippoo."

It did not seem, however, to have made any such impression on the East India Company; at least their conduct and opinions did not indicate any change in consequence of it. Nor could their inflexible indifference be roused by the multiplied instances which occurred of the solid advantages, every one of which clearly demonstrated the importance, of having a suitable station for the seasoning and training of young troops to act, on any emergency and at a short notice, *in their service*, and for the protection of their vast possessions in India. Had not the very striking instance above recited been considered as sufficient to stamp the value of the Cape, the reinforcement of troops that was sent from thence, to accompany the expedition of Sir Home Popham to the Red Sea, it might be supposed, would have forced conviction of the importance of such a station. On this occasion were embarked, at almost a moment's warning, twelve hundred effective men, composed of detachments of artillery, cavalry, and infantry, who all arrived to a man, at Cossir, a port in the Red Sea, from whence they were found capable of immediately sustaining

long and fatiguing marches, notwithstanding the heat of the climate, the heaviness of the ground, and the scarcity of water. The 61st Regiment, Sir Robert Wilson observes landed at Cossir after having been near sixteen weeks on board, without having one sick man, though the strength of the regiment exceeded nine hundred men.

A thousand difficulties, it appears, were started in England with regard to the sailing of this expedition, by people who derive their information only from defective books, and not from local knowledge. The season of the Monsoon was stated to be unfavorable for the navigation of the Red Sea, and the deserts by which it was bordered were held to be totally impassable. But to vigorous and determined minds few things are insurmountable. "The man (Lord Melville) "who projected, and persevered in, the expedition to Egypt," saw very clearly that the expedition to the Red Sea could not fail under proper caution and management, and the event proved that he was right.

Having thus sufficiently shewn, as I conceive, the importance of the Cape as a military station, or depositary of troops, as far as regards the healthiness of the climate, and the effects produced on the constitution of soldiers, by being seasoned and exercised a short time there, I shall now proceed to state the comparatively small expence at which the soldier can be subsisted on this station, and the saving that must necessarily ensue both to Government and the East India Company, by sending their recruits to the Cape to be trained for service either in the East or the West Indies. And as some of his

Majesty's late ministers, in discussing its merits on the question of the peace of Amiens, justified the surrender on the ground of its being an expensive settlement, I shall be more particular on this head, in order to prove to them, what indeed I imagine they are now sufficiently convinced of, how much they had mistaken the subject; and that the cant of economy was but a poor justification for the sacrifice of a place of such importance.

The Cape of Good Hope is the only military station that we ever possessed, and perhaps the only garrison that exists, where the soldier can be subsisted for the sum of money which is deducted out of his pay in consideration of his being furnished with a daily ration or fixed proportion of victuals. In other places, government, by feeding the soldier in this manner, sustains a very considerable loss; that is to say, the ration costs more money than that which is deducted from his pay; but it is a necessary loss, as the soldier could not possibly subsist himself out of his pay in any part of the world, unless in those places where provisions are as cheap as at the Cape of Good Hope. Here each ration costs the government something less than sixpence, which was the amount of the stoppage deducted in lieu of it. But each individual soldier could not have supplied his own ration for eightpence or ninepence at the very least, so that the gain made by government, in furnishing the rations, was also a saving, as well as a great accommodation, to the soldiers. At home, and in different parts abroad, as I have been informed, the ration stands the government in different sums from tenpence to half-a-crown.

At the Cape of Good Hope, some twenty years ago, two pound of butchers' meat cost one penny; at the capture by the English the price had advanced to one pound for twopence; yet, notwithstanding the increased demand, occasioned by the addition of five thousand troops and near three thousand seamen, frequently more than this number, with all the various attempts and combinations that were practised (and, on a certain occasion in the year 1800, very unwisely countenanced by high authority) to raise the price of this article, the contract for supplying the garrison was never higher than at the rate of two and five-eighths pounds for sixpence. Two pounds of good wholesome bread might be generally purchased for twopence. Even in the midst of a scarcity, which threatened a famine, bread rose no higher than twopence the pound; and all kinds of fruit and vegetables are so abundant, and so cheap, as to be within the reach of the poorest person. A pint of good sound wine may be procured at the retail price of threepence; and were it not for the circumstance of the licence for selling wine by retail being farmed out as one source of the colonial revenue, a pint of the same wine would cost little more than three-halfpence.

