

***GEORGE  
TUCKER***



***A VOYAGE  
TO THE MOON***

**George Tucker**

# **A Voyage to the Moon**

**With Some Account of the Manners and Customs,  
Science and Philosophy, of the People of Morosofia,  
and Other Lunarians**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I.](#)

[APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC.](#)

[VOYAGE TO THE MOON.](#)

[CHAPTER II.](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V.](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

[CHAPTER IX.](#)

[CHAPTER X.](#)

[CHAPTER XI.](#)

[CHAPTER XII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XV.](#)

[CHAPTER XVI.](#)

[CHAPTER XVII.](#)

[APPENDIX](#)

# **CHAPTER I.**

## [Table of Contents](#)

Atterley's birth and education—He makes a voyage—  
Founders off the Burman coast—Adventures in  
that Empire—Meets with a learned Brahmin from  
Benares.

# **CHAPTER II.**

The Brahmin's illness—He reveals an important secret to  
Atterley—Curious information concerning the Moon—The  
Glonglims—They plan a voyage to the Moon.

# **CHAPTER III.**

The Brahmin and Atterley prepare for their voyage—  
Description of their travelling machine—Incidents of the  
voyage—The appearance of the earth; Africa; Greece—The  
Brahmin's speculations on the different races of men—  
National character.

# **CHAPTER IV.**

Continuation of the voyage—View of Europe; Atlantic  
Ocean; America—Speculations on the future  
destiny of the United States—Moral reflections—  
Pacific Ocean—Hypothesis on the origin of the  
Moon.

## **CHAPTER V.**

The voyage continued—Second view of Asia—The Brahmin's speculations concerning India—Increase of the Moon's attraction—Appearance of the Moon—They land on the Moon.

## **CHAPTER VI.**

Some account of Morosofia, and its chief city, Alamatua—Singular dresses of the Lunar ladies—Religious self-denial—Glonglim miser and spendthrift.

## **CHAPTER VII.**

Physical peculiarities of the Moon—Celestial phenomena—Farther description of the Lunarians—National prejudice—Lightness of bodies—The Brahmin carries Atterley to sup with a philosopher—His character and opinions.

## **CHAPTER VIII.**

A celebrated physician: his ingenious theories in physics: his mechanical inventions—The feather-hunting Glonglim.

## **CHAPTER IX.**

The fortune-telling philosopher, who inspected the finger nails: his visitors—Another philosopher, who judged of the character by the hair—The fortune-teller duped—Predatory warfare.

## **CHAPTER X.**

The travellers visit a gentleman farmer, who is a great projector: his breed of cattle: his apparatus for cooking—He is taken dangerously ill.

## **CHAPTER XI.**

Lunarian physicians: their consultation—While they dispute the patient recovers—The travellers visit the celebrated teacher Lozzi Pozzi.

## **CHAPTER XII.**

Election of the Numnoonce, or town-constable—Violence of parties—Singular institution of the Syringe Boys—The prize-fighters—Domestic manufactures.

## **CHAPTER XIII.**

Description of the Happy Valley—The laws, customs, and manners of the Okalbians—Theory of population —Rent—System of government.

## **CHAPTER XIV.**

Further account of Okalbia—The Field of Roses—Curious superstition concerning that flower—The pleasures of smell traced to association, by a Glonglim philosopher.

## **CHAPTER XV.**

Atterley goes to the great monthly fair—Its various exhibitions; difficulties—Preparations to leave the Moon—

Curiosities procured by Atterley—Regress to the Earth.

## **CHAPTER XVI.**

The Brahmin gives Atterley a history of his life.

## **CHAPTER XVII.**

The Brahmin's story continued—The voyage concluded—Atterley and the Brahmin separate—Atterley arrives in New-York.

