

COUTEUR

J. Le Coureur
1790
[Signature]

L E T T E R S

CHIEFLY FROM

I N D I A;

CONTAINING

A N A C C O U N T

OF THE

MILITARY TRANSACTIONS

ON THE

COAST OF MALABAR,

DURING THE LATE WAR;

TOGETHER WITH

A SHORT DESCRIPTION

OF THE

RELIGION, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS,

OF THE

INHABITANTS OF HINDOSTAN.

By *JOHN LE COUreur*, Esq.
CAPTAIN IN HIS MAJESTY'S HUNDREDTH
REGIMENT OF FOOT.

1761-1835

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

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L E T T E R I V .

IF Johnstone had possessed sufficient fortitude to have carried into execution the decisions of the council of war, I should have examined the Cape attentively, and could have entered into the exactest details, by communicating to you my own observations on every thing which would have attracted my notice. But I am obliged to rely on the testimony of another; and fortunately we have an officer on board, who has made this voyage by order of the Royal Society.

The temperature of the Cape of Good Hope is subject to many variations. In the summer the sun is almost vertical; during the winter it is in the fifty-third
or

or fifty-fourth degree. Thus an almost insupportable heat is succeeded by a very severe cold: and to this cause we ought generally to ascribe those tempests and hurricanes which occasion such devastation on the land, and are so destructive to those who happen to be at sea. The climate, however, is not that which troubles the inhabitants the most; a cruel despotism poisons every blessing, and plunges the inhabitants into a state of the most torpid inaction. The air is salubrious, and European fruits and vegetables grow here to perfection; but the farmer dares not give to his land that degree of tillage which is necessary to reap abundant crops. The governor of the Cape is not less absolute than the governor of St. Jago: he levies exorbitant taxes, and his oppression is sanctioned by the laws, since he acts under the states of Holland.

At a first view we are surpris'd at seeing a republican government, the principles of which tend to equality, thus en-
slave

have its colonies. But our astonishment ceases when we reflect that the exigencies of a state demand daily fresh supplies in a republic as well as in monarchical states; and that what the Dutch levy on their colonies is, as it were, so much gained over and above their usual supplies. The inhabitants of the Cape are so harassed by these exactions, that they only waited for our arrival in order to declare in our favour.

This country of all others is the most remarkable for its animals: the elephant, so distinguished for size and instinct, is indigenous here. The rhinoceros, famous for a horn of two or three feet in length, which projects from its nose, and remarkable for its stupidity and the impenetrability of its skin, is an inhabitant of the vast forests of the Cape. In these immense retreats was first discovered the ourang-outang, an animal which in almost every respect resembles the human species. It walks erect; and