The farming out of the wine licence was a subject of grievance to the soldier, as it compelled him to buy his wine in small quantities at the licensed houses, when the civilians and housekeepers were allowed to purchase it in casks of twenty gallons, at the rate of five or six rixdollars the cask, which is just about half the retail price he was obliged to pay for it. Yet, vexatious as such a regulation appeared to be, it was

still sufficiently cheap to enable the soldier to purchase fully as much as was useful to him. Numbers of the soldiers, indeed, contrived to save money out of their pay. The 91st regiment of Highlanders, in particular, was known to have remitted a good deal of money to their families in Scotland; and many of the serjeants of the different regiments, at the evacuation of the colony, had saved from one to two hundred pounds in hard money.

In the year 1800 the government, in order to bring a little more money into the treasury by the wine licence, directed, by proclamation, that the retail sellers should demand from the soldier the increased price of eightpence the bottle, instead of sixpence, which, however, they had prudence enough to decline. The sum brought into the government treasury by tolerating this monopoly, averaged about seventy thousand rixdollars annually. But in the event of the Cape falling again into our hands, which sooner or later must happen, if it be an object to secure our Indian possessions, it would be wise to supply this part of the revenue by some other means.

Government likewise derived other profits besides those which accrued from the cheapness of the rations. The Deputy-Paymaster-General drew bills on his Majesty's Paymasters-General in England, in exchange for the paper currency of the colony, in which all the contingent and extraordinary expences of the garrison were paid. There was not, in fact, any other circulating medium than this colonial currency which was sanctioned by the English at the capitula-

tion. The hard money that was brought into the colony from time to time, for the purpose of paying the troops, always found its way to India and China, which made it extremely difficult for the Paymaster to collect the necessary sums. But so tenacious was Lord Macartney in adhering to the principle of paying the soldiers in specie, that, notwithstanding the difficulties and the delay which sometimes occurred in procuring it, he chose rather to let the troops go in arrear, than pay them in paper with the highest premium added to it, to prevent the possibility of a suspicion entering a soldier's mind, that he might be cheated. The premium which Government bills bore in exchange for paper currency fluctuated from five to thirty per cent., but was fixed, for the greater part of the time, at twenty per cent. They would, indeed, have advanced to a much higher rate; for the merchant, unable to make his remittances to any great extent in colonial produce, or in India goods, which, if permitted, might have been injurious to the interests of the East India Company, was under the necessity of purchasing these bills. Lord Macartney, however, considered it expedient to fix the premium at twenty per cent., deeming it right that government bills should bear the highest premium of bills that might be in the market, but, at the same time, not to proceed to such a height as to become oppressive either to the merchant or the public. The drawing of these bills was therefore a source of profit to government. Being an article of merchandize among the English traders who had their remittances to make, and the demand for them exceeding the amount that was necessary to be drawn for the extraordinaries of the army, the premium would have risen in proportion to

their scarcity. To have issued them at par with the paper currency to be trafficked with for the benefit of individuals, when that profit could fairly and honorably be applied to the public service, would be a criminal neglect in those who were entrusted with the government. The merchant, no doubt, took care to cover the *per centage* paid on his remittances by a proportionate advance on his goods; and thus the exchange might operate as a trifling indirect tax on the general consumer of foreign articles, which the increased prosperity of the colony very well enabled them to pay.

The amount of bills thus drawn for the contingent and extraordinary expences of the army, from the 1st of October 1795, when the colony was taken, to the 28th of July 1802, the time it should have been evacuated, as appears from the Deputy Paymaster's books, is 1,045,814*l.* 14*s.* 1*d.* upon part of which (for part was drawn at par for specie) the profit derived to his Majesty's government amounts to the sum of 115,719*l.* 3*s.* 1*d.*

Another source of profit, which might have been very considerable, was derived from the importation of specie. The pay of the soldiers, as I have observed above, was invariably made in hard money, and not in paper currency. The Spanish dollar was issued in payment to the troops at the rate of five shillings sterling, which was always its nominal value at the Cape; and, I imagine, it might have been purchased and sent out at four shillings and fourpence, making thus a profit of more than fifteen per cent. on the pay, as well as on the extraordinaries, of the army. The sum that was

thus imported amounted to 103,426*l.* 18*s.* 3*d.* Upon which, supposing the whole sent out by government, which I understand was not exactly the case, though nearly so, the profits must have been 15,514*l.* at home, besides an additional profit of 710*l.* 13*s.* 3*d.* arising from a small quantity of specie bought in the Cape. As government, however, did not send out a sufficient supply from home, the Paymaster was sometimes under the necessity of purchasing hard money at a higher rate than five shillings the dollar, and consequently suffered a loss, as this was the invariable rate at which it was issued to the troops. About four thousand pounds of copper money were sent out, in penny pieces, which were circulated at twopence, from which there was consequently another profit derived of 4000*l.* This was done by the advice of the police magistrates, who were confident that unless this nominal and current value should be put upon it, the foreigners trading to India would carry it as well as the silver out of the colony.

