

# TEN YEARS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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## CHAPTER I.

Determination to Emigrate.—A Half-pay Officer.—Altered Prospects of a Family.—Colony at the Cape.—The Author sets out to join his Brother.—The Captain of a Fishing-smack.—Discomforts on board.—A Passage to the Cape.—Scarcity of Provisions for the Voyage.—Island of Fernando de Noronha.—Politeness of the Governor.—An Excursion.—Entertainment.—Arrival at the Cape.

It often happens that people suffering under some recent infliction of that capricious dame, Fortune, hastily determine on emigrating to some one of our colonies, in the confident expectation that there, as a matter of course, all their difficulties will cease, and that they will forthwith enter on the enjoyment of all the independence and luxuries which in England are usually the fruit of long and persevering indus-

try, or superior sagacity and success in business. It is also natural, under the pressure of misfortune, to alleviate present sorrow by the contemplation of some vague and undefined scheme of future happiness. If this inclination of the mind be indulged in as to time, we may expect that it will have still more influence as to place, and that some distant land, as unlike as possible to their native country, will be selected as the scene of their anticipated enjoyment.

The mind so disposed naturally seeks for gratification in the perusal of the narratives of travellers, which, unfortunately, in nine cases out of ten, are lamentably deficient in that kind of information which is of most vital importance to a settler: such works are generally fertile in subjects rather calculated to please the imagination than to inform the judgment. An ordinary traveller can at best but relate his first impressions of a country he passes rapidly through, or retail the opinions of others, the accuracy of whose statements he has rarely time or patience to investigate. When we consider that the settler is often influenced in his opinions by his interest, and that the traveller

generally has many native prejudices to get rid of, we need not be surprised at the discordant accounts we receive of the same country. I believe I may safely say, that all who have the means of living comfortably, and of providing for their families, will best consult their own happiness by remaining in the land of their fathers; but, when misfortunes have overtaken them—when they find that they cannot maintain their former station in society, and are capable of vigorous exertion, they can hardly fail to better their condition by emigrating to one of our colonies, while they are at least sure of procuring by their labour a subsistence for their families.

Of all situations above absolute want, I believe none can be more irksome and cheerless than that of a half-pay officer; conscious of being regarded as an useless and burdensome member of society by a large proportion of his countrymen, and ignorant of all the usual occupations of life, he too often sinks into a state of gloomy despondency, or seeks relief in dissipation from the miserable feeling of living without an object or hope of advancement in the world.

With these painful sensations, on the reduction of the second battalion of my regiment, I took my passage for the Orkney islands, where my family possessed considerable landed property, which their predecessors had enjoyed for several centuries—from the time the country was held by their Norwegian ancestors. Instead of the cheerful home I had anticipated, where, with my brothers, I had spent the happiest days of my childhood, amidst the wild scenery of these remote islands, I found a sad change had taken place in the circumstances of our family; debts had accumulated on debts, with interest, law expenses, and all the miseries that hover round the declining fortunes of a proud and ancient race.

My ancestors had been firmly attached to the House of Hanover when all the other proprietors in the county in which they resided had been secretly engaged on the side of the Pretender. My great-grandfather, a distinguished officer in the navy, had been murdered, when he was eighty years of age, in the streets of Kirkwall, by Sir James Stuart of Burray, a violent partisan of Charles Edward. My grandfather

was a child at the time, but never lost sight of his father's murderer; and though the latter obtained a pardon, when the last rebellion broke out, in the year 1745, he again joined the Pretender's party, at the time my grandfather, who was then a captain in the army, obtained a command against the rebels in Orkney, succeeded in taking Sir James Stuart and his brother prisoners, and sent them to the Tower. He forced all the other rebels to conceal themselves in a cave in the Island of Westray, where they were fed by a poor man who kept their secret. These were crimes in our family not soon to be forgotten in a country where enmities are carefully handed down from father to son; and it is not to be wondered at that the other proprietors regarded the falling fortunes of our house with secret satisfaction. We gradually began to experience that change in their manners towards us which every one who has been in a similar situation cannot fail to note in the neighbours whom he had formerly been accustomed to regard as his friends, and which change usually shows itself in a very unequivocal manner in British society.

My elder brother, who, being the heir, had been brought up to no profession, finding that the property would be sold to pay the debts, as a last resource, determined on emigrating to the Cape of Good Hope while he had yet the means of doing so. This colony appeared to him to be one in which he could obtain an independent livelihood with a less violent alteration in his habits than might be expected in most persons. The rest of the family were not long in making up their minds to follow his example, as soon as the property should pass into other hands.

Another brother, who had recently been promoted to a lieutenancy in the navy, in the room of an elder brother who fell in the attack on Leghorn in 1813, soon afterwards joined us in Orkney, after his ship was paid off. As he determined on remaining with our aged and blind father until the property was sold, I prepared, having nothing to detain me in Europe, to join my eldest brother, who was now settled at the Cape.

