

T R A V E L S  
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S O U T H E R N A F R I C A.

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C H A P. I.

*Sketches made on a Journey from the Cape of Good Hope, across the Karroo, or Arid Desert, to the Drosdy of Graaf Reynet.*

ON the 4th of May 1797, the Earl of Macartney arrived at the Cape of Good Hope to take charge of the government of this important settlement. To obtain information of the state of the country, and the disposition of the Colonists under their new masters, were the first objects of his lordship's attention; but the result of his inquiries was uncertain, and contradictory. Equally vague, and at variance with each other on the most important points, were the numerous accounts that had been published. By the labours of two Swedish travellers, the natural history of the country was tolerably well ascertained, but we were still kept in ignorance with regard to those subjects that were connected with the political importance of the settlement. There was not, for instance, a survey of a single bay whose accuracy could be

depended on, except one of Table Bay, made by order of governor Van de Graaf; not a single map that took in one tenth part of the colony. Neither the direction nor the distance of Graaf Reynet were known to any of the inhabitants. It was called a month's journey, or so many hundred hours, with an ox waggon; but whether it was five hundred or a thousand miles was uncertain. That enlightened officer Sir James Craig roughly calculated it at eight hundred miles; which is three hundred miles more than it actually is. He observed that he once had received a dispatch from thence in sixteen days, but that the journey had been done in thirteen. Before we ceded the Cape, the English officers and English dragoons performed the journey in seven days, and sometimes in six; seldom using more than two horses upon the road. It was pretended that the three country districts could raise a militia of cavalry to the amount of from fifteen to twenty thousand men; whereas the fact is, there are little more than twenty thousand white inhabitants, men, women, and children, in the whole settlement. The country was supposed to be so productive of grain, that a cargo of wheat was sent to England out of the quantity found in store at the capture; the following year there was a famine; and a very serious scarcity twice occurred during the short period we held possession of it.

To collect more accurate information, therefore, concerning the distant parts of the Colony, and the nations bordering upon it, was a principal object which his lordship had in view in sending his own secretary into the interior almost immediately after his arrival at the Cape; but this was not the only motive. The ignorant boors of Graaf Reynet, instigated

by certain malicious and designing persons at the Cape, had, even after the surrender of the Colony to the English, indignantly used, and then expelled, both the landrost and the clergyman who had been sent thither by Sir James Craig. It became therefore necessary, in order to convince them of the firmness of the British government, to compel them to receive, and to treat with due respect, the same two functionaries they had thought proper to turn out of the district. The landrost, who had hitherto shewn no great desire to return among a people who had more than once menaced his life, made few objections to accompany me; but the clergyman, already too much terrified or disgusted with the treatment he had met with, could not on any consideration be prevailed on to join our party.

Though the rains usually commence about the beginning of May, in the present year the whole month of June was a series of fine pleasant weather; unfavourable, however, to the labours of the husbandman, and not less so to the traveller, who might have before him a long journey over the uninhabited deserts of Africa, and who must necessarily make daily use of the same cattle, either in the team, or to travel along with him as relays. The established mode of performing long journies, in this Colony, is in covered waggons drawn by bullocks. The carriages made for this purpose are very expensive; but they are well constructed to bear hard service, to run with tolerable ease, and are sufficiently commodious and spacious to contain all the necessaries that may be wanted on a long journey, as well as a cot, or mattress, for sleeping upon. Such a carriage is commonly drawn by a team, or *span* as it

is termed in the colony, of ten or twelve oxen. Each day's journey is called a *skoff*; and its length is generally regulated by local circumstances, being from five to fifteen or twenty hours. It is customary also to travel more in the night than the day, that the cattle may have the advantage of the latter to graze, or rather to brouse, among the shrubbery; for many parts of the country, particularly after a series of dry weather, produce not a single blade of grass. The bitter, sour, and saline plants, than which the arid soil of an African desert produces nothing better, constitute oftentimes their only food for weeks together; and to the use of these may probably be owing the offensive breath that the ox of the colony is generally observed to have. In Europe, the sweetness of the breath of horned cattle is almost proverbial. In Africa, it is remarked to be altogether as nauseous. The bad quality of the water, which in the desert plains is seldom met with pure, or free from impregnations of saline or earthy matter, may also contribute in producing this effect. The speed of an ox in the waggon, where the country is tolerably level, and the surface hard, is full three miles an hour, at which rate he will continue for ten or twelve hours without halting.

The first day of July was fixed upon for our departure from the Cape; and the preceding month was employed in making the necessary preparations, in fitting up three waggons, and procuring draught oxen, which at this season of the year, after the long drought of summer, were scarce and extremely lean. *Bastaards* and Hottentots to serve as waggoners, to lead the foremost pair in the team, and some others to take care of the relays, were very difficult to be procured, but indispensably

necessary. Every thing, however, was in readiness on the day fixed for our departure, though it was night before the waggons left the town; and the oxen were so miserably bad that, before they had proceeded three miles, two of them dropped in the yokes and were obliged to be left behind. In seven hours they had advanced only about fifteen miles, to a place called Stickland, where Sir James Craig had caused stabling for several troops of dragoons, and stone-buildings for the officers and men, to be erected, as a point of great importance in the event of an attack from a powerful enemy. This station is at the south point of a range of hills called the Tigerberg or Tiger Mountain, which terminate, on the Cape side, the sandy isthmus. At the feet of the hills, and in the vallies formed by them, are several pleasant farms, having gardens well stored with vegetables for the table, fruit-eries, vineyards, and extensive corn lands. As none of the latter are enclosed, the country presents a general appearance of nakedness, which, if planted with forest-trees, as the oak and the larch, and divided by fences, would become sufficiently beautiful, as nature in drawing the outline has performed her part. The sandy flat, of which the Tigerberg forms the boundary, is applied to no other use than that of furnishing a part of the supply of fuel for the town, and as a place for the country people and butchers occasionally to turn their cattle upon.