Shortly after the capture of the Cape, General Craig, finding it impossible to raise, upon bills, a sufficient sum of paper currency to defray the extraordinaries of the army, was reduced to the bold measure of stamping a new paper issue, on the credit of the British government, to the amount of fifty thousand pounds; a sum that was never redeemed from circulation, nor brought to any account, until the final restoration of the colony. So that the interest of this sum for seven years produced a further saving to government of 17,500*l.*

By taking these sums together, namely,

Profit on bills drawn	*L.* 115,719	3	1
—— on specie imported -	16,224	13	3
—— on copper money -	4,000	0	0
—— on paper money circulated	17,500	0	0
We have	*L.* 153,443	16	

which may be considered as a clear gain to the government, (independent of the saving on each ration,) and, consequently, a lessening of the expenditure that was occasioned at the Cape of Good Hope.

As this expenditure has publicly been declared of such enormous magnitude as to overbalance all the advantages resulting from the possession of the settlement, and we have already seen how important these advantages are, when considered only in one point of view, it may not be amiss to point out, in as correct a manner as the nature of the subject will admit, the exact sum expended in any one year, in the military department, at the Cape of Good Hope. The year I shall take is from May 1797 to May 1798, when the garrison was strongest; consisting of

The 8th, 28th	Light Dragoons.
The 84th, 86th, 91st, Scotch Brigade	Infantry

In that year the estimate was made up according to the following extract:

1. Subsistence of the non-commissioned officers and privates of the two regiments of dragoons and four regiments of infantry, for one year, according to the new rate of payment, deducting for rations and hospital charges, - - -	55,729	2	6
2. Clothing and contingent expences for ditto, - - - - - - -	28,133	13	2
3. Full pay of the commissioned officers of two regiments of dragoons, and four regiments of infantry for one year, according to the latest regulations, - -	43,667	14	8
4. Staff officers and hospital establishment of one inspector, two physicians, one purveyor, four surgeons, two apothecaries, and nine hospital mates, - -	11,178	2	6
5. Commissary-General's department, including engineers, which alone amounts to 17,225*l.* 16*s.* 5*d.* - - -	107,794	10	11
6. Ordnance department, including artillery expences, - - - - -	18,536	14	4
7. Deputy Quarter-Master General's department, including lodging money to officers, which amounts to about 4000*l.* and bat and forage for 200 days about 6000*l.* in the whole	25,000	0	0
Total amount of one year's expence	*L.* 290,039	18	1

Or, we may, perhaps, be able to come still nearer the truth, by taking the total expenditure of the whole seven years, thus:

Amount of bills drawn by the Deputy Paymaster General for paper and specie, for the pay and subsistence of the non-commissioned officers and privates, and for the extraordinaries of the army for seven years, - - - -	1,045,814	14	1
Specie imported and bought (about) -	111,000	0	0
Clothing and contingent expences at the rate as above specified per year, -	196,935	12	2
Full pay of the commissioned officers of six regiments, as above, for seven years,	305,674	2	8
Ordnance department for seven years,	129,757	0	4
Total amount	*L.* 1,789,181	9	3

which total amount, divided by seven, gives 255,597*l.* 7*s.* for the annual average expence incurred in the military department at the Cape of Good Hope. But it would be the height of absurdity to say, that even this sum, moderate as it is, was an additional expence to Government in consequence of the capture of this settlement; since it is not only composed of the expences of maintaining the garrison, and the contingencies and extraordinaries of the army, but it includes, likewise, the pay, the subsistence, and the clothing of an army of five thousand men. Now as these troops must have been fed, clothed, and paid in any other place, as well

as at the Cape of Good Hope, and, as I have shewn, at a much greater expence, it is certainly not fair to charge this sum to the account of the garrison of the Cape. Even in peace the commissioned officers would have received their half pay, which alone would amount to a sum from 100,000*l.* to 150,000*l.*

There are not, therefore, any grounds for considering the Cape in the light of an expensive settlement. In fact, the sums of money, which have been expended there, dwindle into nothing upon a comparison with those in some of the West India islands, whose importance is a feather when weighed against that of the Cape of Good Hope. Viewing it only as a point of security to our Indian possessions, and as a nursery for maturing raw recruits into complete soldiers, the question of expence must fall to the ground. Of the several millions that are annually raised for the support of government at home, and its dependencies abroad, a small fraction of one of these millions may surely be allowed for the maintenance of a station whose advantages are incalculable. One single fact will sufficiently prove the fallacy of holding out the Cape as an expensive garrison. The price of good bread was one penny a pound, of good mutton and fresh beef twopence, of good sound wine little more than one shilling the gallon, of fruit and vegetables of every description a mere trifle. If in such a country the maintenance of the garrison be attended with great expence, the fault must rest with the government, and cannot be attributable to any unfavorable circumstances in the place itself. If full powers are en-

trusted to weak and corrupt governors, and numerous and unnecessary appointments are created, every station, whatever the local advantages may be, will become expensive.

