

P A R T II.

For the YEAR 1762.

LXIV. *Extract of a Letter of Mr. John Wood, from Calcutta, to J. Perry, Esq; of Hamstead. Communicated by the Rev. W. Stukeley, M. D.*

Read Jan 7,
1762.

MR. Plaisted, who is gone in quality or surveyor, with a party, to take possession of the province of Chetagou, lately yielded up to the company by the new Nabob, gives me an account of two natural curiosities, which he has met with, which I think worth communicating to you.

He writes, that the party entered the province of Chetagou, on New-years-day 1761; and after travelling fifty-four miles, came to a city called Islambad, the chief of the said province; beyond which, about a mile and half, they met with a burning rock, that continually emitted a weak flame from several parts, that might be extinguished for a time, and

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which he did in some places, for experiment sake, and found flame then breaking out from other parts of it a-new, in a very little time, after putting some out, which he kindled again also, with straw; and the natives assured him, any extinguished part would kindle of itself, and flame out again in time: he does not say how long, nor whether new places would continue to burn like old ones, his time not permitting him to make any farther observations of that sort. In passing again from Chetagou to Luckipore, he visited the rock again, which, he adds, is of a hard nature, seems to have no unctuous matter in it; nor would a piece of it, broken off near a flaming part, when heated red-hot, sweat, or discover any sulphureous matter, or even throw off any smoke. Six inches from the burning places, no heat was perceivable; and, close to the rock, was a small stream of water, that forms a large cascade over part of it, during the rains. A small pagoda is lately built over this rock.

The other is a flaming well among the hills, about four miles to the southward of the rock, that blazes on the surface of the water, which the people of the country have inclosed with brick-work, in the form of a funnel or chimney, that draws the flame to a point, and makes it burn fiercer for it. The flame issues also with the water through some holes left in the brick inclosure, for conveying it to an adjacent cistern, like fire confined, and wanting vent. The water thus let out bubbles like a boiling pot, and close to the flame is only luckwarm. A pagoda, built also over the well, is in a constant misty fume, much like what rises from the waters at Bath in England,

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the taste of which, he says, is like this, having drunk of both.

The road from the borders of the Chetagou province to the city was a bank cast up, on one side of which were rice fields, and it is passable in the wet season; but, from Luckipore, where we have a small factory, to the bounds of Chetagou, it is almost a swamp, and is only passable by boats, during the rains.

The city of Islamabad is a mere nest of beggars, pestered with the itch; the country hilly, and the soil loose sand, till you descend into the paddy, or rice fields. The city is fortified with wretched mud walls, without a cannon of any sort belonging to it. He describes part of the country about Chetagou, and before they come to it, as rich, in a fine soil, and luxuriant fertility: the inhabitants of which were, notwithstanding, miserably poor and wretched, owing to the great exactions from the Nabob of Bengal, the Rajah, who governs there, and the usual descending delegated oppressions, practised by eastern despotism.