AMERICAN SEA SERPENTS.

From Mr. Colburn's new Monthly Magazine.

Something extraordinary is always making its appearance in America, and accounts of the same generally appear in the English Journals grossly exaggerated. I am one of those who from experience have learnt the caution necessary to be observed before placing implicit confidence in the relations of our trans-atlantic brethren, and am old enough to remember the sensation caused by the supernatural appearances on the Apalachian mountains; the glory by which they were surrounded dispelling the darkness, as the morning sun triumphs over the clouds of night; the vision lasted until some fanatic asserted it was the "descent of the New-Jerusalem," when reason prevailed, and we heard the inhabitants and them no more.*

Lately we have had "moving stones" in Carolina, but which ceased their motion when Dr. James, of New-York, set on foot an enquiry concerning them. What I at present wish to observe upon is, the account of "huge Sea Serpents," lately said to have been seen along that wonderful coast; my intention however is not to enter into any disquisition whether or no they are of the same species with those of antiquity—those which destroyed Laocoon and yet figure in sculpture, that which proved the youthful nerves of Hercules, or the more sagacious one which foretold the death of Julian, and thereby proved itself a good christian. This I will leave to my American brethren who are well qualified for such researches. I merely intend to state that the Serpents of the Ocean, such as they are described in the accounts from America, are no novel appearance, but have been seen in the Mediterranean. I happened to be on board the Philomel, one of his Majesty's brigs of war, commanded by Captain Guison; having joined her on the 12th December, 1811, at Gibraltar; Lord Cochrane, Commissary-General Macdowel, and Captain Hardinge of the Engineers, were passengers.† I mention them thus particularly, as they are living, and can contradict me if I state any thing which is not correct.

After relieving with a supply of provisions the Portuguese fortress of Molillo, on the coast of Barbary, and anchoring for one day before the celebrated ruins of Oran, we entered the bay of Algiers, and moored the vessel about three miles to the eastwasd of the city, where vessels in common do not ride. Our motive for choosing this position was in order to sound the Bay as secretly as possible. The depth of water might be nine fathoms. One of the cables was cut under water on the second day of our anchorage, I apprehend by the coral rocks, near which place the ship was. A seaman remarked to me from the poop, where he was fishing, that he believed the devil in the shape of a serpent had cut our cable, and was now along side as long as the ship. I immediately looked over the gangway and perceived four of these reptiles sporting in the water: they appeared to me about thirty feet in length, of a dark brown colour, with a light silvery tinge on the belly, and on each side of the head; the head was small, and in thickness of body the size of a stout man's thigh, tapering towards the tail. I observed them frequently roll over, stretched at full length, and when preparing to advance, the head was raised and the tail rolled upwards like a coach wheel, in size nearly to the middle of the animal's back; lowering its head which seemed to have been raised as a necessary action to preserve its balance in folding up the tail, it darted forward with considerable velocity, unfurling itself as it advanced. The sailors vainly endeavoured to catch one of them, letting down shark-hooks with different baits. My opinion was, that the mouth of the animal, which generally appeared open when the head was reared, would not admit a bait larger than an orange, being quite out of our ideas of proportion with respect to its body. They never came nearer to the surface than six feet, so we found it useless to attempt them with a harpoon. The men bathed amongst them unmolested, nor did they abandon the vicinity of the vessel on the occasion, which confirmed me in my opinion, that from the size of the mouth, they were incapable of being dangerous to men. We saw them every day during our stay, until our removal into the Mole, when they left us, or rather we left them. An old Greek renegado told me they were common in the bay, but he had never known any of them being caught. Achmet, the Admiral's pilot, then on board the 50-gun ship, destroyed shortly after by Lord Exmouth, said they were regarded by the fishermen with a superstitious reverence, who believed if they left the bay the fish would also leave it.

They had not, to me, that "carved" appearance noticed by the Americans. I might have discovered that, and several other peculiarities of form in them, by a more narrow scrutiny, but I imagined they were only curiosities to myself, and scarce worth recording in my Journal. I did, however, record them, from a practice never to omit noticing whatever passed under my observation. I pointed them out to Lord Cochrane and the other passengers, and if I recollect aright, his Lordship said they were not uncommon, or words bearing that construction. After this statement, "the American serpent," losing its claim to novelty, is divested of much of its interest; as it is no more wonderful that the serpent of the Mediterranean should be seen on that coast, than the whale of Greenland on the coast of Cornwall.

I am, &c. J. M. MITFORD.

Fitzroy-Place.

