

River, the water of which hardly reached the stirrups of our saddles. The vast deep gullies that branch in every direction, shew that in the rainy season it would be impossible to cross this river where we now did. The bed of the river, which we made use of as a road, in a few months hence would certainly bury the traveller who would dare to venture this way, in its overwhelming torrents. The country hereabouts is thinly inhabited. In the evening we arrived at the neat mansion of an elderly widow lady, at the foot of the Reesbech Kasteel. This part of the country assumes a more diversified and mountainous appearance. We had to ascend a regularly sloping bank, before we arrived at the house, and were met by this truly hospitable lady at the door, who, in the genuine accents of a hearty welcome, bid us alight, and partake of the best she could afford—“*Wat wilt gy gebruck?*” (What would you wish to have?) is the first and most common terms of address, on entering a Boor’s house. Here this question was put to us, accompanied with a manner and  
and

and a wish to oblige, that set us entirely at our ease.

This is an excellent corn farm ; it produces in a good year, fifty waggon loads of corn. One great obstacle to agricultural improvements, is the great distance from Cape Town, and the difficulty and trouble in conveying their produce to market. Their large bullock-waggons are employed for this purpose, and when the weather is hot, they travel during the night, and allow their cattle to be un-yoked, when the sun-beams are powerful. They are then permitted to wander about in search of pasture, under the care of a Hottentot boy, and the cracking of the long whip is to them the signal of departure.

In fact, a corn-boor removed some days' journey from town, is afraid to encrease his crop, from the circumstances and expence attending its conveyance to market, and the time consumed in going and returning. The number of maids each waggon contains, is generally ten, and we may easily conceive the increased number of waggons it would require, to convey to market an increased produce: eight, ten, twelve, some-

times sixteen oxen are allotted to one waggon—each of these specific numbers goes by the name of a *spann*.

In many parts of the country, large heaps of straw are allowed to rot, or to be scattered about by the winds, merely from this circumstance—want of the necessary conveyance for carrying it to town.

To convert the straw to purposes of manure, or apply it as bedding for their cattle, is alike disregarded by them.

The garden supplied us with excellent fruits, and we had every inducement to prolong our stay. In the cool of the evening we parted from this hospitable family, receiving the friendly modes of kissing, and shaking hands with all, according to the custom of the country.

To avoid the heat of the day, we had purposed to travel by night, and as we could not set out without a guide, the son of our good-natured landlady obligingly offered himself to be our conductor.

We kept our course to the westward, and entered the higher part of Swartland. We met with few houses on the road we had taken.

taken. The evening was delightfully cool; the moon just appearing above the horizon, imparted a cheering gleam across the sandy desert. The heavy bullock-waggon had marked out the road for us, so we followed with confidence.

After a long and tiresome journey, we arrived at a late hour, at Tea Fontyne, the residence of the Slabers, which occupies a number of pages in the volumes of a late French writer, whose vivid imagination, heightened by the still more vivid rays of an African sun, gives a coloring to this desert country, the native seat of the sports and graces, as the second Ithaca, to which, in his perplexed moments, he wished to return.

We were received with a frankness and hospitality at the mansion of Slabers, which could not be outdone by the most hospitable African.

I feel myself inclined to go to bed after the fatigues of the journey, but shall resume my pen in the morning, till when,

Adieu.

---

---



---

*LETTER XXXVIII.*

---



---

· Character of the old lady at Slaber's—Her advanced age—Description of the house—Probable derivation of the Tea Fontyne—Swartland noted for brackish water—Journey resumed—Outlines of the scenery in the course of the day's journey—Meet a flock of ostriches—Description of this bird—Saldanha Bay preferable to Table Bay, in some points—Excellent water at Cape Town—The want of water at Saldanha Bay, a great obstacle to erecting a town there—An excellent spring at Hoeyes Bay—Of an English settler at Saldanha Bay, who had long navigated the seas of the Cape—His discovery of a spring of tolerable good water in his garden—Of the vallies—Comfortable lodging at the post-house—Elevation of the adjoining ground—The signal-post erected by the Dutch government.