But the expenditure necessary for the support of the garrison of the Cape, trifling even in war, could be no object whatsoever in time of peace. The fortifications, which were in the most ruinous condition when the place was taken, being finished in a complete manner, would require no further expence than that of merely keeping the works in repair, which might amount, perhaps, to an annual sum of five thousand pounds. The contingencies and extraordinaries of the army could not, at the utmost, amount to twenty thousand pounds; so that twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds would be the extent of the contingent and extraordinary expences of the Cape in time of peace; a sum that, by proper management, and a prudent application of the revenues of the colony, might easily be defrayed out of the public treasury, and leave a surplus adequate to all the demands of the civil department, together with the necessary repairs of public works and buildings.

It may be necessary that I should give the grounds upon which I calculate. From a review of the colonial revenues, I find that the average in the Dutch Government in ten years, from 1784 to 1794, was little more than 100,000 rixdollars yearly, but that by the regulations and new imposts made by the Dutch Commissaries General in 1793, the amount in the following year was 211,568 rixdollars. They

afterwards experienced a considerable increase, and from the first year of Lord Macartney's administration they rose gradually as follows:

From the 1st Oct. 1797 to the 30th Sept. 1798, they were - - -	*R. d.*	322,512	7 5
1st ditto 1798 to ditto 1799 -		360,312	0 0
1st ditto 1799 to ditto 1800 -		369,596	0 0
1st ditto 1800 to ditto 1801 -		450,713	2 4

And it is here not unworthy of notice, that from the moment of the preliminaries of peace being known they fell, the last year's produce being only

From 1st Oct. 1801 to 30th Sept. 1802	389,901	6 0

And in the following year, as far of it as was expired, they were still less productive.

In their state of progressive improvement under the British Government, without a single additional tax being laid but, on the contrary, some taken off and others modified, arrears of land-rent remitted and again accumulating, I think that under the British flag we might, without any danger of exaggeration, reckon upon a net annual revenue of half a million rixdollars, or one hundred thousand pounds currency. The annual average expenditure, including salaries and contingencies of departments, with the necessary repairs of public works and buildings, were, under the administrations of Lord Macartney and Lieutenant-General Dundas, at the most

about 300,000 rixdollars or 60,000*l.* Suppose then the contingencies and extraordinaries of the army to be 30,000*l.* the whole sum required would be 90,000*l.* or 450,000 rixdollars, the exact amount of the colonial revenue at the close of the year 1801.

The point of view, in which the importance of the Cape next presents itself to our consideration, is its local position, as being favourable for distributing troops to any part of the globe, and especially to our settlements in the east, with facility and dispatch; which is not by any means the least among those advantages it possesses as a military station. Important as the considerations are of healthiness of climate and cheapness of subsistence where a depôt of troops is intended to be formed, its value in these respects would very materially be diminished by great distance from, or difficulty of conveyance to, those places where their services are most likely to be required.

The longer the voyage the less effective will the troops be on their arrival; and delay is dangerous, even to a proverb. Perhaps it is not saying too much, that we are indebted in a very high degree to the Cape for the conquest of Mysore and the overthrow of Tippoo; not merely from the reinforcements that were sent from thence to join the Indian army, though they eminently contributed to the conquest of Seringapatam, but from the speedy intelligence obtained of the transactions carrying on at the Isle of France in consequence of the arrival of the Sultaun's agents, of which they were entirely ignorant in India, but which, by the vigilance and precaution of Lord

Macartney, were detected and communicated to the Governor-general of Bengal. "I received," the Marquis of Wellesley observes in his dispatch to the Court of Directors, "on "the 18th of June 1798, a regular authentication of the pro- "clamation (of the Governor of the Isle of France) in a "letter from his Excellency the Earl of Macartney, dated the "28th of March." And he acted, on this intelligence, with that prudence, promptitude, and spirit, for which the character of the noble Marquis is so eminently distinguished. The object of Tippoo was to gain time in order that he might strengthen his position and augment his forces. But the rapid movement of our troops towards his capital, as soon as his hostile views were confirmed, frustrated his plans, and effected the total subversion of his country. Both the moment of attack and the reinforcement from the Cape were acknowledged to be important; in either of which a failure might have proved fatal to the campaign, and would, at all events, have postponed the day of victory.