To those who have never experienced the

bitterness of parting, perhaps for the last time, from a kind and helpless parent, whose independent and proud spirit was nearly sinking under accumulated misfortunes, it would be difficult to describe my feelings on this painful occasion. After receiving his last blessing, though I at that time hoped to see him again at the Cape, and taking leave of my other relations, I was soon seated at the helm of my boat. Taking a last look at the old family mansion and the red rocks that towered over the western ocean, we bounded lightly over the tide of the Pentland firth, which bore us rapidly to the eastward, where I expected to fall in with some vessel on her way to the capital. We soon overtook a fishing-smack: upon making my bargain with the captain, I shook hands with my kind-hearted countrymen, and in a few hours lost sight of the wild rocks and brown hills of Orkney, which possessed more interest in my eyes than the richest prospect the imagination can picture.

The sad and the ridiculous sometimes succeed each other in quick succession as we journey

on in the voyage of life, and the mind is often relieved for the time from feelings which it would be misery to perpetuate.

Our captain was a stout-built little man with a most rubicund nose, which showed what use he made of his time ashore, whenever his toilsome occupation allowed him a short interval to lay in a cargo of artificial spirits. He was equipped in the usual multiplicity of habiliments worn by smacksmen, with a pair of huge fisherman's boots, secured to his legs by several turns of cod-line, and a tarpaulin hat with its brim falling over his broad shoulders, technically called a "norwester." After seeing my countrymen under weigh, he asked me to "step down below and take a glass of brandy by way of a degistener" before dinner.

While my companion was re-loading his short blackened pipe with tobacco, I observed that his rough weatherbeaten countenance indicated, by its deeply-marked furrows, many a reverse of fortune; his history, with which he soon favoured me, sufficiently confirmed the impression conveyed by his appearance.

"Yes, sir, it's a hard life is this here fishing



trade, but if I had knowed as much as I knows now, I'd have had two or three smacks of my own by this time, and a genteel living for my missis and her children at Gravesen'. In them 'ere war-times, the trade was brisk and money came in by handfulls, and ve thought as how ve 'd never see the end on't; for, you see, when ve gets ashore it's not long o' burning a hole in our pockets at the drinkin' shops, and what vith other things, ve never knows how it goes. Now here have I been knocking about in this here trade for the last five-and-twenty years, atween the river, the coast of Norway, the Dogger, and the Orkneys, from the time I was no bigger than that 'ere boy, and at last I gets a wessel of my own—there wasn't a smarter craft in Gravesen' or Greenwich; then comes the peace-time, and the fish begins to fetch low prices in the Lunnun market, and what atween tear and wear o' sails and runnin' rigging, and sometimes carryin' away a spar or two, or makin' a bad fishing, my smack comes to the hammer, when the chaps finds I can't pay 'em their wages, and with what's over I buys me a share of this here wessel, and starts again as

master, and now I owes no man nothing—no not the walue of that 'ere 'bacco-pouch. Howsomever, it comes a little hard on my missis and the young ones, that's never know'd what it is to want for nothing; and, though I says it, my missis hasn't her better in Gravesen', for though I've seen her in all weathers, I never heard a crooked word come out of her mouth, nor see'd her the worse of liquor since we was man and wife."

The captain was here interrupted by the entrance of the boy with a huge tureen of vegetable soup, which he deposited on the cabin floor, while he covered the table with a piece of coarse sail-cloth. Then, chucking his "norwester" into the berth behind him, he seated himself at the head of the board; and, loosening the clasp-knife from the cord that secured it to his button-hole, and wiping the blade on his sleeve, laid it quietly on the table beside him. Several spoons, but no plates, now made their appearance, when the captain invited me to take some soup. I felt much in the same predicament with the poor man in the eastern tale, when he was asked by the Caliph to help him-

self to some choice morsel from the empty dishes. My companion looked half serious and half astonished, but immediately recollecting himself, said, "Perhaps you would like a plate, sir," putting an emphasis on the word "plate." "Here, boy, bring the gentleman a plate." He however, being less fastidious, after baling me out a sufficient quantity with his spoon, proceeded to take some himself without the intervention of any such modern luxury.

The soup was soon removed to the floor of the cabin, where the crew had already seated themselves; and its place supplied by salt beef and a large wooden dish of cabbage, from which the captain helped himself upon a ship-biscuit, which he held in his left hand to answer the purpose of a plate. I had good reason to make the best use of the present opportunity, for this was the last regular meal I was able to enjoy during the voyage.

A fishing-smack is one of the most wretched and comfortless modes of conveyance of which a traveller is sometimes compelled to avail himself. A hundred odious circumstances conspire to offend those organs whose sensibility it is

in the nature of sea-sickness to render morbidly acute. Coal and tobacco smoke, and bilgewater, at other times scarcely tolerable, now render his life at sea worse than a blank. Sea-sickness, however, in a moral, as well as physical respect, is productive of beneficial results, in showing us that our mere existence, when free from mental or bodily suffering, is a state of positive enjoyment; for who, when quietly seated in a comfortable room with the green fields before him, after a stormy voyage, has not felt a sentiment of gratitude steal over his heart for a boon, which, at other seasons, he has been but too apt to underrate?

After being at sea about four days, we arrived at Gravesend, where I gladly quitted the smack, and proceeded to London to take my passage for the Cape. As I wished to lose as little time as possible, I went immediately to the Exchange, where I observed the names of several vessels all warranted to sail on a certain day. The number of ships engaged in the Cape trade was at that time much more limited than at present, and the sums demanded for a passage were consequently very exorbitant.

