

CH. An Account of the Heat of the Weather in Georgia: In a Letter from his Excellency Henry Ellis, Esq; Governor of Georgia, and F. R. S. to John Ellis, Esq; F. R. S.

Dear Sir,

Georgia, 17 July, 1758.

Read Nov. 16,
1758.

THO' some weeks have passed since I wrote to you, yet so little alteration has happened in the state of our affairs, that nothing occurs to me relative to them worth committing to paper. This indeed I need not regret, as one cannot sit down to any thing, that requires much application, but with extreme reluctance; for such is the debilitating quality of our violent heats at this season, that an inexpressible languor enervates every faculty, and renders even the thought of exercising them painful.

'Tis now about three o' clock; the sun bears nearly S. W. and I am writing in a piazza, open at each end, on the north-east side of my house, perfectly in the shade: a small breeze at S. E. blows freely thro' it; no buildings are nearer, to reflect the heat, than 60 yards: yet in a thermometer hanging by me, made by Mr. Bird, and compared by the late Mr. George Graham with an approved one of his own, the mercury stands at 102. Twice it has risen this summer to the same height; viz. on the 28th of June, and the 11th of July. Several times it has been at 100, and for many days successively at 98;
and

and did not in the nights sink below 89. I think it highly probable, that the inhabitants of this town breathe a hotter air than any other people on the face of the earth. The greatest heat we had last year was but 92, and that but once : from 84 to 90 were the usual variations ; but this is reckoned an extraordinary hot summer. The weather-wise of this country say it forebodes a hurricane ; for it has always been remarked, that these tempests have been preceded by continual and uncommon heats. I must acquaint you, however, that the heats we are subject to here are more intense than in any other parts of the province, the town of Savannah being situated upon a sandy eminence, and sheltered all round with high woods. But it is very sufficient, that the people actually breathe so hot an air as I describe ; and no less remarkable, that this very spot, from its height and dryness, is reckoned equally healthy with any other in the province.

I have frequently walked an hundred yards under an umbrella, with a thermometer suspended from it by a thread to the height of my nostrils, when the mercury has rose to 105 ; which is prodigious. At the same time I have confined this instrument close to the hottest part of my body, and have been astonished to observe, that it has subsided several degrees. Indeed, I never could raise the mercury above 97 with the heat of my body.

You know, dear Sir, that I have traversed a great part of this globe, not without giving some attention to the peculiarities of each climate ; and I can fairly pronounce, that I never felt such heats any-where as in Georgia. I know experiments on this subject are

extremely liable to error ; but I presume I cannot now be mistaken, either in the goodness of the instrument, or in the fairness of the trials, which I have repeatedly made with it. This same thermometer I have had thrice in the equatorial parts of Africa ; as often at Jamaica, and the West India islands ; and, upon examination of my journals, I do not find, that the quicksilver ever rose in those parts above the 87th degree, and to that but seldom : its general station was between the 79th and 86th degree ; and yet I think I have felt those degrees, with a moist air, more disagreeable than what I now feel.

In my relation of the late expedition to the north-west, if I recollect right, I have observed, that all the changes and variety of weather, that happen in the temperate zone throughout the year, may be experienced at the Hudson's Bay settlements in 24 hours. But I may now extend this observation ; for in my cellar the thermometer stands at 81, in the next story at 102, and in the upper one at 105 ; and yet these heats, violent as they are, would be tolerable, but for the sudden changes that succeed them. On the 10th of December last the mercury was at 86 ; on the 11th it was so low as 38 of the same instrument. What havock must this make with an European constitution ? Nevertheless, but few people die here out of the ordinary course ; tho' indeed one can scarce call it living, merely to breathe, and trail about a vigorless body ; yet such is generally our condition from the middle of June to the middle of September. Dear Sir,

Yours most affectionately,

Henry Ellis.

CIII.