A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF A

NORTHWEST VOYAGE,

PERFORMED IN THE YEARS

1796, 1797 & 1798.

BY EBENEZER JOHNSON.

When on the boiſterous Waves we ride,
Let not the thought of Fear intrude.

MASSACHUSETTS:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,—1798.—

TO THE PUBLIC.

METHINKS I hear the reader exclaim, that these few lines will not be acceptable to the Public.—*But when they have read the following pages, which I now lay before them, and examined them with the most critical eye, they will not I apprehend be disappointed.—The impartial review taken of three parts of the Globe, and the observations made on the Voyage, (which being nearly two years) must be pleasing to those who are not acquainted with a* Foreign Country.—*This being the first Voyage that I have made to that Country, (and being young in the seafaring business) I was induced to keep a daily journal, from my departure, until my return; which is contained in the following Epistle.—By the desire of a few friends, the subscriber is induced to put it to Press for Public examination, in hopes that it will please some, and give information to others.—As such he flatters himself it will be received, which will amply reward his sufferings.*

A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF A

NORTHWEST VOYAGE,

PERFORMED IN THE YEARS

1796, 1797 & 1798.

I SAILED from Boſton, on board the India Packet, Auguſt 29th, 1796, with pleaſant weather, winds N. E; ſtearing our courſe S. E. September 18th, on our courſe for Cape Horn the Southern extremity of South America; pleaſant weather, light gales of wind attended with a little rain. October 11th.—Nothing material happened. Now have the N. E. Trades Freſh. October 5th.—Some little diſturbances in the Ship as is Natural to ſuppoſe there being five different languages on board. I beginning to make a little proficiency in Navigation. Sunday October 25th.—In Lt. 6. S. ſtearing our courſe S. E. by S. we diſcovered thoſe remarkable clouds called the Magalen clouds, ſuppoſed to take their name from being diſcovered by Magalen and, are actually about vertical with the Straits of Magalen. The number of theſe clouds are three and perhaps the greateſt curioſity ever eye beheld. One of them is jet black the others white. Perhaps the curious reader will query about the truth of this relation. Hundreds are the number of we hardy Seamen, that have been eye witneſs of the ſame. To entertain the reader with a further deſcription of theſe

clouds. They revole round each other in their ſeveral orbits. Their appearance is always plain unleſs obſtructed by a cloudy horrizon, and always in the ſame place except revolving. Sunday October 30th—Morning fair but ſoon found our horrizon obſtucted by clouds, a melancholy ſcene to behold; there came on a gale of wind; finding ourſelves in emi nant danger of being foundered. As the gale increaſed we ſoon found our fore topmaſt about our ears, carried cloſe down to the cap. In replacing the fore topmaſt we unfortunately loſt our main top gallantmaſt. The reader will natural ſuppoſe our ſituation really diſtreſing, andhad it not been for the greateſt exertion we muſt unavoidable periſhed. Saturday November 5th—All an entire calm nothing material to day. Sunday November 6th—Lt. 45,0. 58 m. S. very boiſterous weather a great variety of birds, ſome ſurpriſing whales ſeen in thoſe latitudes. November 20th—By obſervation we ſuppoſed ourſelves not far diſtant from Cape Horn. In the Lt. 55 S. frequently ſeeing ſeals of an enormous ſize, and every kind of animal, natural to the South Seas. Thurſday December 2d—and then diſcovered Cape Horn bearing N. from us. We had a very tedious time of it in geting up with the Cape, but now have very fine weather for this latitude. We find ourſelves becalmed at this time, but ſoon have a breeze of wind and continue our courſe to the ſouthward.

Dec. 9th—In Lt. 59, 0 30m. S. we diſcovered an aſtoniſhing Mountain of ice, that we found to be by our Quadrants four miles in height, and ſuppoſed to be twentyfour in circumference. Among the curioſities in the South Sea this is conſidered one of the greateſt. However incredible this may appear kind reader,, yet hiſtory will confirm it. Catching ſome Albetroſſes twenty feet from one wing to the other. One very remarkable thing in this latitude, is that the ſun is to be ſeen nineteen hours out of twentyfour, and plain day light continually. Sunday December 25th—Nothing particular occured. We have now ſhaped our courſe for the N. W. Coaſt of America which is N. N. W.

