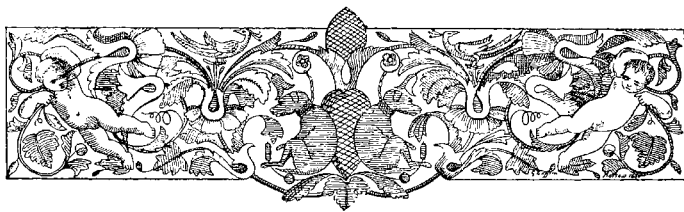


Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

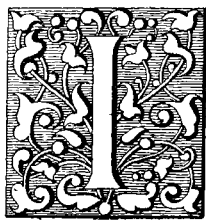
THE TRAVELS
OF
PETER DELLA VALLE,

SIRNAMED THE TRAVELLER,

Containing a Description of the East Indies, &c.

LETTER I.

From Suràt, March 22. Anno 1623.



IN the beginning of this year, at my departure from Persia, I writ last to you from aboard the ship call'd the *Whale*, in which I was newly imbarqu'd upon the coasts of that Country, and had not yet begun my Voyage. Since which time having sail'd over a good part of the Ocean, arriv'd at the famous Countries of *India*, travell'd and view'd no inconsiderable portion thereof; by conveniency of the same ship which brought me hither, and is ready to set sail speedily towards *Muchà*¹ in the Arabian Gulph, (and the rather for that a German Gentleman a friend of mine is imbarqu'd in her, with an intention

¹ Usually spelt Mocha. The chief port of Arabia, on the Red Sea. First visited by an English fleet in 1610, under Sir H. Middleton.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

to travel from thence, in case he can get passage, to see *Æthiopia*) with this Letter (which I recommend to him to get transmitted into *Italy*, if possible, from those Ports of the Red Sea, or by the way of *Cairo*, where they trade, or by some other conveyance) I come again to give you an Account of my Adventures, and the Curiosities which have hitherto afforded delicious repast to my always hungry Intellect. To begin therefore: Upon Thursday the 19 of January, having dispatch'd and taken order for what was needful, a little before day, after the discharge of some Guns as 'tis the custome at going off from any coast, we began leisurely to display our sails, moving but slowly, because we waited for the ship-boat which was still at Shore; upon whose return we unfolded all our Canvase, and, though with a small gale, directed our course between the Islands of *Ormuz*¹ and *Kesom*,² passing on the outer side of *Ormuz* next *Arabia*, in regard the shallowness of

¹ Hormuz, or Ormuz; the ancient Ormuza. An island in the Persian Gulf, celebrated for its wealth, as the emporium of commerce, not only between Persia and India, but also between Europe and India, its commodities being carried up the Euphrates, and thence across the Syrian desert. The island is merely a bare rock. It was taken by the Portuguese fleet, under Albuquerque, in 1514, and retaken by Shah Abbas, King of Persia, with the aid of the English, in 1622. Described by Duarte Barbosa* (? Magellan), in his account of East African and Malabar coasts, printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1866, p. 41. In Linschoten's *Travels* there is the following reference to Ormuz:—"The Ile of Ormus in summer time is so unseasonabell, and intollerably hotte, that they are forced to lie, and sleepe, in wooden cesternes, made for the purpose full of water, and all naked, both men and women, lying cleane under water, saving only their heads."

² Properly Kishm. An island in the Persian Gulf. Also called Kishmish. The ancient Oaracta, celebrated for its wine.

* Duarte Barbosa is stated in a recent work by Guillemard to have been a brother-in-law of Magellan, and perhaps also a cousin. Cf. *Ferdinand Magellan*, by F. H. Guillemard, pp. 87, 90.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CONTINUATION OF VOYAGE.

3

the Channel towards *Persia* afforded not water enough for such great Ships as ours.