It is a prevailing opinion at the Cape, that this isthmus, which now separates the two principal bays, was once covered with the sea, making, at that time, the Cape promontory a complete island. The flatness and little elevation of the sur-

face, the quantity of sand upon it, and the number of shells buried in the sand, have been urged as the grounds for such a conjecture. If, however, such has been the case, and the retreat of the sea progressive, it must have been an incalculable period of time since the two bays were united. I believe they never were, and the more I have attended to this subject the more I am persuaded that, instead of the isthmus ever having been covered with the sea, the time is yet to come when that event will take place. The surface is from twenty to thirty feet above the level of high water mark ; the sand upon it, except where it is drifted into ridges, is seldom three feet deep, and rests upon sand-stone or hard gravel. Ridges of blue schistus and granite rocks appear on various parts of the surface so elevated. Admitting, what is scarcely possible, that the sand-stone and the gravel were the fragments of the mountains by which this plain is enclosed on two sides, yet neither the schistus nor the granite could have been adventitious ; these two materials must have been primeval, and they abound on the most elevated as well as on the lower parts of the isthmus ; in situations that cannot be less than one hundred feet above the level of the sea. But if we suppose the sea to have retreated one hundred feet, in its perpendicular height, we must also suppose the whole continent of Africa to have been an island at the time that the Cape promontory was an island. Yet the isthmus of Suez, near three thousand years ago, was the same flat sandy isthmus, neither higher nor lower, in all probability, than at the present day.

It may be expected that I should offer my reasons for supposing the sea to be gaining upon the land in Southern Africa.

They are founded on observation, and are these: the plain that skirts the Lion's Rump, and which is washed by Table Bay and the sea, usually called the *Green Point*, is lower, much lower, than the isthmus, and must consequently, at the same time with it, have been covered with the sea. Now there is not one single appearance to denote that such has ever been the case. The Lion's Hill declines in a gentle and uninterrupted line into the plain, an appearance which could not have taken place had it ever been beaten by the billows of the ocean. This is further obvious by attending to the side of the plain next to the water, where (the loose materials being swept away by the violence of the surge) the rocky ridges of schistus, and, in places, of granite, run like so many artificial piers, sometimes to the distance of a mile, into the sea. The whole shore of the peninsula is scalloped out in the same manner, demonstrating an encroachment, rather than a retreat, of the ocean. The two ridges also of the isthmus that bound the two bays, one to the northward and the other to the southward, are the highest parts of its surface, and seem to have served the purpose of stopping the progress, rather than marking the retreat, of the sea.

Indeed, from all the observations I have been able to make on the southern coast of Africa, I am decidedly of opinion, that the whole of L'Aguillas Bank, stretching from Cape Point across the entrance of False Bay to the mouth of Rio Infante or the Great Fish River, and to the thirty-seventh parallel of southern latitude, has at one time formed a part of the continent. The regular sweep in which it rounds from this extreme point of South Africa into the main land, the materials

that compose it, the indentations of the coast, all formed in one direction, and the manner in which the fragile rocks break off perpendicularly from time to time along that coast, are indications that sufficiently warrant this conclusion.

It may also be observed, with regard to the L'Aguillas Bank, that the stream of the current strikes strongest just along the outer margin, which I suppose to have formerly been the old coast of Africa, not only because the soundings along this margin are deeper than on any other part of the bank, but because the bottom is fine white sand, such as is usually found on the sea shores; and most of the interior parts of the bank, and especially where it approaches the projecting points of the coast, are composed of rock, and the coarse fragments of comminuted sand-stone.

But the strongest arguments which have been advanced in favour of the Cape isthmus having, at no great period of time, been covered with the sea, rest on the sea-shells that are said to be found in the sand that is accumulated on its surface. Such shells may exist, though I never saw them except on the shores of the bays; but by admitting their existence we prove nothing, as whole strata of them are found buried in the sides of the Lion's Hill, many hundred feet above the level of the sea. These shells were not brought into that situation by the waves of the ocean, but by birds. There is scarcely a sheltered cavern in the sides of the mountains, that rise immediately from the sea, where *living* shell fish may not be found any day in the year. Crows even, and vultures, as well as aquatic birds, detach the shell-fish from the rocks, and



mount with them in their beaks into the air ; shells thus carried are said to be frequently found on the very summit even of the Table Mountain. In one cavern, at the point of Mossel Bay, I disturbed some thousands of birds and found as many thousands of living shell-fish scattered on the surface of a heap of shells that, for aught I know, would have filled as many thousand waggons. The presence of shells therefore is not, in my opinion, any argument for the presence of the sea.

We should not, perhaps, be far amiss in assigning to Africa a prior creation to any of the other continents. Its vast antiquity appears in the very extraordinary manner in which the superior parts of the great chain of mountains are corroded and worn away ; in the immensely deep chasms in which the rills of water trickle down to the sea ; in the disappearance of the water supplied by the heavy rains ; and, above all, in the complete decomposition of the felspar into a kind of semi-indurated clay or lithomarga ; and, as in the course of my travels I have seen in frequent instances, pyramidal crystals of quartz so loosely fixed by the base into masses of felspar as easily to be drawn out with the fingers, and when so drawn out, appearing corroded, and wasted in their transition to some other state.