January 1ſt 1797.—By obſervation find ourſelves in Lt. 25,0. 30m. S. nigh the Trophic Line. We now begin to think of prepairing ourſelves for the N. W. Indians, where we intend to procure our furs. Diſtreſſing is our ſituation on account of bad proviſions, by the neglect of the owners of

the Ship, confined to three ſmall biſcuits per day, and three pints of water.—In this ſituation for three months, with a ſmall allowance of beef.

Indulgent reader do not let me tire your patience, with unneceſſary prolixty for the want of good ſtile being bread without it, and but little chance for improvement. !! Saturday Jan. 14th.—We have now croſſed the Equator and find ourſelves in Lt. 6 N. In taking a great many ſea Turtle are tolerably well furniſhed for proviſion. We ſuffered a great deal for the want of water; but this day have had a very fine ſhower of rain, which furniſhed us with a good ſupply. The ſharks are ſurpriſingly plenty in this latitude; ſome of them are ſo ravenous that while our beef is toing along ſide, which neceſſity requires they take it away net and all.

I have ſome occaſion to complain of our Captain on the account of uſage, his committing aſſault and battery on a number of the crew, is ſomething I dont ſo well reliſh, but am not in a ſituation to ſeek my redreſs at preſent, but anxiouſly wait the arrival of the time, in which I will acquiant him that I took umbridge at it, and ſhall with the greateſt propriety ſeek my redreſs. Bravo.

Sunday January 21ſt.—Stearing N. W. by N. by obſervation found ourſelves in Lt. 15 N. nothing meterial occurred. Saturday February 18th.—We are now in Lt. 49° 33 N. Being diſtreſſed with a terrible gale of wind, of courſe excited ſome alarm in us, for the ſeas run mountains high, and to appearance ſhould have our ſhip covered, daſhing and beating as if ſhe would go to pieces every moment. Feel for us reader in this ſituation, what muſt the feelings within our breaſt be, expecting to go to the bottom every minute; but through divine aſſiſtance and a little of our own exertions we ſoon cleared ourſelves of fear; got our ſails all in, and our yards and maſt down on deck. In this ſituation we remained about fortyeight hours, and then the ſtorm abated ſo that in a ſhort time we found ourſelves in our uſual ſituation. Kind reader, I acknowledge we had great reaſon to thank Neptune the governor of the Seas. !!!!!!

Tueſday February 21ſt 1797.—We this morning had the goodfortune to diſcover land, at 18 Leagues diſtance, and after three days ſail up into Norfolk Sound and come to anchor, after being at Sea about ſix months. Norfolk Sound is in Lat. 58° 5 N. Long. not aſcertained, but thought to be in about 129 E.

We ſoon was incompaſſed about with canoes with 20, ſome 30 Indians in each. Not lying but about a mile from the ſhore we had traffic enough.

After wooding, and watering, and repairing, we weighed our anchor and ſailed for Mearſes Bay, about 3° to the Southward; had very good ſucceſs in trade, found furs plenty being the firſt ſhip on the Coaſt this ſeaſon, purchaſed our furs advantageouſly, after lying at anchor about 20 days; ſet ſail for Charlotte's Iſland, about 1° to the Southward; after arriving there was viſited by a great number of canoes; but could not trade much on account of the boiſterous weather; at our arrival at this place, we let go our anchor; but on account of the gales that are prevalent here, was obliged to heave it up, and make ſail ſeven times in the ſpace of 24 hours. We then thought beſt to ſail for Skiticus ſtill further to the Southward; the diſtance about 40 miles.

After arriving we came to anchor, and find here a large Village rather a Metropolis of this Nation, where we purchaſed three hundred ſkins.

