SECHELLES, a cluster of high, rocky, and, generally speaking, barren islands, in the Indian Ocean, only three of which are inhabited. Cotton is the only product. There are twelve smaller islands, and as many islets or rocks, be­sides the larger ones. They abound in turtle, oysters, and particularly cocoa-nuts, which are imported by the inhabi­tants of the Mauritius. There are six decked vessels which belong to the inhabitants. Lat. 4. to 5. S.

SECKENDORF, Guy Louts de, a very learned Ger­man, descended from an ancient and noble family, was born at Aurach, in Franconia, in 1626. He was a good linguist, learned in law, history, and divinity, and is staid to have been a tolerable painter and engraver. He was honourably em­ployed by several of the German princes ; and died counsel­lor of state to Frederick III., elector of Brandenburg, and chancellor of the university of Halle, in 1692. He wrote many books, particularly a history and defence of the Lutheran religion, in Latin, in two volumes folio, Frankfort, 1602.

SECKER, Thomas, a learned and respectable prelate of the Church of England, was born in 1693, at a village call­ed Sibthorn, in the vale of Belvoir, in Nottinghamshire. His father was a Protestant dissenter, a pious, virtuous, and sensible man, who, having a small paternal fortune, follow­ed no profession. His mother was the daughter of Mr Brough, a substantial gentleman farmer of Shelton, in the same county. He received his education at several private schools and academies in the country, being obliged, by va­rious accidents, to change frequently his masters.

Notwithstanding this disadvantage, he had at the age of nineteen not only made considerable progress in Greek and Latin, and read the best writers in both languages, but had acquired a knowledge of French, Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac, had learned geography, logic, algebra, geometry, conic sections, and gone through a course of lectures on Jewish antiquities and other points, preparatory to the cri­tical study of the Bible. He had been destined by his fa­ther for orders amongst the dissenters. With this view, during the latter years of his education, his studies were chiefly turned towards divinity, in which he had made such advances, that by the time he was twenty-three he had care­fully read a great part of the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, in the original, and the best comments upon it ; Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History, the Apostolical Fathers, Whiston’s Primitive Christianity, and the princi­pal writers for and against ministerial and lay conformity. But though the result of these inquiries was a well-ground­ed belief of the Christian revelation, yet not being at that time able to decide on some abstruse speculative doctrines, nor to determine absolutely what communion he should embrace, he resolved, like a wise and honest man, to pur­sue some profession, which should leave him at liberty to weigh those things more maturely in his thoughts, and not oblige him to declare or teach publicly opinions which were not yet thoroughly settled in his own mind.

In 1716, therefore, he applied himself to the study of physic, and after gaining all the medical knowledge he could, by reading the usual preparatory books, and attending the best lectures during that and the following winter in London, in order to improve himself farther, he went to Paris in Ja­nuary 1719. There he lodged in the same house with the celebrated anatomist Mr Winslow, whose lectures he at­tended, as he did those of the materia medica, chemistry, and botany, at the King’s Gardens. He saw the operations of surgery at the Hôtel Dieu, and attended also for some time M. Gregoire the accoucheur, but without any design of ever practising that or any other branch of surgery. Here he became acquainted with Mr Martin Benson, after­wards bishop of Gloucester, one of the most agreeable and virtuous men of his time, with whom he quickly became connected, and not many years afterwards was united by the strictest bonds of affinity as well as affection.

During the whole of Mr Secker’s continuance at Paris, he kept up a constant correspondence with Mr Joseph But­ler, afterwards bishop of Durham, with whom he became ac­quainted at the academy of Mr Jones, which was kept first at Gloucester, and afterwards at Tewkesbury. Mr Butler hav­ing been appointed preacher at the Rolls on the recommen­dation of Dr Clarke, and of Mr Edward Talbot, son of Bishop Talbot, he now took occasion to mention his friend Mr Secker, without Secker’s knowledge, to Mr Talbot, who promised, in case he chose to take orders in the Church of England, to engage the bishop his father to provide for him. This was communicated to Mr Secker in a letter from Mr Butler about the beginning of May 1720. He had not at that time come to any resolution of quitting the study of physic ; but he began to foresee many obstacles to his pursuing that profession ; and having never discon­tinued his application to theology, his former difficulties with regard to conformity and some other doubtful points had gradually lessened, as his judgment became stronger and his reading and knowledge more extensive. It appears also from two of his letters still extant, written from Paris to a friend in England, both of them prior to the date of Mr Butler’s letter above mentioned, that he was greatly dis­satisfied with the divisions and disturbances which at that particular period prevailed among the dissenters.

In this state of mind Mr Butler’s unexpected proposal found him ; and he was therefore very well disposed to take it into consideration. After deliberating on the subject of such a change for upwards of two months, he resolved at length to embrace the offer, and for that purpose quitted France about the beginning of August 1720.

On his arrival in England, he was introduced to Mr Tal­bot, with whom he cultivated a close acquaintance ; but it was unfortunately of very short duration ; for in the month of December that gentleman died of the small-pox. This was a great shock to all his friends, who had justly conceiv­ed the highest expectations of him, but especially to an amiable lady whom he had lately married, and who was very near sinking under so sudden and grievous a stroke. Mr Secker, besides sharing largely in the common grief, had peculiar reason to lament an accident that seemed to put an end to all his hopes ; but he had taken his resolution, and he determined to persevere. It was some encourage­ment to him to find that Mr Talbot had, on his death-bed, recommended him, together with Mr Benson and Mr But­ler, to his father’s notice. Thus did that excellent young man, for he was but twenty-nine when he died, by his nice discernment of character and his considerate good nature, provide most effectually for the welfare of that church from which he himself was so prematurely snatched away ; and at the same time raised up, when he least thought of it, the truest friend and protector to his wife and unborn daughter, who afterwards found in Mr Secker all that tender care and assistance which they could have hoped for from the near­est relation.

It being judged necessary by Mr Secker’s friends that he should have a degree at Oxford, and having been informed, that if he should previously take the degree of doctor of physic at Leyden, it would probably help him in obtaining the other, he went and took his degree there in March 1721 ; and, as part of his exercise for it, he composed and printed a dissertation *De Medicina Statiea,* which is still ex­tant, and is thought by the gentlemen of that profession to be a sensible and learned performance. In April the same year, he entered himself a gentleman commoner of Exeter College, Oxford ; after which he obtained the degree of bachelor of arts, in consequence of the chancellor’s recom­mendatory letter to the convocation.

He now spent a considerable part of his time in London, where he quickly gained the esteem of some of the most learned and ingenious men of those days, particularly of Dr