Appendix: Anonymous Review of *A Voyage to the Moon*, reprinted from *The American Quarterly Review* No. 5 (March 1828)

## **APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC.**

[Table of Contents](#)

Having, by a train of fortunate circumstances, accomplished a voyage, of which the history of mankind affords no example; having, moreover, exerted every faculty of body and mind, to make my adventures useful to my countrymen, and even to mankind, by imparting to them the acquisition of secrets in physics and morals, of which they had not formed the faintest conception,—I flattered myself that both in the character of traveller and public benefactor, I had earned for myself an immortal name. But

how these fond, these justifiable hopes have been answered, the following narrative will show.

On my return to this my native State, as soon as it was noised abroad that I had met with extraordinary adventures, and made a most wonderful voyage, crowds of people pressed eagerly to see me. I at first met their inquiries with a cautious silence, which, however, but sharpened their curiosity. At length I was visited by a near relation, with whom I felt less disposed to reserve. With friendly solicitude he inquired "how much I had made by my voyage;" and when he was informed that, although I had added to my knowledge, I had not improved my fortune, he stared at me a while, and remarking that he had business at the Bank, as well as an appointment on 'Change, suddenly took his leave. After this, I was not much interrupted by the tribe of inquisitive idlers, but was visited principally by a few men of science, who wished to learn what I could add to their knowledge of nature. To this class I was more communicative; and when I severally informed them that I had actually been to the Moon, some of them shrugged their shoulders, others laughed in my face, and some were angry at my supposed attempt to deceive them; but all, with a single exception, were incredulous.

It was to no purpose that I appealed to my former character for veracity. I was answered, that travelling had changed my morals, as it had changed other people's. I asked what motives I could have for attempting to deceive them. They replied, the love of distinction—the vanity of being thought to have seen what had been seen by no other mortal; and they triumphantly asked me in turn, what



motives Raleigh, and Riley, and Hunter, and a hundred other travellers, had for their misrepresentations. Finding argument thus unavailing, I produced visible and tangible proofs of the truth of my narrative. I showed them a specimen of moonstone. They asserted that it was of the same character as those meteoric stones which had been found in every part of the world, and that I had merely procured a piece of one of these for the purpose of deception. I then exhibited some of what I considered my most curious Lunar plants: but this made the matter worse; for it so happened, that similar ones were then cultivated in Mr. Prince's garden at Flushing. I next produced some rare insects, and feathers of singular birds: but persons were found who had either seen, or read, or heard of similar insects and birds in Hoo-Choo, or Paraguay, or Prince of Wales's Island. In short, having made up their minds that what I said was not true, they had an answer ready for all that I could urge in support of my character; and those who judged most christianly, defended my veracity at the expense of my understanding, and ascribed my conduct to partial insanity.

There was, indeed, a short suspension to this cruel distrust. An old friend coming to see me one day, and admiring a beautiful crystal which I had brought from the Moon, insisted on showing it to a jeweller, who said that it was an unusually hard stone, and that if it were a diamond, it would be worth upwards of 150,000 dollars. I know not whether the mistake that ensued proceeded from my friend, who is something of a wag, or from one of the lads in the jeweller's shop, who, hearing a part of what his master had

said, misapprehended the rest; but so it was, that the next day I had more visitors than ever, and among them my kinsman, who was kind enough to stay with me, as if he enjoyed my good fortune, until both the Exchange and the Banks were closed. On the same day, the following paragraph appeared in one of the morning prints:

"We understand that our enterprising and intelligent traveller, JOSEPH ATTERLEY, Esquire, has brought from his Lunar Expedition, a diamond of extraordinary size and lustre. Several of the most experienced jewellers of this city have estimated it at from 250,000 to 300,000 dollars; and some have gone so far as to say it would be cheap at half a million. We have the authority of a near relative of that gentleman for asserting, that the satisfactory testimonials which he possesses of the correctness of his narrative, are sufficient to satisfy the most incredulous, and to silence malignity itself."

But this gleam of sunshine soon passed away. Two days afterwards, another paragraph appeared in the same paper, in these words:

"We are credibly informed, that the supposed diamond of the *famous* traveller to the Moon, turns out to be one of those which are found on Diamond Island, in Lake George. We have heard that Mr. A——y means to favour the public with an account of his travels, under the title of 'Lunarian Adventures;' but we would take the liberty of recommending, that for *Lunarian*, he substitute *Lunatic*."

