

awaiting the time when I could converse with the men, I made the acquaintance of a little friend, who, without saying a word, procured for me some moments of innocent recreation.— I had tamed a palm-tree rat, which willingly kept me company: this pretty little animal is a species of squirrel, much smaller than the squirrel of Europe; it is grey, with large black and white streaks upon the back; its principal ornament is a long, party-coloured tail, which it takes care to raise at every instant, to keep it clean; its little eyes are of an incomparable loveliness; continually on the watch, it flies at the least noise. The one of which I speak followed me everywhere, came upon my person, entered my pockets, and complained in a cry, very like the singing of a bird, when I drove it away. Alas! it did not advance to old age; when it found no longer the description of food it required, it died of hunger.

“ I arrived at Tutucurin towards the end of May. I was sent, after some days’ repose, to the Pearl Coast, there to exercise the holy ministry. I had at first a very advantageous idea of this celebrated coast, which produces pearl and coral, and which I figured to myself almost as a terrestrial paradise. How the most vaunted things suffer on being closely seen! It would be difficult to find a more melancholy desert, and one of a more monotonous aspect, than this arid shore. The villages of the Paravers, who are pearl-fishers every ten years, and fishermen daily are composed of some wretched cabins, built, or thrown here and there, without order and without symmetry, in the midst of moving sands. These sands, driven by a perpetual wind, rise in such thick clouds, that the robbers often take advantage of them to plunder the passengers, without being seen; they penetrate everywhere, roll like waves around the houses that they bury in their course, and change in a few years the face of an entire locality; every day the domain of cultivation diminishes, and vegetation flies before their continually rising tide.— In all the places where I have been, I have heard my guides say, ‘ There, under these sterile downs, vast and delightful gardens lie buried.’ —

It appears that formerly the coast was more agreeable, and also more peopled; if we are to believe the traditions of the country, it contains scarcely a quarter of its ancient inhabitants.

“ Three handsome churches are still to be seen; one at Vaimbar, another at Tutucurin, and the third at Virpaudipatnam; and, by the way, I must remark, that the maps very inaccurately make of the latter place two villages.— These churches, which we are assured, were built by a captain, on account of a vow, if he should escape from a tempest, are of a size quite disproportioned to the small number of the present Paravers. I asked what was become of the ancient Christians: I was answered, that death had extinguished several families; that the others had been obliged by a scarcity to seek their fortune elsewhere; on all hands it was agreed that formerly there was in the country a vast deal more wealth than at the present day.

“ The first religious act that I performed upon this coast was at an interment. I had not as yet been witness to this ceremony in India, and I was greatly astonished at seeing practises so different from ours. I was conducted to the house of the deceased, a woman who had died in giving birth to her first child. She was laid on a state bed, around which all the family was assembled. I was allowed to conclude the prayers very quietly; but I had no sooner finished than the relatives flung themselves upon the body, with cries and frightful howlings. I knew not what they were going to do: it was to embrace it, but with such strong marks of affection, that the deceased never before in all probability received the like. Some of her relatives repeated to her the most endearing expressions, and the most suited to induce her to remain amongst them; the others reproached her with her hardness in leaving them so soon; all spoke to her at once, and in such a manner, that had the poor woman been alive, she would not have known to which to reply.

“ When the moment arrived for carrying away the corpse, the scene became still more animated: the relatives would not let it go, and it was not without difficulty that it was rescue-