I would not here be understood to suppose that the sea does not retreat from the shore ; on the contrary, it is a well established fact, that in some parts of the world, and particularly in the creeks of the Baltic, the sea has subsided in a very remarkable manner. But this retreat may be partial

and owing to local circumstances. Had it been general, and in the same degree as has been observed on the shores of Bothnia, the isthmus of Suez must have been overflowed, and consequently Africa must have been an island, later than 2000 years ago ; whereas there is every reason to suppose that, many ages before that period, the isthmus was pretty much in the same state in which it now is. The progressive retreat of the ocean cannot therefore be general. It is evident, at the same time, to use the language of the sacred historian, " That all " the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were " covered ;" mountains that are now several thousand feet above its level, and as many thousand miles removed from its shores, bear the most unequivocal indications of this truth. But this effect may, perhaps with more plausibility, be ascribed to the operation of some sudden cause, some convulsion in the globe of the earth, or some check in its diurnal or annual motion, which produced an universal change upon its surface ; and by which " the waters under the heaven " were gathered together unto one place, and the dry land " appeared." Whether this change happened at the first creation, or the earth was deluged at some subsequent period, an idea that the history of all the civilized nations on earth seem to glance at, we must be content to remain in ignorance ; for man, with all his boasted philosophy, will never be able to solve the questions which the Hebrew poet has put into the mouth of the Almighty. " Who shut up " the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued " out of the womb ? When I made the cloud the garment " thereof and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and " *brake up for it my decreed place*, and set bars and doors, and

“ said, Hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here  
“ shall thy proud waves be stayed ?”

Beyond the point of the Tyger berg the isthmus becomes more elevated, less sandy, and is better covered with shrubby plants. A few farms are here and there seen in the hollows, where the rills of water trickle in the bottom of deep glens in a northerly direction. On the dry and naked ridges, where the soil consists of a mixture of sand and a yellowish clay, are thrown up many thousands of those cellular masses of earth, the manufacture of a small insect of the ant tribe, to which naturalists have given the name of *termes*, different however from, and much less destructive than, that species of which a curious description has been given by Mr. Smeathman in the Philosophical Transactions. The ant-hills in this part of Africa seldom exceed the height of three feet. On the lower parts of the isthmus where the soil under the sand is of a boggy nature, they take the consistence of a hard black turf, and are used as fuel.

This plain to the eastward, at a dozen miles beyond Stickland, is terminated by two mountains, between which the road leads into a valley better cultivated and more populous than any part between it and the Cape. Simonsberg, on the right, is among the highest of the mountains that are seen from the Cape. Its forked Parnassian summit is frequently, in winter, covered with snow, and in the south-east winds of summer is generally buried in the clouds. It also has its Helicon trickling down its sides, as yet a virgin spring untasted by the Muses. It held out more charms, it seems,

for Plutus, than for Apollo. A man in the time of the governor, whose name the mountain perpetuates, intent on making his fortune by imposing on the credulity and ignorance of the Company's servants, melted down a quantity of Spanish dollars, and presented the mass to the governor as a specimen of silver from a rich mine that he had discovered in this mountain. Enraptured at this proof of so important a discovery, a resolution was passed by the governor in council, that a sum of money should be advanced to the man to enable him to follow up what he had so successfully begun, and work the mine, of which he was to have the sole direction; and in the mean time, to convince the public of the rising wealth of the colony, the mass of silver was ordered to be manufactured into a chain to which the keys of the Castle gates should be suspended. The chain was made, and still remains in the same service for which it was originally intended, as a memorial of the credulity of the governor and the council. The traces of the operation carried on by this impostor are still visible in the side of the mountain.

The Paarlberg, on the left of the pass into the valley, is a hill of moderate height, and has taken its name from a chain of large round stones that pass over the summit, like the pearls of a necklace. Of these the two that are placed near the central and highest point of the range are called, *par excellence*, the pearl and the diamond: and a particular description of them has been thought worthy of a place in the Philosophical Transactions. From that paper, and Mr. Masson's description, it would appear that these two masses of stone rested upon their own bases, and were detached from the mountain;

whereas they grow out, and form a part, of it. It has also been said that their composition was totally different from the rocks that are found in the neighbouring mountains, which led a naturalist in Europe to observe, that these immense blocks of granite had probably been thrown up by volcanic explosions, or by some cause of a similar nature. This is not by any means the fact; the sand-stone strata of the Table Mountain rest upon a bed of primæval granite, and an infinite number of large stones are scattered at the feet of the Mountains along the sea-coast of the peninsula from the Lion's Head to the true Cape of Good Hope. All these are precisely of the same nature, and the same materials, as the pearl and the diamond; that is to say, they are aggregates of quartz and mica; the first in large irregular masses, and the latter in black lumps resembling shorl: they contain also cubic pieces of felspar, and seem to be bound together by plates of a clayey iron stone. All the stones of this description appear to have been formed round a nucleus, as by the action of the air and weather they fall to pieces in large concentric laminæ. The Pearl is accessible on the northern side, but is nearly perpendicular on all the others. This sloping side is more than a thousand feet in length, and the perpendicular altitude about four hundred feet above its base on the summit of the mountain, where its circumference is a full mile. Near the top it is quadriseded by two deep clifts, crossing at right angles, in which are growing a number of beautiful aloes, besides several cryptogamous and other plants. A great part of the slanting side is covered with a species of green lichen. Down the perpendicular sides are immense rifts, as if the mass had been torn

asunder by its own weight. The Diamond is the higher block, but less bulky, and, being cone-shaped, is difficult and dangerous of ascent.