I was not long in taking my passage on board a small vessel, for which I was to pay 50*l.* being 20*l.* less than the usual rate on board of the larger traders, on the captain's assurance that she would positively sail on the day stated in the handbills. Ascertaining, however, that she could not have her cargo completed for several weeks, and my agreement being only conditional, I looked out for another vessel, and found a small brig of one hundred and twenty tons, which had already cleared out. There was only one cabin passenger going by her; and the captain having laid in provisions for two, was glad to take 40*l.* for my passage. I mention these trivial circumstances for the information of emigrants, who are not always aware that no reliance is to be put in the statements of cards and handbills as to the time vessels may be ready to sail; and to point out the cheapest mode of performing the voyage.

The vessel on board which I had now taken my passage had formerly been a French privateer, and was of course a fast sailer, which, to my mind, made ample amends for anything that was wanting in point of accommodation.

My fellow passenger, a Cape merchant, I found a most agreeable and intelligent companion. On a long voyage, the fewer passengers there are the better, as a number of people of different dispositions cooped up together for such a time, in the absence of other occupation, frequently amuse themselves with petty quarrels, arising nobody knows how, and often terminating rather unpleasantly on arriving in port, particularly when there happen to be ladies on board.

Our captain, a shrewd little man with a tolerable share of self-conceit, possessed a great deal of that kind of knowledge which is drawn from observation, and no small store of that which is derived from stray volumes which had fallen in his way. He had also some gentlemanly feeling, so that on the whole he was a very favourable specimen of his class; his besetting sin was avarice, as we had soon occasion to observe from the very scanty supply of provisions he had laid in for the voyage. His bill of fare, besides the common ship stores of salt beef and biscuit, contained some two or three dozen of lean chickens (many of which after-

wards died a natural death), salt tongues, and pickled tripe. As usual on these occasions, he had taken a small supply of fresh beef to keep us quiet until we fairly lost sight of land, so that when we made the melancholy discovery of the state of our larder we found it was useless to complain.

We sailed from Gravesend on the 18th of June 1819, and in two days lost sight of the English shore. The usual incidents in a passage to the Cape have been so often described, that I shall not dwell on any particulars which are common to all voyages. Suffice it to say, that we fell in with the north-east trade-winds in the usual latitude; were becalmed and deluged with rain for a day or two under the line, which enabled us to fill our casks with fresh water; were followed for days by sharks, one of which we caught; and saw flying-fish in great numbers, which the sailors say fall down as soon as their wings are dry. On the 28th July we entered the south-east trades, and made Cape St. Roque, in Brazil, when we put about on the other tack.

Long before this period, our attenuated poul-

try had totally disappeared from the hen-coops ; this was, no doubt, a most happy deliverance to them at least, as they fared still worse than any living creatures on board. I shall not easily forget the dismayed countenance of my fellow passenger when, one day at dinner, the captain somewhat timidly acquainted us that the fowl about to be discussed was the last of his stock. Mr. W—, born and bred in London, half epicure and half invalid, with the richest recollections of city feasts, and accustomed to look forward to his dinner-hour as the only happy time of the day amidst the toils of business, though he had hitherto borne the scanty fare with some philosophy, could not help casting a rueful glance at me during this announcement, which was so fatal to his peace of mind. The captain himself was not a little attached to good living, and, I verily believe, cursed his own stinginess at the moment, though, for appearance sake, he broke the matter to us as if it were one of those inevitable misfortunes to which voyagers are subjected. We were now reduced, during the rest of the voyage, to tripe and tongues, which regularly on alternate days took their places on



the table; the captain soothing our feelings on the tripe-day by telling us, "We shall have salt tongue *to-morrow*, gentlemen."

On the morning of the 29th, upon coming on deck, we discovered the island of Fernando de Noronha, which we were rapidly approaching. This was a most agreeable sight for the passengers, as we determined to insist on laying in a fresh stock of poultry and vegetables, but carefully avoided broaching the subject until we should be close in with the shore, lest the captain should put about on the other tack to save the additional expense.

Nothing could be more singular and fantastic than the first appearance of this beautiful little island. At first, it looked like the tall spire of some vast Gothic cathedral rising out of the ocean; as we came nearer, we found that this illusion was occasioned by a high hill covered with wood, and terminating in a sharp peak of rock, shooting up perpendicularly several hundred feet in height, but verdant with beautiful creeping plants nearly to the summit. In steering along the rocks, at one extremity of the island, we observed a most singular natural arch

of great height, through which appeared the sea and sky on the other side of the island, which we now perceived was of volcanic origin. We soon came to an open sandy bay, fronting the village, where we persuaded the captain to cast anchor. Opposite, on a rising ground, stood a white plastered building, with a large cross at the end next the sea, by which we knew it to be the church, and several smaller houses around it.

As we left the vessel in the boat, we observed some soldiers, dressed in white slop clothing, putting off from the beach on a kind of raft, made by joining two logs of wood together, with a blanket for a sail. They steered outside of us, but as we were landing altered their course and went on board the brig, observing her cautiously for some time before they ventured to approach. Mr. W——, who understood Portuguese, requested one of the soldiers to conduct us to the governor, who received us with great kindness.