The almost incredible celerity, with which twelve hundred effective men joined the Egyptian army in high health and spirits from the Cape of Good Hope, is another instance that must force conviction of its vast importance as a military station. The advantages indeed that are afforded by its geographical position of acquiring and conveying intelligence with respect to the affairs of neighbouring nations, or of transporting troops, are by no means precarious or depending on chance; there being scarcely a week in the year in which English whalers or merchantmen, or ships of neutral powers, do not touch at the Cape, especially on their outward bound

voyage. And few of these are unwilling to engage as transports.

It appears from the books of the Custom-house, and the returns of the Captain of the port, that there sailed from the Cape

In 1799	-	103 ships
1800	-	109 ditto
1801	-	130 ditto
1802	-	131 ditto

being, in four years, 473 ships,

besides the men of war and coasting vessels. Of these 82 were Americans, 66 Danes, 24 Portugueze, 15 from Hamburgh, and 6 Swedes, 4 from Prussia and Bremen, and the rest English.

The Americans, for some years past, have been establishing a very considerable carrying trade from the eastward on the ruins of the Dutch commerce, and have acquired no small portion of the India and China commerce. The ships of this nation have always found it convenient to touch at the Cape, partly for the sake of refreshing their crews, but with a view, at the same time, of disposing of the whole or any part of their cargo to advantage. This cargo is generally lumber, or it is composed of what they quaintly term *notions*, from the great variety and assortment of goods which they take a fancy, or *notion*, may succeed. In payment of such a cargo they are glad to get bills on India for hard money, which they carry to China to purchase teas, nankeens, and porcelain. From

the Cape to India they are always glad of the opportunity of being employed as transports.

The situation is pretty much the same with regard to the Danes. But the assistance of neither the one nor the other could possibly be wanted, provided the numerous fleets of our East India Company were permitted to touch at the Cape. Without the least inconvenience to their commercial concerns, these ships might transport from England to the Cape a constant succession of raw recruits to be formed there into complete soldiers, from whence they might take on board as many of the latter as should be wanted to reinforce their armies serving in India.

The possession of the Cape is also important in another point of view. Foreign nations trading to India may be said to be at the mercy of the power which holds this grand outwork.

To England, however, its real value consists more in the effectual security it is capable of affording to her trade and settlements in India, than to any advantage that might be taken of annoying or interrupting the commercial concerns of other nations. The unbounded credit of the East India Company, the immensity of its capital employed, the superior quality of British manufactures, and the low rate at which they can be afforded in foreign markets, will always ensure to them the best part of the trade to India and China, and give to England a preference before the other maritime powers of Europe, or that of America. No naval power, therefore,

except France, could feel any jealousy, nor entertain reasonable grounds of objection against the Cape becoming a settlement of the British Empire. They were all allowed to trade and to refresh on the same terms as British subjects, with this single exception, that an additional duty of 5 per cent. was payable on all goods brought into the Colony in foreign bottoms.

The possession of this settlement, at an early period of the war, so completely excluded every hostile power from the Indian seas, threw so great an increase of commerce into our hands by that exclusion, left us in such quiet and undisturbed dominion in the eastern world, and gave us so many solid advantages unexampled in any former war, that one would suppose it a moral impossibility for the East India Company to be unmindful of the source from whence they sprung. But things that are apparently of little value in themselves, are sometimes magnified by intense observation, swell into importance by discussion, and become indispensable by contention; whilst objects of real moment lose their magnitude when slightly viewed, or seen only at a distance, grow little by neglect, and useless without a quarrel. This observation may probably be applied to Malta and the Cape of Good Hope. Respecting the importance of the latter, the French seem to have avoided any discussion in the late negociation for peace. Their views were, no doubt, well known to our Government, and might have induced it, in the very first sketch of the conditions of peace, to propose that the Cape of Good Hope should be restored to the Dutch, or be declared a free port. The latter, however, happening to be just

what France could have wished, was, on further consideration, restored in full sovereignty to its ancient possessors. France, finding that her purpose would be completely answered when once it was rescued out of the hands of the English, made no objection to this arrangement. Ceylon she considered as a less important sacrifice, although she knew it to be a much greater to Holland than that of the Cape. The latter has always been an expensive settlement to the Dutch, whilst from the former they derived a considerable revenue. Had the Cape been demanded on the part of England, there can be little doubt the French would have been equally eager in contesting the point in regard to this settlement as to Malta, knowing their vast importance to us as points of security.

I have no intention to discuss the comparative value of these two stations to England, considering them both to be essentially necessary to her independence as well as to the protection of her commerce and settlements, so long as the restless and aggrandizing spirit of the French Government shall continue to disturb the peace of Europe. It may not, however, be improper to endeavour to point out, and to compare some of the inconveniencies that would necessarily have resulted to our trade and settlements in the East Indies during the late war, from either one or the other of these places being in the hands of an ambitious enemy.