The mountain of the Paarl furnishes a fine field for the botanist. The plants are of infinite variety, and wonderfully luxuriant. The wild olive of the Cape, generally a stunted plant, seems to have here attained its greatest size, and the dark-green foliage is finely contrasted with the elegant tribe of heaths, some of which shoot up to the size and form of trees. The fruit of the wild olive is small, and so acrid as to be unfit for use; but the wood is close-grained, shaded, and takes a polish not unlike that of walnut. Several species of that genus of plants to which botanists have given the name of *Protea* decorate the sides of the Paarl Mountain. Of these one of the most numerous and most conspicuous is the *mellifera*, which, from the great quantity of saccharine juice contained in the bottom of its vase-shaped flowers, is here called the sugar-tree. Many of the inhabitants are at the trouble of collecting this juice, which they consider as an excellent stomachic, and they sometimes boil it down to a thick syrup for the purpose of preserving fruits. Several species of the gaudy-plumed *certhia*, or creeper, may be seen at this season of the year in vast numbers perching themselves on the edge of the corollas, and sucking, with their long sickle-shaped bills, "the honied sweets." The iridescent and brilliant colors of these beautiful little birds, fluttering about the variegated blossoms of the protea, cannot fail to attract the notice of the passenger, for a time, from every other object. One species in particular (the chalybea

of Linnæus) commands attention to its clear melodious note. It sings delightfully in the cage, but is reared with great difficulty, and lives entirely on sugar and water.

The mountains that form the eastern boundary of the valley are eminently grand, their upper regions being masses of bare rock destitute of a single shrub, or even a blade of grass. They are a part of that great chain that stretches from False Bay to the northward, and to which a French naturalist has given the name of the Back-bone of the Earth ; a name, however, that is much more appropriate on account of their singular appearance than great extent. Their naked summits are pointed and jagged, and divided like the vertebræ of the back-bone of an animal. They consist of a number of sandstone strata, placed in a horizontal direction, contain a great deal of iron, being in places perfectly red, and they rest upon beds of granite, clay, and slate. This range of mountains, like an immense wall, shuts out entirely from the Cape the countries that lie beyond it ; so complete a bulwark, indeed, is this chain of mountains, that a few men in possession of the passes would always be able to cut off all communication between the sea-coast and the interior. Of these passes, or *kloofs* as they are called by the colonists, there are but three that are ever crossed with wheel carriages : Hottentot Holland's Kloof near False Bay, which opens a communication with the district of Swellendam and the eastern parts of the colony along the sea-coast : Roode Sand, or red sand, Kloof, opposite to Saldanha Bay, leading to Graaf Reynet, and the remotest parts of the colony ; and Eland's Kloof, still farther

north, which opens into a wild and almost uninhabited part of the country.

Though the mountains are rude and barren, nothing could be more beautiful, rich, or better clothed with vegetation, than the vale they enclose, which is well watered by the numerous branches of the Berg river, uniting in one stream about the middle, and meandering through it to the northward with a smooth and almost imperceptible current. This vale contains the divisions, or parishes, of Great and Little Drakensteen, Fransche Hoek or French corner, and the Paarl. The last of these is an assemblage of about thirty houses, disposed into two straight lines, and so far detached from each other as to form a street about a mile in length. The church stands near the middle. This, as well as most of the houses, is neatly covered with rye-straw thatch, which, if properly laid on, will last from twenty to thirty years. The houses are generally surrounded with plantations of oaks. The common size of these is from ten to fifteen feet in circumference, and from twenty to thirty feet in height without a branch: many are much larger: the tops are neither bent, nor is the wood shaken, nor twisted, as of those about Cape Town; a proof that the winds are less violent in this valley than at the latter place.

Fransche Hoek, and the two Drakensteens, have neither church nor any assemblage of houses that deserves the name of village, but are composed of detached farms, dispersed over the vale at considerable distances from each other. Most



of these are freehold property, that were granted, in the early stages of the Settlement, for certain sums of money, or by favor, or for particular services. They consist each of sixty *morgens* of land, or 120 English acres, and the possessors claim the privilege of the intermediate waste-land to turn their cattle upon. This is a great abuse, which perhaps would best be checked by obliging the proprietors to inclose their just portion of 120 acres, and would certainly be the means of greatly improving the country. The whole valley is convertible into excellent arable land; yet very little corn is cultivated except for home consumption. The principal produce is wine. The whole tract of country indeed that stretches along the feet of the great chain of mountains from the Paarl to False Bay, including the two Drakensteens, Fransche Hoek, the Drosdy of Stellenbosch, and Hottentots Holland, is chiefly employed in raising wine and fruits for the Cape-market.

Hitherto there have been few speculators among the Dutch planters; the spirit of improvement and experiment never entered into their minds; and it may be a matter of doubt, had not the French Protestants, who sought an asylum here from the religious persecutions of their once bigoted countrymen, introduced and cultivated the vine, whether at this time the whole colony would have produced a single leaguer of wine. The sugar-cane grows with health and vigor in several parts of the colony; yet not one of the planters has ever produced a pound of sugar. On asking a farmer, who complained that the canes had overrun his garden, why he did not turn them to some account; he replied with that nonchalance which characterizes the nation, that it served to amuse

the women and children ; but that he should not be the first to try it, as long as he could buy that article in the Cape for six schillings, or three English shillings, a pound.