This gentleman, Major Ruxillon, who was a German in the Portuguese service, informed us that the island was a place of banishment from

the American colonies, and that he commanded a garrison of one hundred and eighty men, who had the charge of about one hundred and fifty convicts, who were kept in a fort near the village. It appeared that the island was frequently visited by pirates, which circumstance rendered great vigilance necessary, and that he had sent off the raft to ascertain what we were, that he might know how to receive us. He was quite delighted to find that we were British, and with the opportunity afforded him of hearing the latest European news. On our inquiring if there were any women in the island, he informed us that they had only five or six.

The walls and roof of the room in which we sat were literally swarming with black lizards, which ran about in all directions with inconceivable rapidity in pursuit of the flies that were still more numerous; and every now and then one of them would fall on our heads from the roof. The outside walls of the habitation were also black with these nimble reptiles, which are encouraged in the houses to lessen the greater nuisance of the flies, and from a common opi-

nion in warm countries that they keep away the snakes.

The major, perceiving that we suffered from the excessive heat, ordered some cold rum-punch, very weak, to be made for us in the West Indian fashion, with a good deal of lime-juice. This refreshing beverage was prepared by a servant in the adjoining room, who leaped on a table, to pour it from a great height into a vessel on the floor, which makes it cool and mellow. Having proposed a walk before dinner, the governor and two or three of the officers kindly offered to accompany us.

The island was almost entirely covered with natural wood of small growth, among which we were much struck with a beautiful kind of tree, common to tropical climates, which projects horizontal branches to a great distance from the stem, from the extremities of which, filaments descend perpendicularly into the ground; these in time unite into a solid substance, and become, in fact, new trunks, which in their turn send out branches in a similar manner to the parent stem. Some of these trees covered more than an acre of

ground. Another tree of the same description extended its branches in the form of an arch, which, on reaching the ground, again takes root and throws out other arches to a great distance—thus affording a delightful shelter from the heat of a tropical sun.

All the cattle and horses belonging to the garrison, though fat and thriving, were covered with large sores, occasioned by the milky juice of trees peculiar to the island, which were so abundant as to constitute nearly a fourth part of the woods. The least drop of this juice falling on the skin produces an inveterate sore, or, if it falls in the eyes, total blindness: this, of course, renders great caution necessary in felling the trees.

Nothing could be more enchanting than the views we enjoyed during our walk, which was along a road cut through the woods, and following the course of the little ravines dividing the hills. In every part of this winding road, the most conspicuous object was the giant pinnacle of rock already alluded to, with its green vest of ivy. Our excursion terminated in a little dell in the bottom of a ravine, where a

garden had been planted with oranges, bananas, and other fruits. Here we found a black slave at work, watering the different vegetables in the garden: he was broad-shouldered and corpulent, but his countenance indicated that sense of moral debasement which I have since often had occasion to remark in this unhappy race.

Opposite the village, on the summit of a rock which overhung the sea, stood a well-built fort, in which the convicts were kept. We hinted that we should like to see it; but the governor dexterously avoided giving any direct answer to our request, from which I conclude that the guns and other defences were not in the best state.

Our entertainment at dinner principally consisted of fish dressed in various ways, a dish of pigeons at the head of the table being the only article of a more solid description. A small kind of pigeon, of quite black plumage, is the only bird fit for food which the island affords, but it is very abundant at all seasons. We had also a profusion of preserved and other fruits, and various kinds of sweatmeats, with

excellent European wines. In the evening, we visited two or three of the officers' ladies, who were lively, and by no means reserved in their manners: they possessed good figures, but their complexions were sallow and disagreeable. When we were ready to depart, we were accompanied to our boat by our hospitable entertainers, who loaded us with presents of Brazilian preserves and fruits of the island.

On the beach we found a number of slaves, with heaps of pumpkins and other vegetables for sale. Our captain, after much higgling with the venders, was persuaded to lay in a small stock of these necessary articles; for, with the exception of a few fowls, little else was to be had in the island. We parted with our kind host and his officers with regret.

Touching unexpectedly at a remote island, where the inhabitants are kind and friendly, is one of those agreeable incidents which relieve the tedium of a long voyage, and is remembered ever afterwards with peculiar pleasure. Mankind are naturally disposed to love their own species, to whatever clime they may belong, or in whatever portion of the globe we

may fall in with them. It is only when this inherent benevolence is deadened by suspicion, or counteracted by clashing interests, that it ceases to operate, even in the minds of the most churlish of our race. During a short visit, such as ours, people have only time to feel all the kindly emotions, and indulge in that interchange of good offices which draws men together, and lays the first foundations of society, before pride and selfishness have rendered laws necessary to preserve its harmony.

We lost the south-east trades in latitude thirty degrees south, and the wind came round to the westward blowing half a gale, the climate suddenly changing from great heat to as great cold, with sleet and snow. As we approached the Cape, we fell in with the Cape pigeons, as they are called, and the huge albatross soaring overhead. On Sunday, the 12th September, Table Mountain appeared in sight, and in a few hours the little brig was safe at anchor in the bay opposite to the town.