—

**WE** experienced at Slaber's every mark of hospitality and attention, for which his family has been at all times celebrated. The good old lady of the house, notwithstanding she has reached her eighty-first year (an uncommon age in this part of the world)

world) enjoys a good state of health, and still retains a great portion of the vigour and vivacity of youth. She delights in rambling over the farm on foot, and overlooking the operations of her servants. It has never been my lot, till now, to remark the female character, at so advanced an age, possessing that open, chearful, impressive countenance, united with a placid serenity of mind, that is never discordant with itself, nor with those around them. We may readily allow, that the contented mind bids fairer for a long lease of life, than those numbers of human beings that daily meet the eye, a prey to corroding care, and the alternate paroxysms of caprice and discontent. The house of Slaber is, as it were, built on the middle of a sandy desert: the prospect on either side, affords no charming verdure, nor waving roads, but one bleak dreary perspective, with here and there a speck of arable land to relieve the wandering eye. Water is so invaluable amidst the parched tracks of Africa, that a number of places receive their name from the qualities of the water in the  
X      neighbourhood.

neighbourhood. The residence of the Sla-  
bers, is named the Tee Fontyn (the Tea  
Spring). When the rainy season sets in,  
it assumes somewhat the color of tea water,  
and might, probably, from this have derived  
its present name. You meet with Brak  
Fontyn, the Brackish Spring; De Eilinda  
Fontyn, from the antelope of that name;  
and many other springs in the course of  
travelling in the country; indicative of the  
particular quality of the water. During  
the dry season, Swartland is noted for  
brackish water, but neither the people nor  
their cattle experience any bad effects from  
the use of it. When the inhabitants of  
another district is inclined to indulge him-  
self in the playfulness of vulgar wit against  
his Swartland neighbour, he commonly says  
to him in a taunting manner, *that in Swart-  
land they drink salt water.*

In the manners and habits of vulgar life,  
there are numberless intervening shades,  
which, though generally unnoticed, the  
pen of the gleaner may with propriety con-  
template—therefore, be this my excuse, if  
I have

I have at times, perhaps, descended into a tiresome minutiae in the detail of rural life.

From Slaber's we directed our course towards Saldanha Bay—a heavy deep sandy road, like most other roads in this country; the waggon wheels still served us as a guide. A variety of beautiful shrubbery and heath lay on each side; at times, from beneath its covert, the timid gryz-boch bounded before us. A herd of bullocks also appeared grazing on the coarse herbage, under the care of a Hottentot or slave; add to these, two or three solitary houses—such were the outlines of the scenery in the course of the day's journey.

We fell in with a flock of ostriches, of about twenty in number. They were alarmed at our approach, and, in their flight, threw up the sand behind them in an astonishing manner. It being the first time I had seen this noble bird in its natural wildness, I was prompted to pursue them, and satisfy my curiosity in regard to their amazing velocity when pursued on horseback. The colonists give it the name of



the struis vogel, the struthia of ornithologists. This bird is peculiarly gentle in manners, and it gets over the ground with such extraordinary speed, that the swiftest horse can hardly overtake it. We were told that the Arabians successfully practise hunting them on horseback. When an ostrich holds erect his long flexible neck, he generally measures six feet in length. Their eggs are thought by some to be good eating, but we all know that to eat of the ostrich was prohibited in the scripture. From their frequenting dry and sterile tracts of country, it has been inferred that they drink little or no water. The part of the country where we met with them, indeed, presents a very strong appearance of want of humidity.

Towards evening we came in sight of Saldanha Bay, winding along with its variegated islands, which at once forms a secure and capacious harbour for shipping on the western coast of Africa.

It was in this bay that commodore Johnson attacked the Dutch fleet, in 1782; and, which is still fresh in our recollection,  
in

in 1796, another ill-fated Dutch squadron was captured by Admiral Elphinstone, now Lord Keith.

By many it has been regretted, that on the first establishment of this settlement, the neighbourhood of this bay was not made choice of for the scite of the town, in preference to Table Bay, where ships are hardly at any season secure, and where delays and inconveniences are often experienced.