We were in company only two English Ships, namely, the *Whale*, which was the Captain-Ship, (in which I was embarqu'd), commanded by Captain *Nicholas Woodcock*, and another called the *Dolphin*, which had for Captain, Master *Matthew Willis*. At noon, being near *Lareck*,¹ and no wind stirring, we cast Anchor without falling our sails, and our Captain sent his long-boat ashore to *Lareck*, with two Grey-hounds, which the English of *Combi*² had given him, to catch what game they could light upon. Towards night we set sail again; but though the wind somewhat increased, yet because the boat was not returned, we struck sail a little, and staid for it, discharging also several musket shots to the end those that were in it might hear and see where we were; and because 'twas one o'clock in the night, and the Boat was not yet come, we doubted some disaster might have befallen it, in regard of the multitude of those Arabian thieves called *Nouteks*,³ which rob upon that sea and frequently reside in this Island of *Lareck*: Yet at length it return'd safe and sound, and brought us abundance of Goats; whereupon we again spread our sails freely to the wind, which was pretty stiff, although not much favourable to our course. However, we went onwards, plying to the Coast of *Arabia* from that of *Persia*; and on Saturday morning, as we drew near the Arabian shore, we saw three small Islands,⁴ situate near one another, and not far from a certain Cape,⁵ the

¹ A small island between Hormuz, and Kishm.

² Properly Gombroon. The principal port of S. Persia, of which the modern name is *Bandar Abbas*.

³ These pirates were attacked and destroyed by the English in 1809.

⁴ Probably the Quoin islands.

⁵ Probably Cape Mussendom, on the Arabian coast. Also called *Seleme*, and, by *Ortelius*, *Mocandon*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

name of which, and the Islands, they could not tell me, so as that I might set it down truly ; whereby I perceiv'd how it comes to pass that many names of places in these parts are very corruptly written in Geographical Charts ; for in the Countries themselves, where commerce is had for the most part with rude and ignorant people, few of them know how to pronounce the same aright.

On Sunday we went from our Ship to recreate ourselves in the *Dolphin*, our companion, where the Captain entertain'd us liberally all day. In the meantime we had a good fresh gale, and sailing directly in the middle of the gulf, we beheld both the coasts of *Arabia Felix*, and *Persia*; and in the latter discern'd a famous white rock, which, standing in the midst of a low sandy shore, looks like a little hill made by hand. We pass'd the Cape, which they call in Persian Com barick,¹ that is, small sand, and the next night we left behind us the point, or peak, of Giasck.²

On Monday, the Sea being calm, the Captain, and I, were standing upon the deck of our Ship, discoursing of sundry matters, and he took occasion to show me a piece of Horn,³ which he told me himself had found in the year 1611 in a Northern Country, whither he then sail'd, which they call Greenland, lying in the latitude of seventy-six degrees. He related how he found this horn in the earth, being probably the horn of some Animal dead there, and that, when it was intire, it was between five and six feet long, and seven inches in circumference at the root, where it was thickest. The piece which I saw (for the horn was broken, and sold by

¹ Written Bombarack in modern maps.

² That is, Jask, on the coast at the entrance of the Persian Gulf.

³ Evidently part of the canine tooth of the "Narwhal" (*Monodon Monoceros*), which, as is well known, frequently grows to an abnormal length. In Greenland such teeth are said to be used as supports for the roofs of huts, and in the Castle of Rosenburg, in Denmark, is a throne, constructed of these teeth.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HORN OF NARWHAL.

5

pieces in several places) was something more than half a span long, and little less than five inches thick ; the colour of it was white, inclining to yellow, like that of Ivory when it is old ; it was hollow and smooth within, but wreath'd on the outside. The Captain saw not the Animal, nor knew whether it were of the land or the sea, for, according to the place where he found it, it might be as well one as the other ; but he believed for certain, that it was of a Unicorn, both because the experience of its being good against poyson¹ argu'd so much, and for that the signes attributed by Authors to the Unicorn's horn agreed also to this, as he conceiv'd. But herein I dissent from him, inasmuch as, if I remember aright, the horn of the Unicorn, whom the Greeks call'd Monoceros, is, by Pliny, describ'd black, and not white. The Captain added that it was a report, that Unicorns are found in certain Northern parts of America, not far from that Country of Greenland ; and so not unlikely but that there might be some also in Greenland, a neighbouring Country, and not yet known whether it be Continent or Island ; and that they might sometimes come thither from the contiguous lands of America, in case it be no Island.

This Country of Greenland is of late discovery, and the first Christian² that discover'd it, or went thither, was this Captain Woodcock, in the year above-mention'd ; and he gave it the name of Greenland upon this account, because, whereas the other Northern Countries thereabouts are destitute of grass, (whence the white Bears, and Wolves,

¹ A superstition which applied to the horn of the rhinoceros also. The origin of this belief is probably owing to the fact that scrapings of horn (owing, perhaps, to the ammonia contained in them) were found to be efficacious, to a certain extent, when applied to bites of venomous reptiles.