## CHAPTER II.

Situation of Cape Town.—The Streets and Houses.—Lodgings.—A Dutch Landlord.—Education and Morals.—Divorces.—Vices of the Slave Population.—Different Classes of Inhabitants.—Avarice of the Dutch.—Traits in their Character.—An atrocious Criminal.—State of the Colony.—Wine Farmers.—Flavour of Cape Wines.—Climate of South Africa.—Diseases.—Persons of the Colonists described.—Ascent of Table Mountain.—Magnificent View.—Indecent Conduct at a Funeral.—Arrival of the Author's Brother.—Character of the Labourers.—Vice of Intemperance.—Duties on Spirituous Liquors.

THE situation of Cape Town is exceedingly grand and imposing, standing on a slope which fronts the sea, with the Table Mountain rising abruptly in the back-ground to the height of three thousand five hundred feet. The base of the mountain is skirted with plantations of the silver-tree, which has been found native only in the immediate neighbourhood of the Cape peninsula, but has been lately propagated to a con-

siderable extent, in consequence of the increasing scarcity of fuel. Below these plantations, the environs of the town are laid out in vineyards, and dotted with neat white cottages, beautifully shaded with vines.

The streets of the town are built with exact regularity, at right angles. The houses are all two stories high and flat-roofed, which, at a little distance, gives them a very handsome appearance: on a nearer view, however, the eye is shocked by the vulgar ornaments in plaster intended to grace their fronts, and which have been carved out somewhat after the fashion of Dutch gingerbread. Many of the habitations of English residents have been recently ornamented in a much better style.

Though the general beauty of the scenery in the neighbourhood of Cape Town, in respect to the grander features of nature, exceeded anything of the kind I had hitherto seen, I confess I was rather disappointed as to the richness and apparent fertility of the uncultivated parts of the country: the general impression its aspect conveyed was that of aridity, though, from its being the winter season, I saw it under the

most favourable circumstances. Wherever the land was not irrigated by springs of water led out artificially, the low grounds were covered with dwarf shrubs, heaths, or very scanty herbage. The soil, however, appeared in many places to be excellent, wanting only water to render it productive; this was evident from the great quantity of vegetable matter of a more hardy description which everywhere covered the ground. I was particularly struck with the geraniums, which grew in great profusion in the hollows, and could not but admire the beautiful heaths, that often rise to the height of eight or nine feet.

At the time of my arrival no lodgings were to be procured at Cape Town, and I was therefore obliged, like others, to board with a private family. The house to which I was recommended was kept by an Englishman, or rather by his wife, to whom I paid four rix dollars, or about six shillings, a day; which was lower than the usual rate, and sufficiently exorbitant, when we take the cheapness of provisions into account. Cape Town is expensive to temporary residents, chiefly from being the resort of

East Indians, who come to the colony to recruit their health, and from being the seat of government as well as the chief sea-port of South Africa.

Our landlord was a heavy, stupid-looking man, whose time was measured by his meals, and who seemed to live but for the enjoyment of eating and drinking. He had originally been a schoolmaster in a small way, but, not meeting with the encouragement "his deserts merited," had become the purchaser of a large house in one of the principal streets, and, like many other inhabitants of Cape Town, made an easy subsistence by receiving boarders. His wife, who was a pretty little woman, amply made up, in activity and liveliness, for the torpidity of her husband, and came under that description of married ladies who are not quite satisfied with things as they find them. Among our boarders I observed that there was one who appeared to be privileged to say and do what he liked, and to have, as it were, the freedom of the house, though several little manœuvres were played off to conceal his influence in the family.

The inhabitants of Cape Town, and more

particularly the Dutch, are by no means conspicuous for the strictness of their morals; nor need we wonder at this, when we consider that slavery prevails among them, and that education at the period to which I refer was very much neglected.

From the culpable carelessness of parents in the instruction of their children at the Cape, and the influence of other local causes, external decency of manners exists there in a very small degree, as the most casual observer must perceive from the conversation of both sexes. In judging of the state of morals in a country, a very material distinction should be drawn between the vices which spring from the more turbulent passions, and such as arise from the love of gain, inasmuch as those of the latter description imply time for reflection.

One peculiarity in the manners of the Dutch at Cape Town, and which marks more strongly the low state of morals, is, that it is generally *after* marriage that both sexes are most noted for their laxity of conduct. At the period to which I allude—in 1819—a stranger, in perusing the Cape newspapers, could not help remark-

ing the number of separations between man and wife which were announced in them. For instance :—A. B., after living for several years with his wife C. D., discovers that their tempers are by no means suited to each other, so that they are in dread of proceeding to extremities, and therefore petition the Matrimonial Court to grant them a separation. Or, in other words : A. B. having a strong suspicion that his wife C. D., has been guilty of certain improprieties, petitions the court to be legally separated ; which petition the court, moved by such excellent reasons, complies with, as a matter of course.

The possession of slaves is, however, the principal source of demoralization in this colony. Until very recently, a slave man could be sold away from his wife, or the wife from the husband. The natural consequence of this act of cruelty has been a general laxity of conduct in the slave population, who constitute a very large proportion of the lower order in the capital of the colony ; and it need not therefore be a matter of surprise, that the children of the colonists, brought up with vice

constantly before their eyes, should not escape contamination.