The thick shubbery, that covers the uncultivated parts of the valley, lodges and protects an abundance of game, particularly of the Cape partridges, which, fearless of man, run about nearly as tame as poultry in a farm-yard ; and of korhaens, the *otis afra* of Linnæus, and white-eared bustard of Latham, which, unlike the partridge, not only fly to a distance at the approach of the sportsman, but keep up, while on the wing, a violent screaming, as if to give notice to other birds of the impending danger. Here also are plenty of Cape snipes, *Scolopax Capensis*, and three species of wild ducks, the *anas Capensis*, or Cape widgeon, the Dominican duck, and the common teal. Among the quadrupeds that inhabit the valley are the *düiker* and the *griesbok* (the diver or plunger, and the grizzled deer). The color of the *düiker* is wholly of a dusky brown ; he is about three feet in length and two and a half in height ; the male has horns streight, black, nearly parallel, but diverging a little towards the points, four inches long, and annulated close to the base. The female has no horns ; length of the ears seven inches ; of the tail, five inches. The *sinus lachrymalis*, or subocular indent, which most of the antelopes have, is in this species so conspicuous that the Dutch say it carries the gall-bladder under the eye. The *griesbok* is of a grizzled or greyish color, the ground bright brown interspersed with silver hairs ; length two feet nine inches ; height one foot nine inches ; ears five inches, black and naked ; tail two inches ; the *sinus lachry-*

*malis* also very distinct. The male has horns four inches long, straight, smooth, tapering to a point, black : the female has no horns. This animal frequents the thickets on the sides of the hills, and descends into the vineyards by night, where it does no small injury to the infant shoots of the vine. The mountains abound with a curious species of antelope, which, from its amazing agility, is called the *klip springer*, or rock-leaper. A dog has not the least chance of taking this animal, but he is easily shot as he bounds from rock to rock, and exposes himself to the sportsman's aim on the highest and most conspicuous pinnacles of the mountains. Its cloven hoofs being each of them subdivided into two segments, and jagged at the edges, give it the power of adhering to the steep sides of the smooth rock, from which it sometimes even hangs suspended without any danger of slipping or falling. The color is cinereous grey, and its black horns are short, straight, erect, and annulated one third of their length from the base. The hair has the singular quality of being so brittle that it breaks instead of bending, adheres loosely to the skin, and is so very light that it is used as the best article that can be procured for the stuffing of saddles and mattresses.

A few miles beyond the Paarl, the Berg or Mountain-river crosses the road. It is here so large and deep in the winter season as to make a pont or floating bridge necessary. A little lower down, however, it is sometimes fordable ; and the peasants, to avoid the toll at the ferry, frequently cross it, though at the hazard of their own lives and of their cattle. At this time the river was pretty full ; yet two farmers, rather than pay four shillings for the passage at the ferry of their

two waggons, ventured through at the ford, and passed it with the loss only of two sheep that were worth at least four times the amount of the toll. The road beyond the ferry is excellent, being a level bed of hard clay ; but the country is very thinly inhabited. In advancing to the northward the surface has fewer inequalities, and becomes sandy. Nothing, however, like drifts or beds of sand, meets the eye ; but, on the contrary, it wanders over an uninterrupted forest of verdure arising from a variety of frutescent plants, among which the tribes of proteas, of heaths, and two species of *seriphium*, called here the rhinosceros-bush, predominate. In those places where the ground is least covered, the hillocks thrown up by the *termites* most abound. Here also, towards the close of the day, a multitude of small land tortoises, the *testudo pusilla* and the *geometrica* of Linnæus, were crawling slowly off the road towards the bushes, after having basked themselves in the open sunshine during the day. The howling wolf and the yelping jackall began their hideous cries shortly after the setting of the sun, and seemed to follow us in the dark, keeping at no great distance from the waggons. It was near the middle of the night before we arrived at a solitary habitation, situated in a wild, bleak, open country, and on the borders of a lake called the *Vogel Valley* or the Bird Lake. The word *valley*, in the colony, implies either a lake or a swamp : at this time the place in question was the latter ; but it abounded with ducks, geese, and teal, and also with the great white pelican, the *onocratulus*, and the rose-colored flamingo. The wings of the latter are converted into fans for flapping away the flies that, in incredible multitudes, swarm in the houses of the peasantry for want of a proper

attention to cleanliness ; and the pelican is shot for the sake of the fine soft down which lies under his plumage. That large unwieldy animal the Hippopotamus, is said at one time to have been an inhabitant of this lake,

A few miles from Vogel valley brought us to the entrance of Roode Sand Kloef, or the red sandy pass over the great chain of mountains. Here the strata of which they are composed, though still of the same nature as those of Drakenstein, are not horizontal, but dip to the south-eastward, making with the horizon an angle of about twenty degrees. The ascent of the Kloef is not steep, but very rugged ; and a small river that meanders down it must be crossed several times. The plants, sheltered by the large fragments of rock that have rolled down the mountains, are uncommonly luxuriant. Of these the different species of protea were the most conspicuous ; that species of *ricinus* called the palma Christi, which affords the castor oil, was very plentiful ; and the two species of the melianthus grew in every part of the Kloef. The *calla Ethiopica* was every where abundant on the margin of the brook, and in full flower. The baboons, from their concealed dens in the sides of the mountain, laughed, screamed, and uttered such horrible noises, the whole time that the waggons were ascending the pass, that to the ears of a stranger, unconscious from whence they proceeded, the harsh yell excited no small degree of surprise.

From the upper part of the Kloef there is no descent to the land of Waveren, or, as the division is now called, Roode Sand. The surface of this vale is four or five hundred feet higher than

that which lies on the Cape side of the range of mountains. It is bounded on the eastern side by a branch of the same chain, much higher, however, than that through which the pass lies, yet accessible by waggons. The summits of the mountains were buried in snow, and the thermometer at sunrise stood, on the plain, at the freezing point.

