

of the surface of the ocean. He describes this surface when, curled by gentle breezes, the short waves flash beneath the play of the reflected beams of light, and again when the ships of Coelho and Paul de Gama contend in a fearful storm against the wildly-agitated elements.\* Camoens is, in the strictest sense of the word, a great sea painter. He had served as a soldier, and fought in the Empire of Morocco, at the foot of Atlas, in the Red Sea, and on the Persian Gulf; twice he had doubled the Cape, and, inspired by a deep love of nature, he passed sixteen years in observing the phenomena of the ocean on the Indian and Chinese shores. He describes the electric fires of St. Elmo (the Castor and Pollux of the ancient Greek mariners), "the living light,† sacred to the seaman." He depicts the threatening water-spout in its gradual development, "how the cloud woven from fine vapor revolves in a circle, and, letting down a slender tube, thirstily, as it were, sucks up the water, and how, when the black cloud is filled, the foot of the cone recedes, and, flying upward to the sky, gives back in its flight, as fresh water, that which it had drawn from the waves with a surging noise."‡ "Let the book-learned," says the poet, and his taunting words might almost be applied to the present age, "try to explain the hidden wonders of this world, since, trusting to reason and science alone, they are so ready to pronounce as false what is heard from the lips of the sailor, whose only guide is experience."

The talent of the enthusiastic poet for describing nature is not limited to separate phenomena, but is very conspicuous in the passages in which he comprehends large masses at one glance. The third book sketches, in a few strokes, the form

\* *Os Lusíadas de Camões*, canto i., est. 19; canto vi., est. 71-82. See, also, the comparison in the description of a tempest raging in a forest, canto i., est. 35.

† The fire of St. Elmo, "*o lume vivo que a marítima gente tem por santo, em tempo de tormenta*" (canto v., est. 18). One flame, the Helena of the Greek mariners, brings misfortune (Plin., ii., 37); two flames, Castor and Pollux, appearing with a rustling noise, "like fluttering birds," are good omens (Stob., *Eclog. Phys.*, i., p. 514; Seneca, *Nat. Quæst.*, i., 1). On the eminently graphical character of Camoens's descriptions of nature, see the great Paris edition of 1818, in the *Vida de Camões*, by Dom Joze Maria de Souza, p. cii.

‡ The water-spout in canto v., est. 19-22, may be compared with the equally poetic and faithful description of *Lucretius*, vi., 423-442. On the fresh water, which, toward the close of the phenomenon, appears to fall from the upper part of the column of water, see Ogden *On Water Spouts* (from observations made in 1820, during a voyage from Havana to Norfolk), in Silliman's *American Journal of Science*, vol. xxix., 1836, p. 254-260.