One of the first observations a stranger makes at Cape Town is the affectation of equality among the white population, arising partly from the republican institutions of the original Dutch settlers, and partly from the democratic feelings of the English merchants; this is almost the only particular in which the old and new inhabitants appear to assimilate. The state and consequence, however, assumed by the civil and military authorities here are, as I believe in most of our colonies, very great; and are often, especially when the functionary happens to be a Dutchman, excessively disgusting. Consequence, in the eyes of our fellow-citizens, like an article of commerce, is always prized more according to its rarity, both with respect to the individual and to the country, than from its intrinsic value.

The inhabitants of Cape Town may be divided into six classes:—I. The civil and military functionaries, including military officers of all ranks, and the clergy of the established churches.—II. Lawyers, medical practitioners,

merchants, retailers, and those who live by letting out their slaves, and by receiving boarders, who form a large portion of the householders; and, in short, all the other white inhabitants above the rank of servants.—III. European and Cape-Dutch artificers and labourers, who compose a very doubtful class between the other white inhabitants and the freed blacks and Malays; claiming equality with the former, to whose rank they soon arrive if they are industrious; and, assuming an insolent superiority over the latter, principally founded on the difference of colour, but to which their general moral character and acquirements by no means entitle them.—IV. The free Malays, who, in point of intellect, are far above the free blacks and slaves. They are a semi-barbarous people, but are industrious and sober, and many of them are able to read and write in their own language. Their religion is the Mahometan.—V. The Hottentots, a class including all gradations of colour, arising from intermixture with Europeans and Cape-Dutch. And—VI. The slaves, — that numerous and unhappy class, whose mental and moral degradation is a re-



proach to their Christian masters. A more disjointed state of society, can hardly exist anywhere.

Though many local causes have combined to modify the character of the Dutch at the Cape, yet they still retain a strong family-likeness, both in their good and bad features, to their European progenitors. They have the same avaricious propensities and attention to small gains; the same persevering industry when they are sure of profit, but less energy in the pursuit of it; the same orderly, phlegmatic, and patient character.

The virtues as well as the vices of the Dutch at the Cape are of a less obtrusive and ostentatious nature than those of the English: these colonists are also strict observers of certain external forms in their manners, are strongly attached to their own customs, and unwilling to adopt the language and habits of the English further than their interest requires. To their connexions they are often liberal, in helping them forward in the world when they are industrious, and generous in relieving their relatives when distressed through inevitable mis-

fortunes: it is seldom, however, that their philanthropy takes a wider range. They are, moreover, universally kind and hospitable to travellers, whether they be friends or strangers. On the other hand, the despotic government of the colony has rendered them mean, deceitful, and cowardly; and the possession of slaves has made them cruel and tyrannical to their dependants, and otherwise corrupted their hearts and manners. It is, indeed, truly lamentable to think to what fiendish excesses the execrable system of slavery has given rise! I have often seen a man walking about the streets of Cape Town who, several years ago, deliberately roasted a slave to death in an oven for presuming to smile at his master; yet, this atrocious criminal was only subjected to some trifling punishment for the deed, and was afterwards received into society as if nothing of the kind had occurred. No crime, in fact, however heinous or disgraceful, excludes a man from society in this country, provided he conforms to its usual observances.

It is always difficult to give a just description of the character of a people, without being

liable to the imputation of dwelling too much on its darker hues. The vicious features of an individual are naturally most prominent, and are therefore first observed, while his virtues are known only to a few: it is therefore but fair that a person should be allowed the credit of more good qualities than at first sight he may appear to possess. My intention is to give my own impressions without disguise on every topic on which I write, leaving the reader to form such conclusions from the facts I mention as may suit his own particular mode of thinking. As I shall have occasion to recur to this subject in the course of my narrative, I shall not at present enlarge on the character of the different classes of society in Cape Town.

Judging from the external appearance of comfort enjoyed by the inhabitants of this place and its vicinity, a stranger is often led to conceive the most erroneous ideas of the real prosperity of the colony. To form correct opinions on this subject, it is necessary to ascertain whether the agricultural population be accumulating capital, or increasing the cultivation of the country; for conclusions drawn from the mode

of life of the inhabitants are always inaccurate; and, to judge of its general prosperity by that of the mercantile part of the population, would be a still more fallacious criterion. With a limited competition, merchants often rapidly accumulate capital in a country where the agriculturists are comparatively poor, by allowing them to run in their debt, and thus getting the farmer's produce at their own price, while they exact an exorbitant profit on the goods he is compelled to take from their stores. From what I could learn during my stay, this state of things very much prevailed at Cape Town, which, from its being at that period the only part whence the colonists received their supplies, had acquired a much greater degree of prosperity than the surrounding country. Notwithstanding the species of monopoly then enjoyed by the merchants of Cape Town, very few of them are possessed of what in England would be considered a large capital. Many of the Dutch inhabitants are in affluent circumstances; but, with a few exceptions, their wealth has sprung from the increase of their slaves, and

the sudden rise in their value consequent on the abolition of the inhuman traffic in slaves.

The wine-farmers in the neighbourhood of Cape Town are far from being a thriving class. The culture of the vine is generally confined to those who possess a number of slaves, for whom they could not otherwise find constant employment, and thus they manage to make a comfortable livelihood ; but they by no means obtain a fair return for the capital employed. The style in which the cheapness of provisions and the command of labour enable this class to live, would lead a stranger to form very erroneous ideas of their wealth and prospects. The circumstances of the corn and stock-farmers are much better, inasmuch as they require a much smaller capital, and, when not too far from market, receive a better return for their labour.

