Much disquisition upon a brief narrative is the professed design of the following work; a work which has increased under my hands far beyond my calculation or design, and which I now publish incomplete, because, from the various interruptions of an active life, whatever may be my wish and object, I cannot pledge myself to bring it to a conclusion.

Such encouragement as I had reason to expect has not been wanting to my former Labours. Popular reputation I neither courted or declined; emolument I neither coveted or disclaimed; but if the approbation of many excellent and learned men be an object of ambition, I have had my reward.

To the censures which I incurred, I am not insensible; but if censure be not illiberal it is the part of prudence to turn it rather to the purpose of correction than offence. One charge only I shall notice; and that,
that, not because it was unjust, but because it originated
in a misapprehension of my design. In the few
instances where I ventured upon etymology, I did not
expect the severity which I have experienced. I had
disclaimed all pretensions to oriental learning; I had
hazarded my own conjectures, in order to excite atten-
tion and curiosity in others; I had never rested a single
deduction of importance on any imaginary interpretation
of my own, and still I have had the mortification to
find that all my precautions were ineffectual. I thought
that in treating of oriental questions, the conjectures of
a classical man, even if erroneous, might have been
pardonable; but I was mistaken: I have seen my error,
and I shall avoid a repetition of the offence. Nothing
etymological will occur in the following pages, but
what will be proposed merely as matter of inquiry, or
what can be referred to oriental authority for sup-
port.

In the Voyage of Nearchus I traced the inter-
course with India to its source, a subject, as it has been called,
"barren, but important;" and I now prosecute the
same inquiry down to its completion, by the discoveries
of Gama, under difficulties still more discouraging to an Author. A work, relieved neither by the incidents of a voyage, or the occurrences of a journal, varied by no personal dangers or escapes, animated by no personal exertion or ability, however it may abound in information, can presume but little upon its powers of attraction. Fidelity, labour, and research, it is true, have their share of merit; but the approbation which they claim must be derived from those who can appreciate the value of talents which, though common to all, are exercised only by the few.

Research, indeed, affords a pleasure peculiar to itself; it presents an idea of discovery to the imagination of the inquirer; an intellectual pleasure, in which he flatters himself others will be desirous to participate; and which, if he can communicate with satisfaction proportionate to his own, publication is not merely the indulgence of a propensity, but the exercise of a social duty.

I have to return my thanks a second time to Mr. Dalrymple, for his kindness in suffering me to copy two of
of his charts; to Sir William Ouseley, for favouring me with the sheets of Ebn Haukel as they came from the press; to Dr. Charles Burney of Greenwich, and to Captain Francklin of the Bengal Establishment. I have likewise been again more particularly obliged to the Bishop of Rochester for his assistance in correcting the position of Meroë; on which subject, more probably will appear upon a future occasion.