great devaſtations committed by this powerful community ; which construct roads, or rather covered ways, diverging in all directions from the neſt, and leading to every object of plunder within their reach, Though the miſchiefs they commit are very great, ſuch is the economy of nature, that it is probably counterbalanced by the good produced by them ; in quickly destroying dead trees and other ſubſtances, which, as the author obſerves, would, by a tedious decay, ſerve only to encumber the face of the earth. Such is their alacrity and diſpatch in this office, that the total deſtruction of deſerted towns is ſo effectually accomplished, that in two or three years a thick wood fills the ſpace ; and not the leaſt veſtige of a houſe is to be discovered.

From the many singular accounts here given of the police of theſe insects, we ſhall mention one reſpecting the different functions of the labourers and ſoldiers, or the civil and mi­litary eſtabliſhments in this community, on an attempt to examine their neſt or city.

On making a breach in any part of the ſtructure with a hoe or pick axe, a ſoldier immediately appears, and walks about the breach, as if to ſee whether the enemy is gone, or to examine whence the attack proceeds. In a ſhort time he is followed by two or three others, and ſoon after­wards by a numerous body, who ruſh out as fast as the breach will permit them ; their numbers increaſing as long as any one continues to batter the building. During this time they are in the moſt violent bustle and agitation ; while ſome of them are employed in beating with their forceps upon the building, ſo as to make a noiſe that may be heard at three or four feet diſtance. On ceaſing to diſturb them, the ſoldiers retire, and are ſucceeded by the labourers, who hasten in various directions towards the breach, each with a burden of mortar in his mouth ready tempered. Though there are millions of them, they never ſtop or embarraſs each other ; and a wall gradually ariſes that fills up the chaſm. A ſoldier attends every 600 or 1000 of the la­bourers, ſeemingly as a director of the works ; for he never touches the mortar, either to lift or carry it. One in par­ticular places himſelf cloſe to the wall which they are re­pairing, and frequently makes the noiſe above mentioned ; which is conſtantly anſwered by a loud hiſs from all the labourers within the dome : and at every ſuch ſignal, they evidently redouble their pace, and work as faſt again.

The work being completed, a renewal of the attack constantly produces the ſame effects. The ſoldiers again ruſh cut, and then retreat, and are followed by the labourers loaded with mortar, and as active and diligent as before. “ Thus, says the author, the pleaſure of ſeeing them come out to fight or to work alternately may be obtained as often as curioſity excites or time permits : and it will cer­tainly be found, that the one order never attempts to fight, or the other to work, let the emergency be ever ſo great.” The obſtinacy of the ſoldiers is remarkable. “ They fight to the very laſt, diſputing every inch of ground ſo well as often to drive away the negroes, who are without ſhoes, and make white people bleed plentifully through their fstockings.”

Such is the strength of the buildings erected by theſe puny infects, that when they have been raised to little more than half their height, it is always the practice of the wild bulls to ſtand as centinels upon them, while the rest of the herd is ruminating below. When at their full height *of* 10 or 12 feet, they are uſed by the Europeans as places to look out from over the top of the graſs, which here grows to the height of 13 feet upon an average. The author has stood with four men on the top of one of theſe buildings, in order to get a view of any veſſel that might come in fight.

It may appear ſurprising how a Being perfectly good ſhould have created animals which ſeem to ſerve no other end but to ſpread deſtruction and deſolation wherever they go. But let us be cautious in ſuſpecting any imperfection in the Father of the Univerſe. What at firſt sight may ſeem only productive of miſchief, will, upon mature deli­beration, be found worthy of that wiſdom which planned the moſt beautiful parts of the world. Many poisons are valuable medicines ; the storms are beneficial ; and diſeaſes often promote life. Theſe termites, indeed, are frequently pernicious to mankind, but they are alſo very uſeful and even neceſſary ; one valuable purpoſe which they ſerve is, to deſtroy decayed trees and other subſtances, which, if left on the ſurface of the ground in hot climates, would in a ſhort time pollute the air. In this reſpect they reſemble very much the common flies, which are regarded by mankind in general as noxious, and at beſt as uſeleſs beings in the crea­tion ; but this is certainly for want of conſideration. There are not probably in all nature animals of more importance ; and it would not be difficult to prove, that we ſhould feel the want of one or two ſpecies of large quadrupeds much leſs than of one or two ſpecies of theſe deſpicable-looking insects. Mankind in general are ſenſible that nothing is more diſagreeable, or more peſtiferous, than putrid ſub­ſtances ; and it is apparent to all who have made obſervation, that thoſe little insects contribute more to the quick, diſſolution and diſperſion of putreſcent matter than any other. They are so neceſſary in all hot climates, that even in the open fields a dead animal or ſmall putrid ſubſtance. cannot be laid upon the ground two minutes before it will be covered with flies and their maggots, which instantly entering quickly devour one part, and perforating the rest in various directions, expoſe the whole to be much ſooner dissipated by the elements. Thus it is with the termites ; the rapid vegetation in hot climates, of which no idea can be formed by any thing to be ſeen in this, is equalled by as great a degree of deſtruction from natural as well as acci­dental causes @@(a). It ſeems apparent, that when any thing whatever is arrived at its laſt degree of perfection, the Cre­ator has "decreed it ſhall be totally deſtroyed as ſoon as poſſible, that the face of nature may be ſpeedily adorned with fresh productions in the bloom of ſpring or the pride of ſummer : ſo when trees, and even woods, are in part deſtroyed by tornadoes or fire, it is wonderful to obſerve how many agents are employed in haſtening the total diſſolution of the rest; but in the hot climates there are none ſo expert, or who do their buſineſs ſo expeditiouſly and effectually, as theſe insects, who in a few weeks deſtroy and carry away the bodies of large trees, without leaving a particle behind, thus clearing the place for other vegetables, which ſoon fill up every vacancy ; and in places where two or three years before there has been a populous town, if the inhabitants, as is frequently the case, have choſen to abandon it, there ſhall be a very thick wood, and not ths veſtige of a poſt to be ſeen, unleſs the wood has been of a ſpecies which, from its hardneſs, is called *iron wood.*

@@@(a) The Guinea graſs, which is ſo well known and ſo much eſteemed by our planters in the West Indies, grows in Africa, as we have already mentioned, thirteen feet high upon an average, which height it attains in about five or six months ; and the growth of many other plants is as quick.