² Martin Frobisher was there in 1576. (*Frobisher's Three Voyages*, by Hakluyt Society.)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

which inhabit them live upon dead Whales and other like things), he found this green and full of Grass, although it be always cover'd over with snow, so that, when the Animals there mind to feed, they hollow the snow with their feet, and easily find the grass, which is kept continually fresh under the same. The English now yearly sail thither, where they take abundance of Whales, and some so vast that, when they open the mouth, the wideness is above three Geometrical paces, or fifteen foot over. Of these Whales the English make Oyle, drawing it onely out of the fat of their paunch, and they make such plenty that out of one single Whale, they say, they often get 19, 20, and 21 Tun of Oyl. This Greenland, by what Captain Woodcock saw, who discover'd it, from the end of seventy-six degrees to seventy-eight and a half, (the cold not suffering him to go further) was uninhabited, he not having found any person there, but only wild beasts of many sorts. The Company of the Greenland Merchants of England had the horn, which he found, because Captains of ships are their stipendiaries, and, besides their salary, must make no other profit of their Voyages ; but whatever they gain or find, in case it be known, and they conceal it not, all accrues to the Company that employes them. When the Horn was intire it was sent to Constantinople to be sold, where two thousand pounds sterling was offer'd for it : But the English Company, hoping to get a greater rate, sold it not at Constantinape, but sent it into Muscovy, where much about the same price was bidden for it, which, being refus'd, it was carry'd back into Turkey, and fell of its value, a much less sum being now proffer'd than before. Hereupon the Company conceiv'd that it would sell more easily in pieces then intire, because few could be found who would purchase it at so great a rate. Accordingly they broke it, and it was sold by pieces in sundry places ; yet, for all this, the whole proceed amounted onely to

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THINGS LIKE SNAKES IN THE SEA.

7

about twelve hundred pounds sterling.¹ And of these pieces they gave one to the Captain who found it, and this was it which he shew'd me.

II.—On the 25th of January, sailing in the main Sea with the prow of the Ship South-East and by East, and, as I conceive, at a good distance from the Country of Macran² (which I conjecture to be part either of the ancient Carmania, or else of Gedrosia, and at this day having a Prince of its own, lyes upon the Sea Coast between the States of the Persian and those of the Moghol), we discern'd behind us three or four Ships, which seem'd to be Frigots or Galliot, but towards evening we lost sight of them. The same day, and the other before, began to be seen in the Sea abundance of certain things, which I took to be Snakes,³ or at least fishes in the form of Snakes, being exactly of the form of large Eeles, long and round, and, according to the motion of the water, seem'd crooked as they floated along the Sea. Nevertheless, demanding of intelligent persons what they were, I understood that they were neither those Animals, nor yet living things, but only a kind of excrement of the Sea in that shape, void of all motion, saving what the agitated water gave it, although,

¹ This seems to be an incredible sum, but it is a fact that these teeth were sold for more than their weight in gold.

² Or Mekran. This province is no doubt identical with part of the ancient Carmania and Gedrosia. But Carmania extended further westwards than the present western boundary of Mekran, and the latter name is now applied only to the maritime portion of these two ancient provinces, of which the northern portion now constitutes the provinces of Kirman, Kohistan and Beloochistan.

³ Compare a passage in Langsdorff's *Travels* (vol. ii, p. 147): "We perceived in the water, near the ship, a sort of riband-like object, perfectly clear and transparent, which had the direct form and figure of a snake. It was probably composed of a number of 'salpen' or 'mollusca' of a particular species, mentioned by Forskal as hanging to each other in so extraordinary a manner."

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8 TREATY BETWEEN ENGLAND AND PERSIA.

by reason of the motion of the ship they seem'd to move contrary to us, whilst we saw them left behind. And they told me that the nearer we came to India we should see more of these things.