P.S.—The master of an American vessel arrived at Penobscot asserts his having encountered at sea a serpent full one hundred feet long, and in thickness greater than a water cask. This formidable animal reared itself several feet out of the water, took a look at the ship, and quietly glided away. An affidavit is said to be preparing for the master and crew, to establish this extraordinary fact. This account is also given in Lloyd's List, which alone renders it worthy of notice. The dimensions of a water cask are various—barrels, butts, and puncheons; and those called gang-casks on board of merchant ships commonly contain 200 or more gallons, and are at least three feet in diameter; if the latter is meant, "astonishing" indeed must be the size of the animal; if by "water-cask" is meant the *barrel* in common use, about one foot in diameter, more astonishing still must it be in the former case, as the master's fears must have magnified his powers of vision, and in the latter it may be accounted for by suffering him to have passed a cable washed off some ship's deck in a gale, which I think not improbable. About twelve years ago an American captain trading for furs, saw on the shores of New-Zealand an animal of the serpent kind, which rose out of the water and looked into his main-top; of this fact an affidavit was also prepared, but never administered: perhaps this may be the same animal and the discoverer the same person. I have heard more extraordinary things asserted by American Captains, whose accounts cannot be too cautiously received, but to this I give no credit. "Jonathan" had heard of the serpent, and determined to have a share in the glory of fixing it as a native of "the Columbian Ocean."

National vanity is deemed preferable to *truth* by most American seamen, and the above may be set down as a fit companion to the *Scotch Mermaids* which were exhibited in the western isles, and were actually sworn to by several Scotch persons and *second-sighted* old women. I see no reason to alter my opinion, that the serpent of America and the Mediterranean are of the same species, and not uncommon, though rarely noticed. The difference in size will soon be reconciled, and as America is the land of the marvellous, they are entitled to forty or fifty feet extra upon such an occasion. I expect some other Captain, on the strength of this great discovery, will import us a parody to its honour on the famous national song, such as—

Hail, Columbia! favour'd strand,
Fill'd with snakes by sea and land!

An Unaspiring Republic!—The following volunteer toast was given on the 4th of July, at Natchez, in the United States, by Major Thomas Freeman:—"*The boundaries of the United States, from Baffin's Bay to Cape Horn!!*"

* These luminous appearances on the Apalachian mountains were ascribed to the particular state of the atmosphere. Some of the American philosophers even travelled from Philadelphia to observe them.

† Captain Hardinge, a man of considerable talent, took views of the city, mole and batteries, whilst the master of the brig sounded the bay minutely, under pretence of grappling for the lost anchor. I should believe Lord Exmouth acted upon Captain Hardinge's plan, as that gentleman remarked to me, in case of a bombardment, the very situation occupied by the Queen Charlotte on that memorable event afterwards taking place.

ON THE FUR TRADE.

From the St. Louis Enquirer.

The importance of this trade has not been inficiently estimated by the American government. The English have always seen its value. They have aided their subjects in carrying it on, and have made it a means of individual wealth, and of national power. The North West and Hudson Bay companies, protected by the English government, have carried down the St. Lawrence the furs of the Missouri and Mississippi, Montreal has flourished upon a commerce which belongs to St. Louis: and the British traders have acquired for their government the command of all the savages of the North American continent.

The Hudson Bay and North West companies, for a long time enemies and rivals to each other, are now reported to be united under the direction of the Earl of Selkirk. The policy and the enterprize of this chieftain will give a new energy to the united operations of these companies. The seat of their power is at the junction of the *Assiniboin* and *Red river*, in latitude 50 and longitude 21, from Washington city. Here the Earl of Selkirk has planted a Scotch colony, built a fort, and established a garrison; and from this point the British traders extend their operations into the territories of the United States; spreading themselves over the head waters of the Mississippi, the river *St. Peters*, and all that part of the Missouri which lies above the *Mandan* villages to the British establishments on the *Assiniboin*, is but five days travel; and a constant communication is kept up between them as well by the *Moose* river as by the trading path which goes over land.

The Moose river, a water of lake *Assiniboin*, here takes its rise within one mile of the Missouri river. Rising in the rocky mountains, in latitude 44, in the parallel of the falls of St. Anthony, the Missouri runs to the north east for one thousand two hundred miles as if going to Hudson's Bay, when, having reached the interior of the north American continent, and gained a latitude further north than the head of the Mississippi, she suddenly turns to the south, and discharges herself into the gulf of Mexico.

It is at the point of this northern bend that the British traders enter the region of the Missouri, and cut off the American traders from the commerce of the Indians above. Since 1807 they have maintained this advantage. At that period the American traders had gone above, had entered and even crossed the rocky mountains; but the *Black-Feet* Indians were set upon them by the British traders; twenty-seven of their number were killed, and the remainder driven home.