In the first place, it may be considered as a general principle that has long been rooted in the French Government, and from which it is likely never to depart, to aim at the overthrow

of our power in India, and to endeavour to erect upon its ruins an empire of their own. To accomplish this point, and in consequence thereof, in the language of the present Corsican ruler, "To strike a blow at England which will be fol-"lowed up with its complete destruction," they know there are but two roads to take: the one by getting possession of Egypt and Syria, where they might collect and season their troops for the grand expedition, either by sea or land; the other by occupying the Cape of Good Hope. Knowing the latter to be a desperate attempt, they were induced to make an experiment on the former. Had they, or their forced ally, the Dutch, kept possession of the Cape, there is no reason for supposing that the same fleet which sailed for Egypt, might not have sailed from some other port, to this station; or that they could not have slipped out from time to time almost any number of troops they might have thought proper to send. These troops, when seasoned and prepared at the Cape, for a warmer climate, could easily have been transported to the Isles of France and Bourbon, where the French would not only continue to draw supplies from the former, and to victual and provision their ships of war and transports from thence, as in the American war, but where they could not fail to have received a material reinforcement to their shipping from the Dutch: for it may be recollected, that the fleet under the command of Admiral Lucas reached Saldanha Bay, in spite of the obstacles which the Southern Atlantic presented, by the Cape being then in our hands. This fleet combined with that of the French would have required a naval force, on our part, in the Indian seas that might not have been quite convenient for us to spare. It is possible, also, they might have

cluded the vigilance of our force, as their object would not have been so much to fight us, as to have put in execution a plan that many are inclined to suppose floated in the mind of Buonaparte when he took the road of Egypt, though he was soon convinced of the futility of it by that route, without at least double the number of troops; his whole army being barely sufficient to keep the conquered country in subjection.

Among many reasons, which led to this conjecture, was the work of *Mr. Anquetil Duperron* on India, which, after being withheld from publication for fifteen years on account of the information it contained, and of which it was supposed the English might avail themselves, was hastily issued from the press on the sailing of this memorable expedition; being intended, most probably, as a guide for the officers on their arrival in India. This intelligent writer, who, to a mind capable of observation and deep reflection, adds the great advantage of local knowledge, fixes on the coast of Malabar as the foundation and corner-stone of their long projected empire in India. The considerations which induce him to give this coast the preference are, among others, the facility of possessing the passes of the neighbouring mountains, and of thus securing the internal commerce of Hindostan—the opportunity it would afford of entering into an alliance with the Mahrattas, whom he considers as a warlike and faithful people—the easy intercourse that might be maintained from this coast with the Persian gulph, the Red Sea, the Isles of France and Bourbon, Madagascar, and the Cape of Good Hope.

These are certainly important considerations, and demanded all the vigilance and attention of our Government in India. Even a small force of French troops, had they been thrown upon the coast of Malabar, at the very moment when *our forces were drawn off into the Mysore, against the* Sultaun's army, might have proved fatal to our possessions on this coast. The usurper would, no doubt, have obtained his reinforcement from the Isle of France, and probably without our knowledge, rendering, by their means, the conquest of Seringapatam doubtful. If, in such a state of things, the French forces could have gained a footing at Bombay, Goa, or Guzzarat, and intrigued themselves into an alliance with the Mahratta powers, though it might not have realized their project of an Indian empire, it would, at least, have been destructive of our possessions in the west of the peninsula, the holding of which, indeed, Mr. Anquetil considers as fatal to our power in India.

On this subject his opinion is not singular; before the overthrow of the Mysore kingdom, there were many of our own countrymen, whose sentiments in this respect accorded with his; and who, like himself, have not only a profound knowledge of Indian politics, but are well acquainted with the physical and moral character of the natives, their several connections and relations; and who, at the same time, possess the advantage that local information so eminently affords. The reduction of the Sultaun, it is true, has contributed in no small degree to our security on the Malabar coast; has consolidated our power in Southern India, and rendered the junction of foreign forces with the Mahratta chiefs more dif-

ficult, if not altogether impracticable. On the northern parts of this coast only are we vulnerable in India by sea.