Thurſday March 16th.—We have had the good fortune to procure eleven hundered ſkins beſt prime. After ſetting ſail from this, we ſhape our courſe for Norfolk Sound, on arriving in Norfolk Sound, we ſpoke the ſhip Diſpatch, Capt. Bowers, from Boſton, under way out of the Sound, all hands, in good ſpirits, excepting one ſick with the ſcurvey, a diſorder which I ſuffered much from. You may well conceive with what raptures we imbraced one another, they being the firſt chriſtian people we have ſeen ſince we left Boſton; the Diſpatch being bound to Mearſes Bay, we tacked ſhip, and went in company with them. On our arrival at the Bay, we found lying there, Capt. Trotter, in a brig from Providence, likewiſe the brig Hazzard from Boſton, ſloop Capt. Lay, maſter. We had no particular news from them, all were well. We here had good ſucceſs in purchaſing furs. Weighed anchor and ſet ſail for Norfolk Sound, arriving there, we got a ſupply of wood and water, we then purchaſed a few furs.

The reader will not conſider me to minute in mentioning ſo often our purchaſing furs, as they were the only object of our Voyage, the number of ſkins purchaſed was 2200 and upwards.

The Natives of the N. W. part of this Country, are very much alike in their manners, they ſpeak a number of lan-

guages; they are a hardy robuſt ſet of people, about a middle ſize, reſembling our Indian very much, of a tawny complexion.

A ſhort deſcription of the animals may attract the attention of the reader. 1ſt. The ſea animal, the Elephant about the ſize of a large ox, when full grown, utter a terrible roaring that at times will excite alarm in any human creature; principally of a vermilion color. 2d. The ſea Lion, and ſea Dog, are not much unlike except the Lion vaſtly the largeſt.

The fowl kind are extremely numerous ſuch as Geeſe, Turkeys, Brants, Ducks, of every kind, the Eagle and Pelican, the largeſt of the feathered race, in theſe Northern and unexploied regions.

The ſea Otter that valuable animal, eminant for its fine fur. In Cook's performances, theſe ſkins were ſold in China for 100 Dollars per ſkin, but we ſold them for 25 or 30.

May 31ſt 1797.—We ſet ſail for China ſtearing S. S. W. with a fine breeze.

INDIA PACKET, June 30th, 1797.—We continue on our paſſage for China, with a briſk wind, ſtearing S. W. in Lat. 30 N. two of our men are taken with the ſcurvey, a diſorder very common in ſuch a voyage.

I. P. July 7th.—In Lat. 21 N. we loſt our main and fore top maſt, in a very heavy Squall of wind, we however, replaced them very ſoon.

I. P. July 24th.—In Lat. 14 N. L. 144° 30, ſeven of our crew have the ſcurvy, very bad, including our chief officer. We have been becalmed about 18 days; but have now a breeze of wind.

I. P. July 30th.—We had the fortune to diſcover the Iſland Tinnian, at 5 A. M. and got in with it at two P. M. We came to anchor and ſent our boat on ſhore, with the ſick to the number of ſeven; left them and brought of a fine Bullock, and five hundred oranges, a number of cocoanuts, and ſeveral hogs. The animals on this Iſland are entirely wild, were put on here by Anſon, a Spaniard, in circumnavigating the Iſland Tinnian, is in Lat. 14° 8 N. W. Long. 145 with ſeveral adjacent Iſlands. Agragan, Sipan, &c.

Thurſday July 16th.—This day we ſet ſail for China, all in good ſpirits, a paſſage in which nothing material happened. After being in the red Sea a few days, and paſſing

through the thouſand Iſlands arrived at Macow. Macow is ſituated at the mouth of the river Ta, or yellow River. We there came to anchor; after ſetting ſail for Canton we arrived in Wambo harbour in 48 hours, the diſtance being 85 miles, we there came to anchor after three months paſſage from the N. W. Coaſt of America.

Wambo harbour, September 1ſt, 1797.—The trade of Wambo. As to the trade of this Country, it is rendered ſomething difficult on account of their precarious diſpoſitions being ever open and ready to accept of every advantage as robbing, pilfering, &c. &c. Their mode of worſhiping is ſomething very peculiar; they burn incenſe night and morning; continually offering up ſacrifices to the Deity, or to uſe their Language to Joſé. There are immenſe numbers that are born and live on the waters until they die: It is ſuppoſed that there are one Million that live on the waters continually. It is too well known in this Country to enter into a long hiſtory of the Chineſe or their manners in general.