- The valley of Roode Sand, or Waveren, is a fertile tract of land, well watered by streamlets falling from the inclosing mountains, and produces abundance of corn, some wine, raisins, and other fruits. Several parts are capable of being flooded, and on that account admirably adapted for the cultivation of rice. The Chinese bamboo, a plant not more elegant than it is useful, grows here with great luxuriance, and is employed for whipstocks, and for the frame over which the covers of the waggons are laid. The Cape olive grows wild in great abundance, and also the palma Christi. Game of various kinds is plentiful, such as bustards, partridges, snipes, ducks, and mountain geese. Of antelopes they have the duiker, klip-springer, steenbok, griesbok, and reebok. The last is an animal that does not yet appear to have been described in any systematic work. Its size is that of the domestic goat, but it is much more elegantly made. The color is a bluish grey, the belly and breast white; horns seven or eight inches long, annulated about a third part of the length from the base. Besides these they have the Cape hare, and an animal that burrows in the ground called the *yzer varke*, or iron hog, the flesh of which, when salted and dried, is esteemed by the Dutch as a great delicacy. It is the *hystrix cristata*, or crested porcupine, of Pennant. Several of the

farmers breed them; but it is a fierce and vicious animal, and not safe to be approached by strangers. The *aard varke*, or earth-hog, the *myrmecophaga Capensis*, or ant-eater of the Cape, is also very common, and, like the porcupine, undermines the ground, seldom quitting its subterranean abode except in the night. The thighs of this animal are sometimes salted, and in that state considered as very good hams.

The valley of Roode Sand is about thirty miles in length, and is inhabited by about forty families. On quitting this division, the country becomes wild and almost uninhabited. Bogs, swamps, and morass covered with rushes and sour plants, large tracts of naked hard clay, deep sandy roads, pools of stagnant water, and those infallible indications of a barren soil, hillocks of ants, are the chief objects that meet the eye of the traveller. For several miles together no human habitation makes its appearance. In this dreary country there was nothing to engage the attention but the vast chain of mountains on the left which we were shortly to pass, and which here began to round off into an easterly direction. This branch was much more wild, lofty, and barren than that through which the Kloef of Roode Sand opens a passage. It consisted of immense columnar masses of naked sand-stone, of a red ferruginous color passing in places into steel-blue. The corroded and jagged summits, like the battlements of so many towers or minarets, leaned from their bases, and seemed to owe their only support to each other. The strata were here inclined to the eastward in an angle of about forty degrees, and seemed as if ready to slide down over each other. Still they were uniform, and had evidently never been

disrupted by any subterraneous eruption or concussion. On the opposite side of the dale, however, stood a long range of hills which had every appearance of volcanic origin. Some were perfect cones; others truncated at the summit, in the manner of those on which craters are generally found. Hills like these, standing each on its proper base, and so very different from any that had yet been seen, were too interesting to pass; and we turned out of the road to visit them. Like the rest, they were composed of quartz, sand-stone, and iron; not, however stratified as in the great chains, but torn and rent into large fragments. There was no lava; nor did it appear that any of the stones had undergone fusion. There was no blue slate in their sides, which most probably would have been the case had they been thrown up by any subterranean impulse, the whole base of the plain being composed of it. They seemed in fact to be the remains of worn down mountains crumbling into fragments with age.

Within these hills we came to a valley about three miles in length and two in width, having a surface as level as that of a bowling-green. By a strong stream passing from one end to the other, the whole might be laid under water, and converted into most excellent rice grounds. This stream was smoking hot. The springs, by which it was supplied, issued out of the ground at the foot of some hills which formed the head of the valley. They threw up the water with great violence, and with it quantities of small whitish sand mixed with minute crystals of quartz. The bed of the reservoir, and the channel down which the water was carried across the valley, in a stream strong enough to turn the largest mill in England, were com-



posed of these materials. The water was perfectly clear, and deposited not the smallest degree of any kind of sediment, neither in the pool where the springs were, nor by the edges of the stream. A green *Conferva* grew on the margin of both. No change of color was produced upon the plants and stones with which the water came in contact. With sulphuric acid it deposited no sediment, nor became in the least turbid, nor were blue vegetable colors at all affected by it. No impregnation of any kind was discoverable, in the smallest degree, by the taste. On the contrary, it is considered so pure that the family living near it generally employed it for dressing their victuals; and all their linen and colored clothes were washed in it without sustaining any injury. The thermometer I had with me was graduated only to 140°, to which point it ascended almost instantaneously. The temperature appeared to be very nearly that of boiling water.

The duration of hot springs for ages without any considerable variation in temperature, or in the quantity of water thrown out, is one of those secret operations of nature that has not as yet been satisfactorily explained, but which has baffled, at all times, the speculations of philosophers. The decomposition of pyritical matter, the slacking of lime, and the subterranean furnace, heated with combustible materials, have each had their advocates, but each when “weighed in the balance has been found wanting.”

From the hot wells we crossed the Breede, or broad river, and entered a kloof on the opposite, or northern, side of the

vale, which opened a passage through the second great chain of mountains. It is called the Hex river's kloef, and is about four miles in length. The ascent is much less than that of Roode Sand kloef, the fall of the river that meanders through it being not more than 200 feet. The mountains on each side of this pass were wild and naked, but the kloef itself abounded with large frutescent plants. Basking in the sun, on the banks of the river, were a troop of four or five hundred large black baboons, apparently of the species of *Cynocephalus*, which quitted their place with seeming reluctance, grumbling and howling as they scrambled up the sides of the naked rocks.