The Cape district, with few exceptions, is very inferior to the other parts to the eastward of it, both as a grazing and a corn country. Its soil is generally poor and sandy, and where good, it is so arid, that nothing in the way of cultivation can be done with it without the aid

of irrigation, when the farmer is so fortunate as to have a good spring to lead over his land during the long droughts which peculiarly characterise the climate. The wine-trade has been for some time on the decline, in consequence of the reduction of the duties on European wines, as well as from the comparatively inferior quality of those of the Cape.

Many reasons have been assigned for the disagreeable flavour of the common Cape wines, and great exertions have of late years been made to improve them, which, I doubt not, under other circumstances, might ultimately prove successful. It has been said that the earthy flavour, as it is called, arises from the nature of the soil, and that therefore it admits of no remedy; but I believe the whole truth is, that labour is too dear, and the situation of the Cape too remote from the English market to enable it to compete with the wine countries nearer home.

A colony where labour is dear and scarce is ill qualified to vie with the advantages of situation and the redundant population of an old country. Under these circumstances, the po-

licy of encouraging the cultivation of the vine at the Cape is, to say the least, very doubtful ; for one of the most important duties of a government is to direct the capital and energies of the people into the most profitable channels.

Cape Town and the country skirting the base of the mountains are, notwithstanding their proximity to the sea, very warm, and less healthy than the other districts of the colony. It being the spring season in this latitude, I found the weather very delightful. The pools were generally frozen over in the course of the night ; yet there was no snow on the mountain-tops in the morning, and the sky was beautifully clear and serene. When the sun was two or three hours high, the reflection from the rocks of the Table Mountain made Cape Town very warm ; but the heat in this country is not accompanied with that sense of oppression which we feel in England when the thermometer indicates the same degree. This may be accounted for by the greater dryness and elasticity of the air, which enable it readily to absorb the perspiration and keep the pores of the skin open.

Many circumstances combine to render the climate of South Africa more salubrious than that of almost any other part of the world. The two prevailing winds, the south-east and the north-west, passing over the ocean, or only partially over the land, preserve a great equality of temperature throughout the year; moderating the heat of summer, and tempering the cold of the winter months. The dryness of the climate also, and the openness of the country, exempt it from diseases arising from the putrefaction of vegetable matter; such as fevers and agues. The warm and dry state of the atmosphere has an extraordinary effect in dispelling that depression of spirits which is so annoying to some constitutions in the humid climate of Great Britain.

The diseases of the inhabitants are seldom dangerous, and are generally caused by repletion, or want of exercise. In some parts of the colony, the residents are subject to stone and gravel, attributable to the quality of the water, which is frequently brackish, from being impregnated with sulphate of magnesia. Diarrhoeas are very frequent in situations where



sudden changes of temperature take place, as in deep valleys near the base of the mountains, or are caused by drinking bad water. They are most prevalent in the spring and autumn, but are rarely obstinate or dangerous. Pulmonary consumptions are uncommon among the Dutch and English, but very frequent among the Hottentots, from a scrophulous taint, and their habit of sleeping on the ground. Many of these people have also a pernicious habit of smoking a plant called "dacha," a kind of wild hemp, which is well known, even to themselves, to occasion consumption, if the practice be continued for a long time. The plant produces stupefaction, and in time weakens the intellect and destroys the nerves. The "dacha smokers" are held in great contempt by the tobacco smokers of their nation, who never fail to reproach them with the propensity in their quarrels. The climate of the Cape is found beneficial in incipient consumption, but not in the more advanced stages of the malady.

There is another disease, which is very common among the Dutch who live along the ranges of mountains from the neighbourhood

of Cape Town to the district of George, called the "zinkins," affecting one side of the face with pain and swelling, and which, though not dangerous, is exceedingly troublesome. This complaint very rarely affects the English, and seems to be occasioned by the habit the Dutch have of sitting in the hot weather between two open doors. That dreadful disorder, the leprosy, is not uncommon among the natives of the colony; and there is an institution for patients afflicted with this malady in the district of Swellendam. It is remarkable, that the very few natives of Europe who have been thus affected, have been addicted to the use of pork and other gross diet. It is worthy of observation in this place, that the Hottentots, Kaffres, and the other original inhabitants of South Africa, have universally a strong dislike to pork as an article of food.

The Dutch colonists are a tall race, with broad shoulders and large limbs; but they are of a lax fibre, and have a great tendency to become corpulent early in life. So general is this disposition to corpulency, that they fancy no

one can be healthy without it ; and, of course, it is considered an essential ingredient in beauty. A Dutchman, in describing a handsome female, usually adds, that she is “dik en vet”—thick and fat—as the *sine qua non* of feminine loveliness. Notwithstanding the tall stature and bulk of the Dutch, I have often had occasion to remark their great inferiority in point of muscular strength to the English.