I do not wiſh to tire the reader with intrinſic circumſtances; but after diſpoſing of our furs for money, purchaſed ourſelves a Cargo of Teas and a few China curioſities, we ſet ſail for Boſton, the 12th of November 1797.—Some apologies are neceſſary in this caſe, but when the reader is become acquainted with the circumſtances he will be kind enough to excuſe me for not continuing my journal in a regular manner as I intended. In the commencing of the Voyage; I had the miſfortune of being ſick the moſt part of the time after I left China unable to write. So I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfy the reader, as far as poſſible.

October 17th.—Loſt ſight of land on our paſſage for America after ſailing through the China Seas and down the coaſt of Africa, through the ſtraits of Balaboam by Java-head for ninety days we arrived at the Cape of Goodhope the Southern extremity of Africa. In Lat. 34° 30 S. Canton lying in 23 N. the reader may eaſily eſtimate the Diſtance. The Cape of Goodhope is the garden of Africa. It being very pleaſantly ſituated and the moſt ſpacious Bay in the world lying before the town. This town was taken by the Dutch, a long time ſince from the Hottentots, but was three years ſince captured by the Engliſh; and now is in he hands of them and guarded by as large a fleet for the place as any in the known world. We found cauſe to lie

in this place ten days on account of our ſick: We had the misfortune to loſe three of our people, on our paſſage from China; one of them third mate. We find here a variety of people: Engliſh, Dutch, Hottentots, too numerous to mention. One curioſity is the Hottentots ſheep, of an enormous ſize; their tails are ſaid to weigh 25lb. I have ſeen them to weigh 15lb. The fowl kind, the Oſtrich are found here in plenty, the Caſovarous are ſeen here, an extraordinary fowl. The Caſovarous are about the ſize of the Oſtrich, not unlike them except their wings and bruſtles.

February 3d.—This morning ſet ſail for Boſton, leaving one of our men ſick at the Cape, and after coming too, at the Iſland Aſanchiant to get a little refreſhment by fiſh and turkle. We ſet ſail for Boſton. A deſcription may not be diſagreeable to the indulgent reader. It is in Lat. 8 S. a continued clift of rocks, about 24 miles in circumference. Deſtitute of inhabitants or any animal except rats, and them without number of an enormous ſize. Of fowl kind is found here the man of war bird, and Gull in plenty. The turkle of this place are very large ſome weighing 900lb. It being within about 8° of the Equinoctial line, S. is well adapted to them. The turtle furniſhed us with the moſt delicious diſh being a variety of meats in them. For brevity ſake, I muſt leave this ſubject and continue a ſketch of the paſſage from China to America.

February the 24th, 1798.—We weighed our anchor for the laſt time with joyful hearts, and ſet ſail for Boſton ſteering W. N. W.

I. P. March 15th, 1798.—Continuing our paſſage to Boſton N. E. trades ſteering W. N. W. by obſervation find ourſelves in 23° 30 m. North about the tropic line.

April 1ſt, 1798.—By obſervation we find ourſelves in Lat. 30° 24 m. upon a parallel with the W. I. Iſlands: Nothing particular occurred.

April 7th.—We came in ſight of land through miſtake. We got into Marblehead harbour owing to the fog which was very heavy, we there took a pilot and directed our courſe for Boſton, where we arrived the 10th, after a paſſage of 137 days from China.

For two long years upon the main,
Each toil and danger I went through in hopes to ſee
my native ſhore again :
The whiſtling winds began to blow,
Where to fix my mind I did not know !

When duty called I began to bid adieu,
But ſtil to myſelf and country true,
A ſailor's life a life, of woe
Now up and down, to and fro !

Bleſt with Neptune ſmiles we fly
To riſe ſeas running mountains high,
Though pearls threat around
All ſenſe of danger drown'd !

But think not our caſe is hard,
For coming home is a ſweet reward ;
Our ſails when in harbour is furl'd
Then each brave fellow for his girl !

The deck we clear
Then three times cheer,
Our am'rous toaſt
Here we love moſt !

This world is a ſtage
On which mankind engage,
A labyrinth of woe
Wandering for they know not who!