The head of the kloef opened out into a narrow valley to which there was no descent. It is about two miles in width and fifteen in length; and the third branch of mountains, on the northern side, were covered half way down from their summits with snow; yet the orange-trees at their feet were loaded with large ripe fruit. Four families, the only inhabitants of this deep valley, constitute a little world of their own; their wants might be as bounded as their horizon, for the fertility of the ground furnishes them with almost every necessary of life. They have plenty of cattle, and also all the different sorts of game that are met with on the other side of the mountains. We saw here some large partridges with red wings, much preferable to the common Cape partridge, and a quadruped called the *Berghaas* or mountain hare. It was the *Dipus Cafer* of Linnæus, by some called the Cape Gerboa. Like the kangaroo of Botany Bay it has the hind legs about thrice the length of the fore ones. When pursued, it always takes to the

mountains, knowing that the construction of its legs is better adapted to ascend their steep sides than to scour the plains.

All the appearances of Hex-river valley declare it to have been at one time a lake, the head of which, having given way at the kloof, has suffered the water to force itself out upon the next lower terrace, leaving only a bog in the middle, to which the stoney bases of the mountains shelve on each side. Should the falls of Niagara once sweep away the barrier that occasions them, the lake Erie would then become a plain or valley, like that of the Hex-river, and many others that occur within the chain of mountains of a little Africa.

At the head of this little valley we were to take leave of every human habitation for at least ten days, which is the ordinary time required to cross over the Karroo, or arid desert, that lay between us and the distant district of Graaf Reynet. It therefore became necessary to supply ourselves here with a stock of provisions, as nothing whatsoever is to be had on the desert except ostrich eggs and antelopes. To those travellers who are furnished with a good waggon and a tent, the want of habitations is no great loss; for few of them, behind the first range of mountains, have any sort of convenience, comfort, or decency. Among the planters of Africa it is true there are some who live in a decent manner, particularly the cultivators of the grape. Many of these are descendants of the French families who, a little more than a century ago, found an asylum at the Cape of Good Hope from the religious persecutions that drove them from their own country. But a true Dutch peasant, or boer as he styles

himself, has not the smallest idea of what an English farmer means by the word comfort. Placed in a country where not only the necessaries, but almost every luxury of life might by industry be procured, he has the enjoyment of none of them. Though he has cattle in abundance he makes very little use of milk or of butter. In the midst of a soil and climate most favourable for the cultivation of the vine, he drinks no wine. He makes use of few or no vegetables nor roots. Three times a-day his table is loaded with masses of mutton, swimming in the grease of the sheep's tail. His house is either open to the roof, or covered only with rough poles and turf, affording a favourable shelter for scorpions and spiders; and the earthy floors are covered with dust and dirt, and swarm with insects, particularly with a species of the *termes*, which, though not so destructive as some others of this genus, is nevertheless a very troublesome and disagreeable animal. His apartments, if he happens to have more than one, which is not always the case among the grazing farmers, are nearly destitute of furniture. A great chest that contains all his moveables, and two smaller ones that are fitted to his waggon, are the most striking articles. The bottoms of his chairs consist of thongs cut from a bullock's hide. The windows are without glass; or if there should happen to be any remains of this article, it is so patched and daubed as nearly to exclude the light it was intended to admit. The boor notwithstanding has his enjoyments: he is absolute master of a domain of several miles in extent; and he lords it over a few miserable slaves or Hottentots without control. His pipe scarcely ever quits his mouth, from the moment he rises till he retires to rest, except to give him time to swallow his *sopie*, or a glass

of strong ardent spirit, to eat his meals, and to take his nap after dinner. Unwilling to work, and unable to think; with a mind disengaged from every sort of care and reflexion, indulging to excess in the gratification of every sensual appetite, the African peasant grows to an uncivilized size, and is carried off the stage by the first inflammatory disease that attacks him.

How different is the lot of the laboring poor of England, who for six days in the week are doomed to toil for twelve hours in every day, in order to gain a morsel of bread for their family, and the luxury of a little animal food for the seventh day!

The cultivators of the ground, who inhabit the nearer districts to the town, though something better than the breeders of cattle, live but in a very uncomfortable manner in the midst of profusion. They have little or no society with each other, and every one seems to live solely for himself. Though removed from each other to the distance of several miles, and enjoying the benefit of many thousand acres of land under the rate of a farthing an acre, it is yet a singular fact, that scarcely any two neighbours are found to be on good terms with each other, but are embroiled perpetually in quarrels and disputes about the extent of their farms, or the privilege of a spring or a water-course. One great cause of their endless disputes is the absurd manner of estimating distance by time. The quantity of land in a government farm, according to the established custom of the colony, must be one hour's walk across it. If one farmer is supposed to have put down his *baaken*, or stake,

or land-mark, a little too near to that of his neighbour, the *Feld wagt-meester*, or peace-officer of the division, is called in, by the latter, to pace the distance, for which he gets three dollars. If the *Feldwagt-meester* should happen to regulate his pace to the satisfaction of both parties, the affair is settled ; but as this is not always the case, the next step is for the discontented party to apply for a commission, consisting of the Landrost, two members of the Council, the Secretary of the district, and a Messenger. These gentlemen share fifteen dollars a day as long as they are out upon the commission to determine how far a man ought to walk in an hour.