It has been observed, that Europeans possess greater physical power than the inhabitants of uncivilized countries. If we understand by this the absolute vigour of muscle exercised in any particular effort or feat of limited duration, the observation holds good as it respects the Hottentots and Kaffres, who are both inferior in this respect to the English, and even to the Dutch colonists ; but, in enduring strength, or the ability to support a moderate exertion of the muscles for a length of time, as in travelling on foot, they are more than their equals. The same remark holds good with regard to English horses and the horses bred in the colony. It is thus that Providence nicely apportions the capa-

bilities of man and the brute creation to the situations and countries in which they are destined to live.

Many of the old colonists are descendants of the French Protestants, who settled in the "Franch Hock," near Cape Town, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and introduced the cultivation of the grape into the settlement. Though these people have entirely lost their original language and manners, and have intermarried with the Dutch, they still retain some physical qualities that distinguish them from the other colonists. They are less phlegmatic and possess a livelier expression of countenance, have brighter eyes, and are altogether, better looking than the Dutch.

I had anticipated much pleasure from ascending Table Mountain. Choosing therefore a cool day, I set off alone, about twelve o'clock, taking what appeared to me the most direct road. After struggling through a thick plantation of the silver-tree, I emerged near the gorge of a tremendous ravine, with a foot-path in the bottom, which led, by an exceedingly steep ascent, to the summit. As I ad-

vanced, the ravine gradually became narrower, until it appeared like a huge fissure, as if the mountain had been cloven asunder by an earthquake, the rocks rising in awful grandeur on either side perpendicularly like colossal walls.

There was a solemn stillness in the scene, which was interrupted from time to time by a hoarse roar from a troop of baboons that were playing their gambols among the rocks above me. Even the birds had nearly disappeared from this wild spot, and the only living creatures to be seen along the rugged path were some black lizards running over the stones. It soon became necessary to use my hands as well as feet, to make my way among the fragments of rock which had fallen from the sides of the chasm, or been washed down by the torrents. The path had now become so steep, that, accustomed as I had been to rocks, I became almost giddy when I looked back on the road by which I had ascended, and could not help feeling some anxiety how I should get down again. The remaining part of the ascent, however, was not worse than what I had already over-

come ; and, scrambling on with hands and feet among the rocks, I soon reached the summit of the mountain.

The road I had taken was the only practicable approach on the side of the town, and I carefully marked it with some stones, to prevent any mistake in descending ; the neglect of which precaution had been the occasion of several people losing their lives by falling from the precipices which everywhere environ the top of the mountain. From an adjoining platform of rock, I enjoyed a splendid view of Cape Town and Table Bay, and the blue mountains of Hottentots-Holland, at forty miles' distance, which interrupted the further prospect in that direction. On the other side, nothing met the eye but the wide ocean as far as the sight could reach, and the solitary magnificence of desolate rocks and mountains. Yet, even at this elevated spot, the mountain was covered with beautiful heaths and shrubs.

I have often heard it said, that springs are found rising from the most elevated points of high mountains, which are supposed to be conveyed thither by subterranean ducts, from

mountains still higher. Supposing this for a moment to be the case, it may naturally be asked, whence these other mountains derive their supplies? The absurdity of the theory is too obvious to require any refutation. I was told that there was a spring on the highest point of Table Mountain; but here, as in every other spot regarding which there is a similar story, I indeed found springs, not rising from the highest point, but under a long slope or inclined plane, of sufficient extent to receive an adequate supply of rain and dew, at an elevation where there is not much evaporation.

The view from Table Mountain, though grand and magnificent, was at the same time rather sombre and desolate; for, however beautiful the natural productions of the uncultivated country may be when examined in detail, the general effect of them at this distance was as unsatisfactory to the eye as the bleakest heaths in Scotland. I came down the mountain, as may be supposed, much quicker than I ascended it, and reached home by five o'clock, not at all fatigued with my excursion.

In the evening I attended the funeral of a Dutch gentleman, who was father-in-law to an English merchant, a friend of my brother. He had died the day before of gout in the stomach. The company were received at the street-door by two portly personages, upwards of six feet high, whose full-fed countenances expressed anything but sorrow, and indicated that they were thinking much more of the substantial supper which would follow, than of the melancholy occasion of their meeting. They were probably the undertakers also; who, like doctors and lawyers, are not always without some consolation in the misfortunes of their dearest friends. After refreshments had been handed about to the company, we proceeded by torch-light to the churchyard.

During the procession, two young Dutchmen, who walked before me, were talking pretty loudly, discussing the character of the defunct in no very measured terms: at last one of them made some observation which excited a laugh among the mourners near them. So much for the refinement of the Cape-Dutch! who rarely feel much themselves, and consider it quite



superfluous politeness to pay any regard to the feelings of others.

In about a fortnight I was joined by my brother, who set off for Cape Town on horseback as soon as he heard of my arrival, followed by a little urchin of a Hottentot, who led a spare horse, and in his appearance and manner of riding much resembled one of those monkeys exhibited about the streets of London mounted on a dog's back.

The appearance of my brother with two hundred settlers, who were indentured to him in 1817, was hailed by the English inhabitants as a great benefit to the colony; but, like many others who lead the way in new enterprises, he was far from reaping any advantage himself adequate to the magnitude and risk of the undertaking. He had selected his people, who were all Scotchmen, from the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, with the greatest care; taking only such as could furnish the best testimonials of character from their last employers and the clergymen of their respective parishes. The terms he offered to the artisans were, to convey them to the Cape, on condition