Supposing, however, the views of the enemy, on the Malabar coast, to have failed, they would, at least, have been enabled, with the assistance of the Dutch, to annoy and cut up our Indian and China trade by the multitude of cruizing vessels sent out from their islands of France and Bourbon, and from the Cape of Good Hope. Even under every disadvantage, the French frigates and the nest of privateers on the Mauritius station did much mischief at the commencement of the late war, and although they had few reinforcements from France, it required five years, with a very active and powerful squadron from the Cape and from India, before they were all taken and destroyed. What then must have been the case, if, instead of the English possessing this important station, it had been an enemy's port for assembling, refitting, and refreshing the combined fleets of the French and Dutch? It is unnecessary to observe, that neither of these powers would have found much difficulty in reaching the Cape with single ships, when we have an instance of a whole fleet of Dutch ships arriving there notwithstanding they were fifteen weeks on their passage. This single fleet, acting from the Cape, might have been productive of much inconvenience, expence, and injury to England, and especially to the trade of the East India Company. Were, indeed, the French and Dutch to keep up a proper naval force at this place, it is extremely doubtful if any of the homeward-bound fleets of the East India Company would ever reach England, or if they did, it would be under an expence of

convoy so enormous, that the profits on the cargoes would be inadequate to meet it; but of this we shall have occasion to speak more particularly in the next chapter. Such are the dangers to be apprehended in consequence of the Cape being held by an enemy.

The principal disadvantages that would result to England by leaving Malta in the possession of France appear to be, in the first place, the power it would give them of excluding our ships from that port, the best, undoubtedly, in the Mediterranean, and of increasing their force there to the complete annihilation of our Mediterranean trade; and secondly, the means it would afford of facilitating their views upon Egypt, by enabling them to throw into that country a force sufficient to conquer it, and probably to renew their project upon India.

With regard to the extent and importance of the Mediterranean trade I speak with diffidence, but I am not apprehensive of hazarding much by saying that it admits not of a comparison with that of India and China, though, perhaps, too valuable to be altogether relinquished. In this respect then the value of Malta is certainly less important than that of the Cape of Good Hope. But the second point is of a more serious nature. Some, however, are of opinion, that although the subjugation of Egypt may at any time be accomplished by the French, through Malta, yet, in such an event, we have every reason to expect that the vigilance and activity of a British fleet, and the valor of British soldiers, might always enable us to dispute with them the passage of

Syria. But that, admitting even they should succeed in collecting at Suez an army equal to their wishes, the difficulties of transporting this army to India would be almost insurmountable. If it be meant by those who support this opinion that the attempt is to be made by sea, whilst the Cape remained in our possession, I have little hesitation in agreeing with them that it must certainly fail. During the last war, when their troops had marched to Suez, they had not a single ship in the Red Sea that dared to carry the French flag, nor, with the Cape and Ceylon in our hands, could they at any future period have a fleet of any description without our permission.

But we will even allow them to have assembled at Suez a fleet of their own ships, or of the country coasters, sufficient to take on board their armament destined for the Malabar coast. The next question is, where, or in what manner, are they to victual and to provision such a fleet for a month or five weeks passage, and especially in the supply of the indispensable article of water? The fountains of Moses, it is true, furnish a supply of water at all seasons of the year, but they are situated at twelve miles distance from Suez. Water may be, likewise, and is, collected in tanks or reservoirs near the town, but it soon grows fetid. The difficulty, however, of victualling and watering such a fleet, though great, is not insurmountable, and therefore may be allowed to be got over.

The dangerous navigation of the Red Sea, in which it appears not fewer than fifteen armed ships were lost between

the time of the French entering Egypt, and the signing of the definitive treaty of peace, is the next obstacle that presents itself, and which may also be surmounted. But as the navigation down this sea can only be performed six months in the year, on account of the periodical winds which there prevail, we can always know, within six months, when such a fleet would attempt to pass the narrow strait of Babelmandel, and be prepared accordingly. This strait is completely commanded by the island of Perim, against which there is no other objection but the want of water. If, however, we have allowed the French to surmount so many difficulties before they can arrive at the straits of Babelmandel, we may surely give ourselves the credit of being able to overcome this single objection against the island of Perim. A reservoir to collect and preserve rain water might be constructed; or, by digging below the level of the sea, fresh water would, in all probability, be obtained; or, at any rate, water might be transported thither from the continent, sufficient for the supply of the small garrison that would be necessary to protect the strait. The possession of this island, with a few frigates, is said to be competent to the destruction of all the craft that could possibly be collected and sent down from Suez and all the other ports of the Red Sea. Little, therefore, is to be apprehended from the designs of the French on India by the way of the Red Sea, so long as we can command the strait and victual the force necessary to be stationed there; advantages which the possession of the Cape and of Ceylon would always enable us to make use of.