Thus disappointed in my expectations, and assailed in my character, what could I do but appeal to an impartial public, by giving them a circumstantial detail of what was most memorable in my adventures, that they might judge, from intrinsic evidence, whether I was deficient either in soundness of understanding or of moral principle? But let me first bespeak their candour, and a salutary diffidence of themselves, by one or two well-authenticated anecdotes.

During the reign of Louis the XIVth, the king of Siam having received an ambassador from that monarch, was accustomed to hear, with wonder and delight, the foreigner's descriptions of his own country: but the minister having one day mentioned, that in France, water, at one time of the year, became a solid substance, the Siamese prince indignantly exclaimed,—"Hold, sir! I have listened to the strange things you have told me, and have hitherto believed them all; but now when you wish to persuade me that water, which I know as well as you, can become hard, I see that your purpose is to deceive me, and I do not believe a word you have uttered."

But as the present patriotic preference for home-bred manufactures, may extend to anecdotes as well as to other productions, a story of domestic origin may have more weight with most of my readers, than one introduced from abroad.

The chief of a party of Indians, who had visited Washington during Mr. Jefferson's presidency, having, on his return home, assembled his tribe, gave them a detail of his adventures; and dwelling particularly upon the courteous treatment the party had received from their "Great Father,"

stated, among other things, that he had given them ice, though it was then mid-summer. His countrymen, not having the vivacity of our ladies, listened in silence till he had ended, when an aged chief stepped forth, and remarked that he too, when a young man, had visited their Great Father Washington, in New-York, who had received him as a son, and treated him with all the delicacies that his country afforded, but had given him no ice. "Now," added the orator, "if any man in the world could have made ice in the summer, it was Washington; and if he could have made it, I am sure he would have given it to me. Tustanaggee is, therefore, a liar, and not to be believed."

In both these cases, though the argument seemed fair, the conclusion was false; for had either the king or the chief taken the trouble to satisfy himself of the fact, he might have found that his limited experience had deceived him.

It is unquestionably true, that if travellers sometimes impose on the credulity of mankind, they are often also not believed when they speak the truth. Credulity and scepticism are indeed but different names for the same hasty judgment on insufficient evidence: and, as the old woman readily assented that there might be "mountains of sugar and rivers of rum," because she had seen them both, but that there were "fish which could fly," she never would believe; so thousands give credit to Redheiffer's patented discovery of perpetual motion, because they had beheld his machine, and question the existence of the sea-serpent, because they have not seen it.

I would respectfully remind that class of my readers, who, like the king, the Indian, or the old woman, refuse to

credit any thing which contradicts the narrow limits of their own observation, that there are "more secrets in nature than are dreamt of in their philosophy;" and that upon their own principles, before they have a right to condemn me, they should go or send to the mountains of Ava, for some of the metal with which I made my venturous experiment, and make one for themselves.

As to those who do not call in question my veracity, but only doubt my sanity, I fearlessly appeal from their unkind judgment to the sober and unprejudiced part of mankind, whether, what I have stated in the following pages, is not consonant with truth and nature, and whether they do not there see, faithfully reflected from the Moon, the errors of the learned on Earth, and "the follies of the wise?"

## **JOSEPH ATTERLEY.**

*Long-Island, September, 1827.*

## **VOYAGE TO THE MOON.**

[Table of Contents](#)

### **CHAPTER I.**

*Atterley's birth and education—He makes a voyage—  
Founders off the Burman coast—Adventures in that Empire  
—Meets with a learned Brahmin from Benares.*

Being about to give a narrative of my singular adventures to the world, which, I foresee, will be greatly divided about their authenticity, I will premise something of my early history, that those to whom I am not personally known, may be better able to ascertain what credit is due to the facts which rest only on my own assertion.