It is also in this bend that the Missouri receives the Yellow Stone; at the mouth of which the American government is now establishing a fort and a factory.

The choice of this position is excellent, and the government have been equally fortunate in the choice of the officers who are to maintain it.

The military force will be under the command of Col. Chambers: the Indian department will be under the immediate direction of Capt. O'Fallon.

Besides the services which will be rendered by these officers within the circle of their duties in counteracting British policy, and attaching the Indians to the American standard, much is expected from their researches into the geography and natural history of the country which they will visit.

The first step towards protecting the American traders in the prosecution of the fur trade, it is hoped will be followed up by another on the part of the congress, *the incorporation of a company to carry it on upon all the waters of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Columbia rivers.* The citizens of this country forwarded a petition to congress to this effect about three years ago; *Have the congress had time to read it yet?*

Stray Ox.

AN OX, the property of the Subscriber, went astray from the Common in Fredericton, between the 25th and 30th September last, of the following Description:—pale red, with wide horns—a cross on the near horn—will girt about six feet and a half—and is eight years old. Any person finding an OX of the above description, and will bring it or give information where it can be obtained, shall be liberally rewarded

JAMES HENDERSON.

Fredericton, 7th December, 1818.

PARIS, OCTOBER 12.

A Courier, arrived last night from Aix-la-Chapelle, has brought to the King the news, that on the 9th of this month the Duke of Richelieu, Plenipotentiary of his Majesty, has signed, with the Plenipotentiaries of the Courts of Austria, England, Prussia, and Russia, a Convention, according to which the Army of Occupation will quit the French territory by the 30th of November next. The sum which remains to be paid by France, conformably to Article 4th of the Treaty of the 20th November, 1815, is definitively fixed by that Convention at 265 millions, upon which sum 100 millions will be acquitted in *inscriptions de rente* at the price of the 5th of this months.

The *Journal de Paris* contains a similar notice to the above, and adds, that as France owed 140 millions for each of the two last years, and only 265 millions are now required to be paid: she has obtained by the Treaty a remission to the extent of fifteen millions, besides the advantage of the discount on the 100 millions paid in stock.

The other Journals merely repeat the announcement, without the addition of any new facts.

The review of departure will, according to all accounts, take place on the 17th or 18th instant. Orders are said to have arrived on the 8th, at Cambray, from the Duke of Wellington, directing the necessary preparations for a grand review on the 17th, by the Emperor of Russia and King of Prussia, of the British, Russian, and other contingents, in the plains between Valenciennes and Solemes. It is believed that the principal point of the review will be the celebrated field of Famars.

The British Cavalry cantoned in the Arondissement of St. Omer had, in consequence of these orders, already begun to move towards the destined scene of the review, on the 9th and 10th instant.

The *Journal de Paris* states, that it appears to be without doubt, that, after the review, the troops will set out on their march home, without returning to their cantonments; and that the delivery of the fortified places will be made between the 20th and 30th of this month.

The probability of such being the intended arrangement, is confirmed by an article from Mayence, which states, that the Burgomaster of Durkheim, on the Hart, has received from the Royal Regency of Spire, orders to make the necessary dispositions for the passage of a corps of 20.000 Russians, making part of the Army of Occupation, who are to arrive upon the borders of the Rhine *towards the end of October.*

"BRUSSELS, OCT. 10.

"The news which we announced respecting the decision of the Sovereigns to withdraw the Army which occupies the Provinces of the North of France from the Upper Rhine to the sea, is fully confirmed.

"The evacuation will be terminated at the end of November. At the head quarters of the English Army at Cambray, they have begun the sale of the horses, which become useless under the present circumstances. Preparations are making at the Russian Head-quarters at Maubeuge, and the Prussian at Sedan, for the grand review of the troops by the Allied Sovereigns, which will take place in a few days preparatory to their departure."

"AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, OCT. 10.

"His Majesty the Emperor of Russia and our King, will leave this city on the 16th, to review their troops forming part of the Army of Occupation, and will then go for a very short time to Paris. His Majesty the Emperor of Austria will not quit Aix-la-Chapelle. Though the principal negociation relative to the departure of the Army of Occupation, is terminated, there are other important matters reserved for the decision of the Congress. The Conferences continue daily, alternately at Prince Hardenbergs, and Prince Metternich's: the result is each time laid before the Allied Sovereigns. This uninterrupted succession of the conferences, proves that affairs of the highest importance are under discussion.

"It is confirmed that the Army of Occupation will soon pass the frontiers of France. According to the last instructions of his Excellency the Duke of Richelieu, the last contract for supplying the troops which compose it, is limited to four weeks.

"However, France will be obliged to continue to furnish the money necessary for