The excellence of the water in Cape Town that runs in never-failing streams from the lofty Table Mountain, and its proximity to the bay, were certainly powerful inducements to erecting the capital in its neighbourhood, added to the facility with which the India ships might be supplied with it in their voyages to and from India. Such considerations were certainly objects of the first magnitude to the adventurous Dutch.

An almost insuperable obstacle stands in the way of erecting a town at Saldanha Bay, which is the want of water. Could that be removed, by diverting the stream

of the Berg river to this purpose, so as to afford the necessary supplies—then, indeed, might the fondest hopes of the politician and speculatist be realised. In regard to a more central situation for internal supplies, it certainly claims a pre-eminence to Cape Town.

When a few miles off Hoeljes Bay, there is an excellent spring of fresh water, which is named the *Mitte Klep* (White Rock) from its proximity to a mass of rock, of a white color.

The water we had to drink was extremely brackish, but the settlers at the bay find no inconveniency from it, and are perfectly reconciled to its use.

An English settler has made choice of this retired spot to live in with his family. He had long navigated the tempestuous seas of the Cape, as master of a whaler, and from a spirit of adventure and enterprize, he fancied this an eligible situation for prosecuting the whale fishery, as the winter months are favorable for killing whales in the bay. The little spot of ground he has got under cultivation, yields luxuriant crops of

vegetables, although the soil is chiefly sand. Were there abundant supplies of water, and sufficient energy in the inhabitants of the country, then, indeed, might the surrounding dreary prospect be made to smile with every useful vegetable for the nutriment of man and beast. A discovery of some importance in this part of the world, has been made by this Englishman, in digging his garden, which is, a spring of tolerable good water, and free from any brackish taste.

The sheltered vallies that we traversed in our way to the bay, seemed admirably calculated for the growth of wood, both for fuel and other purposes. Many parts one could hardly be without expressing some astonishment on viewing. The strong healthy coloring of the leaves of the shrubbery and underwood, growing from an apparently sandy plain, and at this season very seldom refreshed by a fertilizing shower, must excite some surprize.

We crossed the ferry in the morning, and got safely and comfortably lodged at the post-house, on the west side of the bay.

What we had to eat was good of its kind but, unfortunately for our party, the stock of camty wine was exhausted, and our only beverage was brackish water—bad enough, you will say; yet such is the influence of habit, even in matters of *taste*, that our landlord extolled it as excellent and salutary, although the wry faces we made in getting it down our throats, did not seem to accord with his eulogium in its favor.

The ground on this side of the bay is more elevated, and rises more suddenly. On the summit of the highest hill, the Dutch government had a signal-post erected, for conveying intelligence to the Cape. An old dismounted cannon is still to be seen on the top, which was formerly used as the signal of alarm on the approach of a fleet to the coast. The view from the flag-post is at once commanding and extensive, and the bay below is a beautiful sheet of water; but many years must elapse before the genius, the industry, and exertion of man, can render its lonely bank sufficiently interesting

teresting to the contemplative mind. Permit me to take you down from this elevated situation, and at the same time to subscribe myself

Yours, &c.

---

---

---



---

*LETTER XXXIX.*

---



---

Return to Slaber's—Proceed to Kleplery—Hart-beests frequent this part of the country—Arrive at Greene Kloof—Much resorted to by sportsmen—Formerly the shooting-lodge of the Dutch governor—The neighbourhood infested by Wolves—The depredations committed by them on the cattle—Produce of Mr. Van Renan's farm—Report of his farm—Koe Berg, Botter Berg, and Tyger Berg, visited—Their fertility in Corn—The corn-farmers obliged to send their cattle to graze on the other side of the mountain—A wax candle made from the berries of a small bush—Customs peculiar to the Dutch—Houses wholly built of clay, very common—The shell-lime which is used, excellent—Return to Cape Town.