But if through the Cape the French can contrive to assemble and victual a large armament in the Indian Seas, we must have an immense force to prevent such an armament from co-operating with a body of troops that may previously have been thrown into Egypt and Syria, a plan which they probably intended to have carried into effect, had not the ambitious views of Buonaparte put us on our guard, and rendered the present war both just and necessary. Such a plan, by means of such a peace as the last, might easily be realized long before any intelligence of it could reach India, or any force be sent out from England to counteract it, were Malta and the Cape of Good Hope accessible to the French; but with the latter in our possession the attempt would be madness.

What the consequence might be of an attempt entirely by land, from Greece or Syria to India, is not quite so certain. If the emperor Paul had lived to carry into execution his wild but dangerous scheme, of assembling a large body of troops on the eastern borders of the Caspian Sea, to act in concert with the French, it is difficult to say where the mischief of their quixotism might have ended. The minds of men, intoxicated with power and maddened by ambition, are not to be measured by the same motives which commonly guide the actions of mankind. It is certain that neither Paul nor Buonaparte regarded the great waste of men that such a project would have occasioned. They must have known that by no precaution nor exertion could they have made sure of a constant supply of provisions for so vast a

combined army; but such knowledge would not have prevented them from making the experiment, the lives of their people being objects of little consideration with them. If, like the host of Xerxes, they should be compelled to feed on grass and the shrubs of the thicket, or, like the army of Cambyses, in its march against the Ethiopians, be reduced to the still more dreadful necessity of killing every tenth man to feed the rest, what remorse would such calamities occasion in the breast of that man, who could deliberately put to death by poison the companions of his victories, for no other fault than the misfortune of being disabled by sickness?

Yet, although vast numbers would necessarily perish in such an enterprize, the result might, nevertheless, be the means of shaking our security in India; and this would be considered as a most ample compensation for any loss the enemy might sustain in the expedition. The obstacles that have been urged against it were, perhaps, equally great and numerous when the Macedonian hero undertook to march his army across the same countries; yet he overcame them all. And if Alexander could succeed in penetrating into India, why not Buonaparte, since military skill and tactics are now so much superior among Europeans to what they were in his day, whilst they have remained nearly stationary in the nations of the East? No sufficient reason can, perhaps, be assigned why the one, with the same or with increased means, and with talents, perhaps, not less suited to apply these means to the best advantage, should not be able to proceed to the same length that the other did.

That no part of his army would ever return is extremely probable. When a considerable proportion had perished by fatigue, by sickness, and by famine, the rest, in all human probability, by change of climate, manner of living, and by intermarrying with a new people, would produce a new race, and that race would cease to be Frenchmen, just as the successors of Alexander ceased to be Greeks. An army for such an expedition must, in the outset, be immense, to afford a sufficient number of men to maintain the conquered countries through which they must pass. The farther they proceeded the more numerous would be the enemies left in their rear; and on their approach to India, there is no reason for supposing that the native powers would welcome their arrival, jealous, as they now must be, of admitting new European visitors, after the dearly bought experience they have already had of their old friends from the same quarter. These, however, are contingencies that amount to no security of a failure in the main object of the expedition, namely, the destruction of our empire in the east. We shall, perhaps, come nearest the mark by considering the most serious, and probably the only, obstacle that would impede their progress in the countries that lie between Syria and India, to be occasioned by the great difficulty of procuring provisions and transporting the baggage and ammunition that would be required for so large an army. But even these are difficulties which, by an enterprizing and determined mind, would be surmounted.

Whether the French really intended to march an army by land, in the event of their having reduced Acre and got pos-

session of Syria, seems to be doubtful; but it is pretty evident they entertained hopes, at one time, of being able to co-operate with the Sultaun of Mysore by the Red Sea, though it does not appear that any previous plan had been concerted for transporting their troops from Egypt to India. The whole expedition, indeed, should seem to have been, in the first instance, a momentary thought, without any further plan or design than that of diverting the original intention of an armament, which was vauntingly called the Army of England. The fact seems to be, that the power and the influence of Buonaparte, who had the command of this army, had rendered him the object of jealousy and hatred to the Directory, who were equally glad with himself to have an excuse for changing the current of these vast preparations from a hazardous, almost hopeless, enterprize, whose failure would have ended in equal disgrace both to the Directory and their general, into a romantic expedition that had the sanction of the old government for the attempt, and, at all events, was more promising of success than the pretended invasion of the British islands. The fame of Buonaparte required, in fact, to be supported, at that time, by some new and signal adventure which might be the means of rescuing him from the secondary part the Directory had reserved for him, by the command of a pretended expedition against their only remaining enemy. In this situation some of his friends, it is supposed, suggested to him the conquest of Egypt, which had long been an object of the French Government under the monarchy. The brilliancy of such a conquest was well suited to the enterprizing spirit and ambitious views of the Corsican. It is supposed, also, that the memoir which