I was born in the village of Huntingdon, on Long-Island, on the 11th day of May, 1786. Joseph Atterley, my father, formerly of East Jersey, as it was once called, had settled in this place about a year before, in consequence of having married my mother, Alice Schermerhorn, the only daughter of a snug Dutch farmer in the neighbourhood. By means of the portion he received with my mother, together with his own earnings, he was enabled to quit the life of a sailor, to which he had been bred, and to enter into trade. After the death of his father-in-law, by whose will he received a handsome accession to his property, he sought, in the city of New-York, a theatre better suited to his enlarged capital. He here engaged in foreign trade; and, partaking of the prosperity which then attended American commerce, he gradually extended his business, and finally embarked in our new branch of traffic to the East Indies and China. He was now very generally respected, both for his wealth and fair dealing; was several years a director in one of the insurance offices; was president of the society for relieving the widows and orphans of distressed seamen; and, it is said, might have been chosen alderman, if he had not refused, on the ground that he did not think himself qualified.

My father was not one of those who set little value on book learning, from their own consciousness of not possessing it: on the contrary, he would often remark, that as he felt the want of a liberal education himself, he was determined to bestow one on me. I was accordingly, at an early age, put to a grammar school of good repute in my native village, the master of which, I believe, is now a member of Congress; and, at the age of seventeen, was sent to Princeton, to prepare myself for some profession. During my third year at that place, in one of my excursions to Philadelphia, and for which I was always inventing pretexts, I became acquainted with one of those faces and forms which, in a youth of twenty, to see, admire, and love, is one and the same thing. My attentions were favourably received. I soon became desperately in love; and, in spite of the advice of my father and entreaties of my mother, who had formed other schemes for me nearer home, I was married on the anniversary of my twenty-first year.

It was not until the first trance of bliss was over, that I began to think seriously on the course of life I was to pursue. From the time that my mind had run on love and matrimony, I had lost all relish for serious study; and long before that time, I had felt a sentiment bordering on contempt for the pursuits of my father. Besides, he had already taken my two younger brothers into the counting-house with him. I therefore prevailed on my indulgent parent, with the aid of my mother's intercession, to purchase for me a neat country-seat near Huntingdon, which presented a beautiful view of the Sound, and where, surrounded by the scenes of my childhood, I promised

myself to realise, with my Susanna, that life of tranquil felicity which fancy, warmed by love, so vividly depicts.

If we did not meet with all that we had expected, it was because we had expected too much. The happiest life, like the purest atmosphere, has its clouds as well as its sunshine; and what is worse, we never fully know the value of the one, until we have felt the inconvenience of the other. In the cultivation of my farm—in educating our children, a son and two daughters, in reading, music, painting—and in occasional visits to our friends in New-York and Philadelphia, seventeen years glided swiftly and imperceptibly away; at the end of which time death, in depriving me of an excellent wife, made a wreck of my hopes and enjoyments. For the purpose of seeking that relief to my feelings which change of place only could afford, I determined to make a sea voyage; and, as one of my father's vessels was about to sail for Canton, I accordingly embarked on board the well-known ship the *Two Brothers*, captain Thomas, and left Sandy-hook on the 5th day of June, 1822, having first placed my three children under the care of my brother William.

I will not detain the reader with a detail of the first incidents of our voyage, though they were sufficiently interesting at the time they occurred, and were not wanting in the usual variety. We had, in singular succession, dead calms and fresh breezes, stiff gales and sudden squalls; saw sharks, flying-fish, and dolphins; spoke several vessels: had a visit from Neptune when we crossed the Line, and were compelled to propitiate his favour with some gallons of spirits, which he seems always to find a very agreeable



change from sea water; and touched at Table Bay and at Madagascar.