—

**WE** re-traced our road back to Slaber's, and met with the same hearty welcome as before.

We then directed our course towards Kleplery. The hart-beests frequent this part of the country, but we were not so fortunate

as

as to fall in with any on our road. In the evening we arrived at Greene Kloof. Here is a pleasing variety of hill and dale, and it is much resorted to by the sportsmen of the Cape. This is one of those government farms, which, during the Dutch administration, the governor of the colony always took care to turn to his own emolument and advantage. A tolerably good house had been built here, but it is rapidly falling into decay: every thing around bears strong impression of the ravages of time, and neglect. The Dutch governor and his family were wont to retire thither at certain seasons, and to employ it as a shooting lodge.—Wolves, in great numbers, infest this neighbourhood, and are so bold and daring at times, as to attack their cattle in the kraal, though close by the house. The night before, a young foal had been mangled and torn by one of these destructive animals, in a most shocking manner. The mother of the foal made a noble stand in its defence, but had suffered so much in the conflict, that she died two days after.

A Mr. Van Renan, who has got a large  
farm



farm a few hours ride from Greene Kloof, carries on his agricultural pursuits with great spirit and enterprise. He is not ashamed to benefit from the example of the English farmer (Mr. Dusket) in the arrangement and management of his land. I shall note down the produce of his farm this year, and the number of his cattle, as related by himself :

1100 muids of barley  
 400 ditto - wheat  
 400 ditto - rye  
 300 ditto - oats  
 3000 sheep  
 100 milch cows

A farmer of the name of Pringtloo, is said to possess 18,000 sheep in the distant district of Bruntjes Hoogte. A muid of grain weighs about one hundred and ninety pounds.

On leaving Greene Kloof, we visited the Roe Berg, Botter Berg, and Tyger Berg, small districts in an elevated exposure, and very fertile in corn. From their vicinity to Cape Market, encouragement is held out to them

them for the enlarging their possessions, and encreasing their crops. Their heavy bullock-waggon are almost daily employed at this season, in transporting to the Cape, corn and chaff for the government stores.

The corn-farmers in this part of the country, are obliged to send their cattle to graze on the other side of the mountain, after the labour of their farm is completed, to recruit the strength of their oxen, and put them into good plight. The trifling sum of a few shillings a month, is all that is exacted from them by the grazier, and two or three months at most are sufficient to make them fat.

I observed an excellent kind of wax-candle, at the table of our hospitable landlord, made from the berries of a small bush, that grows in great abundance along the isthmus of the Cape. The process is performed by boiling, and they found it answer better by adding about one half of tallow, to the candles thus made.

The Dutch custom of wearing their hats at all times, and officiously pulling them off in a complimentary manner to strangers, is so well  
well

well known, as scarcely to deserve any notice at this time. However, there is one custom, which is peculiarly pleasant if not healthful, in a warm climate, to which even the rough and coarse-mannered Dutch of the interior pay an implicit regard—I mean the ready attention which is paid to a stranger in presenting him with water to wash, at all times; it is never omitted, both before and after meals. The youngest of the family are taught to chant a long grace on these occasions, and I have more than once caught myself about to fall to, when the demure countenances of those around taught me better manners.

Houses wholly built of clay, are very common among them. They are sufficiently durable, and their small inclosures are composed of the same materials. Where the seasons are only distinguished by wet and dry, and where, perhaps, from the month of October, to the beginning of May, little or no rain falls, this kind of buildings is found to be perfectly adapted to the climate. A dry atmosphere hardens the whole, as if composed of stone. Houses  
are

are built with bricks, without submitting them to the power of the furnace, but the influence of a warm sun soon renders them hard. A covering of lime is super-added, and if the weather continues favorable till the whole is completely bound together, then the rain beats against the clay-built mansion without any bad effect. Shell-lime, which is used in the harbour, is excellent of its kind. Saldanha Bay is the grand depot for this useful substance: a manufacture of lime might, to a considerable extent, be erected on the banks of this beautiful bay.

On our return we found, by the violence of the south-east winds, that Cape Town was not far off. We must now, for a few months longer, be annoyed with hurricanes, columns of sand, and every other inconvenience peculiar to this climate.

Having now finished all my intended excursions, of course my Gleanings must terminate. What further novelty I meet with must serve for a personal communication.

If the feeble efforts of my pen have, in any degree, tended to dissipate the gloom  
of

of your heavy hours, I shall think the task of friendship, on my side, has been duly performed; if not, it remains for you to act the part of friendship, by accepting the WILL for the DEED, and believing me

Yours, &c.

