

“ had fed in an indigo-field: the indigo had not
 “ only tinged their urine blue, but the cream of
 “ the milk was of a most beautiful blue colour, and
 “ had a radiated appearance from the centre (Is it
 “ not hence probable, that the dye is the oily part
 “ of the plant?). The milk underneath was clear
 “ and white as usual.”

Dr. Garden wrote, a year ago, that the prickly pear grows in great abundance about Carolina; and also that the cochineal insects are found upon it; but hitherto no attempts have been made to cure them as the Spaniards do. In hope, that some rich dye may be produced from the plant itself, Mr. Baker proposed some experiments to Dr. Garden, which he intends to prosecute this summer.

XXXVII. *An Account of an extraordinary Shower of black Dust, that fell in the Island of Zetland 20th October 1755* *.
In a Letter from Sir Andrew Mitchell, of Westshore, Bart. to John Pringle, M. D. F. R. S.

S I R,

Pall-Mall, June 9th, 1757.

Read June 23, 1757. **I**N compliance with your desire, I made particular inquiry, whether at or about the time the earthquake happened at Lisbon the 1st of November 1755. any uncommon phenomena

* See Phil. Transact. Vol. xlix. Part 2. p. 509.

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were

were observed to appear in the islands of Orkney or Zetland, as such had happened about that time in other parts of Scotland. From Orkney I was informed, that nothing particular had happened; only, that about the time mentioned the tides were observed to be much higher than ordinary. I received from Zetland a letter, dated 28th May 1756. from Mr. William Brown, Master of the grammar-school at Scalloway in [that country, a sensible and observing man; wherein he writes verbatim as follows. “ Blessed be
 “ God, notwithstanding the great devastations, that
 “ have been made in other parts of the world by
 “ earthquakes, we have been intirely free from any
 “ disaster of that nature: nor has any thing extra-
 “ ordinary happened in this country since you left
 “ it; only on Monday the 20th October last, be-
 “ twixt the hours of three and four in the afternoon,
 “ the sky being very hazy, as it uses to be before a
 “ storm of thunder and lightning, there fell a black
 “ dust over all the country, tho’ in greater quantities
 “ in some places than in others. It was very much
 “ like lampblack; but smelled strongly of sulphur.
 “ People in the fields had their faces, hands, and
 “ linen, blackened by it. It was followed by rain.
 “ — Some people assign the cause of it to some ex-
 “ traordinary eruption of Hecla. But I shall trou-
 “ ble you no more about it, as no doubt some of
 “ your friends have written to you of it some time
 “ ago.” —

In June 1756. I returned to Zetland; and, upon further inquiry, found what Mr. Brown had written me was attested by Mr. Mitchell, parson of the parish of Tengwall, and by several Gentlemen of credit and reputation, who had seen and observed
 the

the same phenomenon in different parts of the country at the time above-mentioned.

Mr. Brown having omitted to mention, how the wind did blow at the time the black dust was observed, I made particular inquiry about that circumstance, and found it was from the S. W. which does not seem to favour the opinion, that the dust proceeded from an eruption of mount Hecla, which lies about N. W. from Zetland; unless it may be supposed, that a north wind happening just before had carried this dust to the southward, and the south-west wind immediately following had brought it back to the northward. But, in this case, would not this black dust have been observed in Zetland at its first travelling to the southward? Upon inquiry, I did not hear it was.

Thus far I have obeyed your commands, which I will always do with pleasure; and if you think it worth while to lay this letter before the Royal Society, I leave you at full liberty to do so, or not, as you think proper: but what it contains may be relied on as truth. I am, with great regard,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

And. Mitchell.

P. S. I may add, that the distance from mount Hecla to Zetland is between 500 and 600 miles.