On the whole, our voyage was comparatively pleasant and prosperous, until the 24th of October; when, off the mouths of the Ganges, after a fine clear autumnal day, just about sunset, a small dark speck was seen in the eastern horizon by our experienced and watchful captain, who, after noticing it for a few moments, pronounced that we should have a hurricane. The rapidity with which this speck grew into a dense cloud, and spread itself in darkness over the heavens, as well as the increasing swell of the ocean before we felt the wind, soon convinced us he was right. No time was lost in lowering our topmasts, taking double reefs, and making every thing snug, to meet the fury of the tempest. I thought I had already witnessed all that was terrific on the ocean; but what I had formerly seen, had been mere child's play compared with this. Never can I forget the impression that was made upon me by the wild uproar of the elements. The smooth, long swell of the waves gradually changed into an agitated frothy surface, which constant flashes of lightning presented to us in all its horror; and in the mean time the wind whistled through the rigging, and the ship creaked as if she was every minute going to pieces.

About midnight the storm was at its height, and I gave up all for lost. The wind, which first blew from the south-west, was then due south, and the sailors said it began to abate a little before day: but I saw no great difference until about three in the afternoon; soon after which the clouds broke away, and showed us the sun setting in cloudless majesty, while the billows still continued their stupendous rolling, but

with a heavy movement, as if, after such mighty efforts, they were seeking repose in the bosom of their parent ocean. It soon became almost calm; a light western breeze barely swelled our sails, and gently wafted us to the land, which we could faintly discern to the north-east. Our ship had been so shaken in the tempest, and was so leaky, that captain Thomas thought it prudent to make for the first port we could reach.

At dawn we found ourselves in full view of a coast, which, though not personally known to the captain, he pronounced by his charts to be a part of the Burmese Empire, and in the neighbourhood of Mergui, on the Martaban coast. The leak had now increased to an alarming extent, so that we found it would be impossible to carry the ship safe into port. We therefore hastily threw our clothes, papers, and eight casks of silver, into the long-boat; and before we were fifty yards from the ship, we saw her go down. Some of the underwriters in New York, as I have since learnt, had the conscience to contend that we left the ship sooner than was necessary, and have suffered themselves to be sued for the sums they had severally insured. It was a little after midday when we reached the town, which is perched on a high bluff, overlooking the coasts, and contains about a thousand houses, built of bamboo, and covered with palm leaves. Our dress, appearance, language, and the manner of our arrival, excited great surprise among the natives, and the liveliest curiosity; but with these sentiments some evidently mingled no very friendly feelings. The Burmese were then on the eve of a rupture with the East India Company, a fact which we had not before known; and mistaking us for English, they

supposed, or affected to suppose, that we belonged to a fleet which was about to invade them, and that our ship had been sunk before their eyes, by the tutelar divinity of the country. We were immediately carried before their governor, or chief magistrate, who ordered our baggage to be searched, and finding that it consisted principally of silver, he had no doubt of our hostile intentions. He therefore sent all of us, twenty-two in number, to prison, separating, however, each one from the rest. My companions were released the following spring, as I have since learnt, by the invading army of Great Britain; but it was my ill fortune (if, indeed, after what has since happened, I can so regard it) to be taken for an officer of high rank, and to be sent, the third day afterwards, far into the interior, that I might be more safely kept, and either used as a hostage or offered for ransom, as circumstances should render advantageous.

The reader is, no doubt, aware that the Burman Empire lies beyond the Ganges, between the British possessions and the kingdom of Siam; and that the natives nearly assimilate with those of Hindostan, in language, manners, religion, and character, except that they are more hardy and warlike.

I was transported very rapidly in a palanquin, (a sort of decorated litter,) carried on the shoulders of four men, who, for greater despatch, were changed every three hours. In this way I travelled thirteen days, in which time we reached a little village in the mountainous district between the Irawaddi and Saloon rivers, where I was placed under the care of an inferior magistrate, called a Mirvoon, who there exercised the chief authority.

