

Of the prodigious Chestnut-Trees on Mount Etna, with some other curious Particulars; from Mr. Brydono's Tour, &c.

We left the Catania road on the left and began to ascend the mountain, in order to visit the celebrated tree, known by the name of *Il Castagno de Cento Cavalli*. (The chestnut tree of an hundred horse;) which for some centuries past has been looked upon as one of the greatest wonders of Etna. We were likewise determined (if possible) to gain the summit of the mountain by this side, and to descend by the side of Catania; but we were soon convinced of the impossibility of this, and obliged, though with a good deal of reluctance, to relinquish that part of our scheme.

The distance from Giardini to Piedmonte is only ten miles, but as the road is exceedingly rough and difficult it took us near four hours to travel it. The barometer, which at Giardini (on the sea side) stood at 29 inches, 10 lines had now fallen to 27:3. Fahrenheit's thermometer (made by Adams in London) 73 degrees.

From this place, it is not less than five or six miles to the great chestnut trees, through forest growing out of the lava, in several places almost impassable. Of these trees there are many of an enormous size; but the *Castagno de Cento Cavalli* is by much the most celebrated. I have even found it marked in an old map of Sicily, published near an hundred years ago; and in all the maps of Etna, and its environs, it makes a very conspicuous figure. I own I was by no means struck with its appearance, as it does not seem to be one tree, but a bush of five large trees growing together. We complained to our guides of the imposition, when they unanimously assured us, that by the universal tradition and even testimony of the country, all these were once united in one stem; that their grandfathers remembered this, when it was looked upon as the glory of the forest, and visited from all quarters; that for many years past it had been reduced to the venerable ruin we beheld.

We began to examine it with more attention and found that there is an appearance that these five trees were really once united in one. The opening in the middle is at present prodigious, and it does indeed require faith to believe that so vast a space was once occupied by solid timber.—But there is no appearance of a trunk on the inside of any of the stems, nor on the sides that are opposite to one another. Mr. Glynn and I measured it separately, and brought it exactly to the same size, viz 211 feet round. If this was once united in one solid stem, it must with justice need have been looked upon as a very wonderful phenomenon in the vegetable world, and was deservedly styled, the glory of the forest.

I have since been told by the Canonico Reupero, an ingenious ecclesiastic of this place, that he was at the expense of carrying up peasants with tools to dig round the *Castagno de Cento Cavalli*, and he assures me, upon his honour, that he found all stems united below ground in one root. I alleged that so extraordinary an object must have been celebrated by many of their writers.—He told me that it had, and produced several examples; Philoteo, Carrera, and some others. Carrera, begs to be excused from telling its dimensions, but he says, he is sure there was wood enough in that one tree to build a large palace. Their poet Bago-

lini too has celebrated a tree of the same kind, perhaps the same tree; and Massa, one of their most esteemed authors, says he has seen solid oaks upwards of 40 feet round; but adds, that the size of the chestnut trees was beyond belief, the hollow of one of which, he says, contained 300 sheep; and 30 people had often been in it on horseback. I shall not pretend to say, that this is the same tree he means; or whether it ever was one tree or not. There are many others that are well deserving the curiosity of travellers. One of these, about a mile and a half higher on the mountain, is called *Il Collino del Geba*; it rises from one solid stem to a considerable height, after which it branches out, and is a much finer object than the other. I measured it about two feet from the ground; it was 76 feet round. There is a third called *Il Castagno del Nere*, that is pretty nearly of the same size. With respect to a thick bush, sometimes formed or gnarled, I believe, or makes the mountain by the mountain.

The climate here is much more temperate than in the best region of Etna, where the excessive heats must ever prevent a very luxuriant vegetation. I found the barometer had fallen to 27:3, which announces a variation of very near 1000 feet, equivalent to the elevation of some of the French Academies, to 11 or 20000 feet of latitude in the former of a latitude.

The vast quantity of nitre contained in the ashes of Etna, probably contributes greatly to increase the luxuriance of this vegetation, and the air so strongly impregnated with it, and the smoke of the volcano, must create a constant supply of this salt, formed by some, not without reason, the food of vegetables.

There is a great fault in the middle of the great chestnut tree for holding the fruit it bears, which is still very considerable; here we dined with excellent appetite, and being thoroughly convinced, that it was in vain to attempt getting to the mountain on that side, we began to descend, and after a very fatiguing journey over hills, we saw the fertile fields and rich meadows, which we saw at sunset at *Jaci Biale* near, with the utmost difficulty, we at last got lodging in a convent of Dominicans.

The last lava we crossed before our arrival there, is of a vast extent. I thought we never should have had done with it; it certainly is not less than six or seven miles broad, and appears in many places to be of an enormous depth.

To be Continued

ANECDOTES.

Balby, a Griqua, in South Africa, stated, that the first thing which led him to think of religion, was observing the Hottentots, who belonged to Zak rader mission, giving thanks when eating.—I went (said he) afterwards to that settlement, where I heard many things, but felt no interest in them. But one day, when alone in the fields, I looked very seriously at a mountain, as the work of that God of whom I had heard. Then I looked to my two hands, and for the first time noticed that there were the same number of fingers on each. I asked why are there not five on this hand, and three on that? it must be God that made them so. Then I examined my feet, and wondered to find my soles both flat; not one flat and the other round. God must have done this, said I. In this way I considered my whole body,

which made a deep impression on my mind, and disposed me to hear the word of God with more interest, till I was brought to trust that Jesus died for my sins."

Gideon, a converted Indian, was one day attacked by a savage, who, presenting his gun to his head, exclaimed—"Now I will shoot you for you speak of nothing but Jesus." Gideon answered—"If Jesus does not permit you, you cannot shoot me." The savage was so struck with this answer, that he dropped his gun, and went home in silence.

Nothing is more ridiculous than to boast advantages of education which have not been improved. A young clergyman in America was lately boasting, among his relations, of having been educated at two colleges, Harvard and Cambridge. "You remind me," said an aged friend present, "of an instance I knew, of a cart that sucked two cows." "What was the consequence?" said a third person. "Why, Sir, replied the old gentleman, very gravely, "the consequence was, that he was a very great calf."

SELECT SENTENCES.

Evil habits are so great a stain to humanity, and so odious in themselves, that every person attacked by right reason would avoid them, though he was sure they would be always succeeded both from God and man, and had future punishment entailed upon them.

None can be content without application and study. Aristotle says, That to become an abler in any possession whatsoever, three things are necessary; which are, nature, study, and practice.

A man of ingenuity may go a great way in the field of learning by himself. Heraclitus, philosopher of Ephesus, had no master or tutor, but obtained his great knowledge by his own private study and diligence. Though this cannot be an example to those who have not the advantage of a guide.

A hawk is a heeter towards God, and a crow towards man.

POETRY.

TO-MORROW.

To-morrow! Grand decider of our race!
For thee, still unprov'd, to day gives place:
The heart's led choice, and hence the tongue
To-morrow.

To-morrow! Fair foundation, broken reef!
Who ever prosper'd that to thee gave heed?
How madly wastes to day will never speed
To-morrow.

To-morrow! Phantom of the idler's brain!
To-day as yesterday, has come in vain
To him, who trifling, wisdom heeps to gain
To-morrow.

To-morrow, dost thou say, thou'll wiser be?
"Thou'lt!" This night, thy soul's require
Thee?
To-day is lost nor shall thou ever see
To-morrow.

To-morrow! Let the man of heart sincere,
The present time improve, his God reverse.
Who wisely lives to-day, has nought to fear
To-morrow.