---

---

THE END.

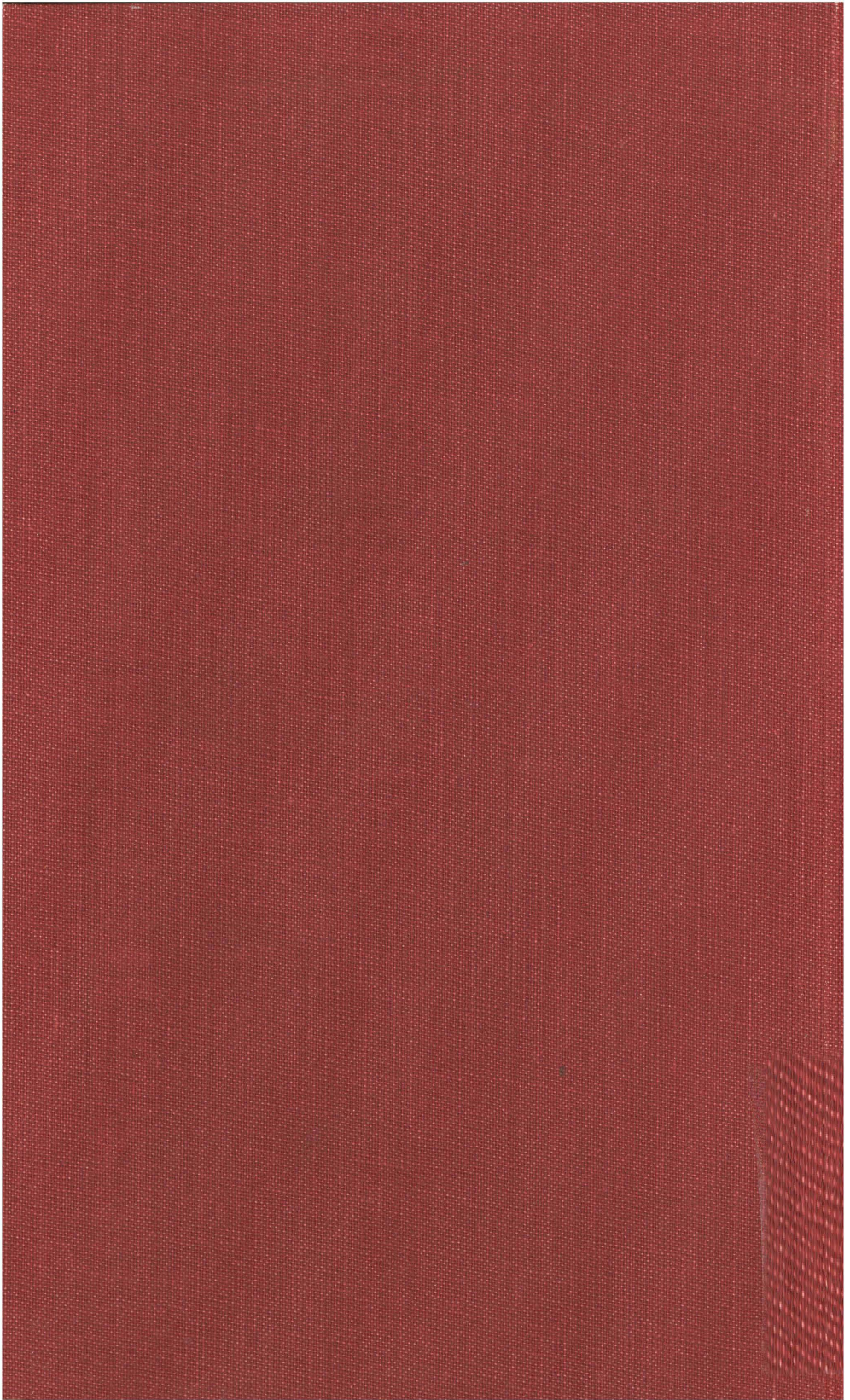
---

---

---

---

JAMES CUNDEE, PRINTER,  
*Ivy-Lane.*





ZA 968.704  
GLEANINGS

GLEANINGS IN AFRICA

1806