This place, named Mozaun, was romantically situated in a fertile valley, that seemed to be completely shut in by the mountains. A small river, a branch of the Saloon, entered it from the west, and, after running about four miles in nearly a straight direction, turned suddenly round a steep hill to the south, and was entirely lost to view. The village was near a gap in the mountain, through which the river seemed to have forced its way, and consisted of about forty or fifty huts, built of the bamboo cane and reeds. The house of my landlord was somewhat larger and better than the rest. It stood on a little knoll that overlooked the village, the valley, the stream that ran through it, and commanded a distant view of the country beyond the gap. It was certainly a lovely little spot, as it now appears to my imagination; but when the landscape was new to me, I was in no humour to relish its beauties, and when my mind was more in a state to appreciate them, they had lost their novelty.

My keeper, whose name was Sing Fou, and who, from a long exercise of magisterial authority, was rough and dictatorial, behaved to me somewhat harshly at first; but my patient submission so won his confidence and good will, that I soon became a great favourite; was regarded more as one of his family than as a prisoner, and was allowed by him every indulgence consistent with my safe custody. But the difficulties in the way of my escape were so great, that little restraint was imposed on my motions. The narrow defile in the gap, through which the river rushed like a torrent, was closed with a gate. The mountains, by which the valley was hemmed in, were utterly impassable, thickly set as they were with jungle, consisting of tangled brier, thorn and

forest trees, of which those who have never been in a tropical climate can form no adequate idea. In some places it would be difficult to penetrate more than a mile in the day; during which time the traveller would be perpetually tormented by noxious insects, and in constant dread of beasts of prey.

The only outlet from this village was by passing down the valley along the settlements, and following the course of the stream; so that there was no other injunction laid on me, than not to extend my rambles far in that direction. Sing Fou's household consisted of his wife, whom I rarely saw, four small children, and six servants; and here I enjoyed nearly as great a portion of happiness as in any part of my life.

It had been one of my favourite amusements to ramble towards a part of the western ridge, which rose in a cone about a mile and a half from the village, and there ascending to some comparatively level spot, or point projecting from its side, enjoy the beautiful scenery which lay before me, and the evening breeze, which has such a delicious freshness in a tropical climate.

Nor was this all. In a deep sequestered nook, formed by two spurs of this mountain, there lived a venerable Hindoo, whom the people of the village called the Holy Hermit. The favourable accounts I received of his character, as well as his odd course of life, made me very desirous of becoming acquainted with him; and, as he was often visited by the villagers, I found no difficulty in getting a conductor to his cell. His character for sanctity, together with a venerable beard, might have discouraged advances towards an

acquaintance, if his lively piercing eye, a countenance expressive of great mildness and kindness of disposition, and his courteous manners, had not yet more strongly invited it. He was indeed not averse to society, though he had seemed thus to fly from it; and was so great a favourite with his neighbours, that his cell would have been thronged with visitors, but for the difficulty of the approach to it. As it was, it was seldom resorted to, except for the purpose of obtaining his opinion and counsel on all the serious concerns of his neighbours. He prescribed for the sick, and often provided the medicine they required—expounded the law—adjusted disputes—made all their little arithmetical calculations—gave them moral instruction—and, when he could not afford them relief in their difficulties, he taught them patience, and gave them consolation. He, in short, united, for the simple people by whom he was surrounded, the functions of lawyer, physician, schoolmaster, and divine, and richly merited the reverential respect in which they held him, as well as their little presents of eggs, fruit, and garden stuff.

From the first evening that I joined the party which I saw clambering up the path that led to the Hermit's cell, I found myself strongly attached to this venerable man, and the more so, from the mystery which hung around his history. It was agreed that he was not a Burmese. None deemed to know certainly where he was born, or why he came thither. His own account was, that he had devoted himself to the service of God, and in his pilgrimage over the east, had selected this as a spot particularly favourable to the life of quiet and seclusion he wished to lead.