The next Evening our Captain, who was a little more merry than ordinary, (because the Captain of the *Dolphin* dining with us that day, he had drunk pretty freely) in conversation discoursing with me, as he was wont, after Supper, spoke very frankly to me concerning their affairs of Ormuz. In conclusion, he told me that their Treaty with the *Persians* stood thus: That, if they would deliver to the English the Fortress of *Ormuz*, with half the revenues of the Custom-house and the City, as they desir'd from the beginning, then the English would people Ormuz, and restore the trade as formerly, keeping the same continually open with *Persia*; and, that for this purpose, and also for guarding that Sea against the *Portugals* and other Enemies, they would keep four ships in Ormuz. That, when this were agreed upon, the English would transport a good number of people from England, and whole Families with Wives and Children, to dwell in Ormuz, as the *Portugals* did before, and then they would prosecute the War against the *Portugals* at Maschat and everywhere else. But, if these things were not agreed to, they would make war no longer against the *Portugals*; nor car'd they for the Traffick of *Persia* upon any other terms. Now, should these Treaties take effect, they would in no wise be advantagious for the Catholick Religion; and, were there no more to be fear'd, the *Portugals* would thereby be for ever excluded from recovering Ormuz. Yea, all the rest which they possess in those parts would be in great danger. Imanculi Beig, who was General of the *Persians* in the late Wars, and with whom the English treated in *Combrù* concerning this affair, Captain *Woodcock* said, inclin'd to the bargain; but it was not known what

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the *Chan* of *Sciraz*,¹ and, (which is more important), the King would do. On one side, I know, the Persians insisted much upon having *Ormuz* wholly to themselves, accounting it a small matter to have gain'd, with so much War, and loss of men, onely the half, or rather less then half, (the Fortress being deducted) which the English demanded for themselves; so that the *Persians* would have but the same interest there as the King of *Ormuz* had with the *Portugals*, and no more. They conceive also that they have done little, and perhaps ill, should they make no greater acquisition, in having onely chang'd the *Portugals* in *Ormuz* for the English, and Christians for Christians; that upon easier terms it might be hop'd that perhaps the *Portugals*, after the loss of *Ormuz*, would agree with the *Persians* now there was no more to lose, and onely give the *Persians* that which the King of *Ormuz*, a Mahometan like themselves, enjoyed. Moreover, to the *Persian*, no doubt, the friendship of the *Portugals* would be more profitable, in regard to the many States which they possess in *India*, from whence they may with more facility and certainty maintain the accustomed commerce with *Persia*. But, on the other side, to see the *Portugals* so worsted, and the English more fortunate, at least, and couragious, if not more strong, 'tis a clear case that *Ormuz* will never be reinhabited, nor Trade set on foot again, unless some nation of the *Franks* reside there, which have ships and strength at sea, (things which the *Persians* wholly want, there being neither Mariners nor Timber² in *Persia*, about

¹ Or Shiraz—a noted city of Persia, esteemed the second in the kingdom, near the ruins of the ancient city of Persepolis. The birth-place of the poet Hafiz.

² The scarcity of wood was so great on the coast of Persia that coasting vessels were made of pieces of wood of all sorts, and sizes, from the size of a barrel-stave, and upwards, covered over with “dammer” (a kind of resin). (Heeren's *Historical Researches*.)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 SENTIMENTS OF KING OF PERSIA.

that Sea, wherewith to build ships), and the loss resulting to *Persia* by the extinguishing of this Traffic, the charge of maintaining the Fortress of *Ormuz* without any profit, and the continual danger of losing it every hour, unless the English guard the Sea with their ships and help to defend it, these, and other like considerations, may not improbably induce the King of *Persia*, contented to have demonstrated his power and valour, and chastis'd his Enemies, the *Portugals*, according to his desire, to grant the English as much as they demand: For he should not yield it to them upon force, but out of his liberality and, for his own profit, give them that freely, which to retain to himself, as things now stand, would not onely be of no advantage, but of loss. Peradventure he may also imagine now, in the pride of his victory, that, as with help of the English he has driven the *Portugals* out of *Ormuz*, so 'twill be easie for him to expel the English too, either by the help of others, or else by his own Forces alone, should they not comply with him. However, because these Treaties with the *Persians* are manag'd by the Company of Merchants who also made the War, and not by the King of *England*, and hitherto 'tis not known whether their King approve the fact, or no, and will prosecute or let fall the enterprize; therefore, for a total conclusion, besides the consent of the King of *Persia*, they also wait the determination of the King of *England*, and the greatest hope I have of the defeating of these projects so prejudicial to the Catholicks is this alone, that the English King will not meddle in them, and, perhaps also, prohibit his Subjects so to do; as a person whom we know to be a Friend to Peace, most averse from all kind of War, especially with the King of *Spain*, while the Match of his Son with the Daughter of *Spain* is in agitation.

III.—In the mean time we began to find the Sea sufficiently rough, being got wholly out of the Persian Gulph,