

CHAPTER XXI

Mauritius, Beautiful Appearance of—Great Crateriform Ring of Mountains—Hindoos—St. Helena—History of the Changes in the Vegetation—Cause of the Extinction of Land-shells—Ascension—Variation in the Imported Rats—Volcanic Bombs—Beds of Infusoria—Bahia—Brazil—Splendor of Tropical Scenery—Pernambuco—Singular Reef—Slavery—Return to England—Retrospect on our Voyage

MAURITIUS TO ENGLAND

APRIL 29TH.—In the morning we passed round the northern end of Mauritius, or the Isle of France. From this point of view the aspect of the island equalled the expectations raised by the many well-known descriptions of its beautiful scenery. The sloping plain of the Pamplemousses, interspersed with houses, and colored by the large fields of sugar-cane of a bright green, composed the foreground. The brilliancy of the green was the more remarkable, because it is a color which generally is conspicuous only from a very short distance. Toward the centre of the island groups of wooded mountains rose out of this highly-cultivated plain; their summits, as so commonly happens with ancient volcanic rocks, being jagged into the sharpest points. Masses of white clouds were collected around these pinnacles, as if for the sake of pleasing the stranger's eye. The whole island, with its sloping border and central mountains, was adorned with an air of perfect elegance: the scenery, if I may use such an expression, appeared to the sight harmonious.

I spent the greater part of the next day in walking about the town, and visiting different people. The town is of considerable size, and is said to contain 20,000 inhabitants; the streets are very clean and regular. Although the island has been so many years under the English government, the gen-