There was one part of his story to which I could scarcely give credit. It was said that in the twelve or fifteen years he had resided in this place, he had been occasionally invisible for months together, and no one could tell why he disappeared, or whither he had gone. At these times his cell was closed; and although none ventured to force their way into it, those who were the most prying could hear no sound indicating that he was within. Various were the conjectures formed on the subject. Some supposed that he withdrew from the sight of men for the purpose of more fervent prayer and more holy meditation; others, that he visited his home, or some other distant country. The more superstitious believed that he had, by a kind of metempsychosis, taken a new shape, which, by some magical or supernatural power, he could assume and put off at pleasure. This opinion was perhaps the most prevalent, as it gained a colour with these simple people, from the chemical and astronomical instruments he possessed. In these he evidently took great pleasure, and by their means he acquired some of the knowledge by which he so often excited their admiration.

He soon distinguished me from the rest of his visitors, by addressing questions to me relative to my history and adventures; and I, in turn, was gratified to have met with one who took an interest in my concerns, and who alone, of all I had here met with, could either enter into my feelings or comprehend my opinions. Our conversations were carried on in English, which he spoke with facility and correctness. We soon found ourselves so much to each other's taste, that there was seldom an evening that I did not make him a visit, and pass an hour or two in his company.

I learnt from him that he was born and bred at Benares, in Hindostan; that he had been intended for the priesthood, and had been well instructed in the literature of the east. That a course of untoward circumstances, upon which he seemed unwilling to dwell, had changed his destination, and made him a wanderer on the face of the earth. That in the neighbouring kingdom of Siam he had formed an intimacy with a learned French Jesuit, who had not only taught him his language, but imparted to him a knowledge of much of the science of Europe, its institutions and manners. That after the death of this friend, he had renewed his wanderings; and having been detained in this village by a fit of sickness for some weeks, he was warned that it was time to quit his rambling life. This place being recommended to him, both by its quiet seclusion, and the unsophisticated manners of its inhabitants, he determined to pass the remnant of his days here, and, by devoting them to the purposes of piety, charity, and science, to discharge his duty to his Creator, his species, and himself; "for the love of knowledge," he added, "has long been my chief source of selfish enjoyment."

Our tastes and sentiments accorded in so many points, that our acquaintance ripened by degrees into the closest friendship. We were both strangers—both unfortunate; and were the only individuals here who had any knowledge of letters, or of distant parts of the world. These are, indeed, the main springs of that sympathy, without which there is no love among men. It is being otherwise, to treat with contempt what mankind hold in respect: and philosophy teaches us not to extinguish our feelings, but to correct and



refine them. My visits to the hermitage were frequently renewed at first, because they afforded me the relief of variety, whilst his intimate knowledge of men and things—his remarkable sagacity and good sense—his air of mingled piety and benignity,—cheated me into forgetfulness of my situation. As these gradually yielded to the lenitive power of time, I sought his conversation for the positive pleasure it afforded, and at last it became the chief source of my happiness. Day after day, and month after month, glided on in this gentle, unvarying current, for more than three years; during which period he had occasionally thrown out dark hints that the time would come when I should be restored to liberty, and that he had an important secret, which he would one day communicate. I should have been more tantalized with the expectations that these remarks were calculated to raise, had I not suspected them to be a good-natured artifice, to save me from despondency, as they were never made except when he saw me looking serious and thoughtful.

## CHAPTER II.

### Table of Contents

*The Brahmin's illness—He reveals an important secret to Atterley— Curious information concerning the Moon—The Glonglims—They plan a voyage to the Moon.*

About this period, one afternoon in the month of March, when I repaired to the hermitage as usual, I found my venerable friend stretched on his humble pallet, breathing very quickly, and seemingly in great pain. He was labouring under a pleurisy, which is not unfrequent in the mountainous region, at this season. He told me that his disease had not yielded to the ordinary remedies which he had tried when he first felt its approach, and that he considered himself to be dangerously ill. "I am, however," he added, "prepared to die. Sit down on that block, and listen to what I shall say to you. Though I shall quit this state of being for another and a better, I confess that I was alarmed at the thought of expiring, before I had an opportunity of seeing and conversing with you. I am the depository of a secret, that I believe is known to no other living mortal. I once determined that it should die with me; and had I not met with you, it certainly should. But from our first acquaintance, my heart has been strongly attracted towards you; and as soon as I found you possessed of