The dangerous and difficult roads in every part of the colony, but particularly the kloefs or passes of the mountains, and the still more perilous fords of the rivers, shew how very little sense is entertained by the peasantry of public benefits or public conveniences. Each gets over a difficulty as well as he can, and no more is thought about it till it again occurs. An instance appeared of this in crossing the Breede river opposite to Brandt Valley, which is done by means of a small flat-bottomed tub, about six feet by three. In this machine foot passengers hawl themselves over by a rope fixed to two posts, one on each side of the river. When a horse is to cross, the saddle is taken off, the rider gets into the tub, and drags the animal after him. But when a waggon is to be transported, it must first be unladen, and the baggage carried over in the vessel: the carriage is then made fast by one end to this floating machine, and the other is buoyed up by a cask, and in this manner it is dragged over. Thus is half a day consumed in passing a small river of thirty or forty



S. Daniell del.

T. Medland sculp.

*A Boor's wife taking her Coffee*

yards at the most in width, when a few planks, properly put together, would enable them to carry over any sort of carriage, cattle, or horses, with safety and convenience, in five minutes.

The women of the African peasantry lead a life of the most listless inactivity. The mistress of the family, with her coffee-pot constantly boiling before her on a small table, seems fixed to her chair like a piece of furniture; and it is the business of a little black boy or a Hottentot wholly naked to attend her with a small branch of a tree or a fan made of ostrich feathers to flap away the flies. The annexed sketch drawn from nature by Mr. Daniell, is so true a picture of a boor's apartment, that any further description would be superfluous. Few of the Africans educated among slaves and Hottentots, have any idea of what, in a state of society, constitutes female delicacy. They make no scruple of having their legs and feet washed in warm water by a slave boy, or by strangers; an operation indeed that is regularly performed every evening. If the motive of such a custom were that of cleanliness, the practise of it would deserve praise; but to observe the tub with the same water passed round through all the branches of the family, according to seniority, is apt to create ideas of a very different nature. Most of them go constantly without stockings and shoes, even when the thermometer is down to the freezing point. They generally, however, make use of small stoves to place the feet on. The young girls sit with their hands before them as listless as their mothers. Most of them, in the distant districts, can neither read nor write, so that they have no mental resources



whatsoever. Luckily, perhaps, for them, the paucity of ideas prevents time from hanging heavy on their hands. The history of a day is that of their whole lives. They hear or speak of nothing but that such-a-one is going to the city, or to church, or to be married, or that the Bosjesmans have stolen the cattle of such-a-one, or the locusts eaten their corn. The young people have no meetings at fixed periods, as in most country-places, for mirth and recreation. No fairs, no dancing, no music, nor amusement of any sort. To the cold phlegmatic temper and inactive way of life may perhaps be owing the prolific tendency of all the African peasantry. Six or seven children in a family are considered as very few; from a dozen to twenty are not uncommon; and most of them marry very young, so that the population of the colony is rapidly increasing. Several, however, of the children die in their infancy, from swellings in the throat, and from eruptive fevers. Few instances of longevity occur. Their mode of life is perhaps less favorable for a prolonged existence than the nature of the climate. The diseases of which they generally die in the country are bilious and putrid fevers and dropsies.

The men are in general much above the middle size, very tall and stout, but ill made, loosely put together, awkward, and inactive. Very few have those open ingenuous countenances that among the peasantry of many parts of Europe speak their simplicity and innocence. The descendants of French families are now so intermarried with those of the original settlers, that no distinction, except the names, remains. And it is a remarkable fact that not a word of the French language is spoken or

understood by any of the peasantry, though there be many still living whose parents were both of that nation. Neither is a French book of any kind to be seen in their houses. It would seem as if these persecuted refugees had studied to conceal from their children their unfortunate history and their country's disgraceful conduct.

The means of education, it is true, must be very difficult to be had among a people so widely scattered over a vast extent of country as the peasantry are in the colony of the Cape. Some have a person in the house whom they call the schoolmaster. This is generally a man who had served out his time in the ranks. His employment, in this new situation, is not only to instruct the children to read, to write, to sing psalms, and get by heart a few occasional prayers, but he must also make himself serviceable in other respects. At one place that we passed, the poor schoolmaster was driving the plough, whilst a Hottentot had the more honorable post of holding and directing it. The children of those who either cannot obtain, or afford to employ, such a person, can neither read nor write; and the whole of their education consists in learning to shoot well, to crack and use with dexterity an enormous large whip and to drive a waggon drawn by bullocks.

A book of any kind is rarely seen in any of the farmers' houses, except the Bible and *William Sluiter's Gesangen*, or songs out of the Bible done into verse by the Sternhold and Hopkins of Holland. They affect to be very religious, and carry at least the practical part of devotion fully as far as the most zealous bigots. They never sit down to table without a long

grace before meat pronounced with an audible voice by the youngest of the family ; and every morning before day-light one of William Sluiter's Gesangen is drawled out in full chorus by an assemblage of the whole family. In their attendance at church they are scrupulously exact, though the performance of this duty costs many of them a journey of several days. Those who live at the distance of a fortnight or three weeks from the nearest church generally go with their families once a-year.

Rude and uncultivated as are their minds, there is one virtue in which they eminently excel—hospitality to strangers. A countryman, a foreigner, a relation, a friend, are all equally welcome to whatsoever the house will afford. A Dutch farmer never passes a house on the road without alighting, except indeed his next neighbour's, with whom it is ten to one he is at variance. It is not enough to inquire after the health of the family in passing: even on the road, if two peasants should meet, they instantly dismount to shake hands, whether strangers or friends. When a traveller arrives at a habitation, he alights from his horse, enters the house, shakes hands with the men, kisses the women, and sits down without farther ceremony. When the table is served he takes his place among the family without waiting for an invitation. This is never given, on the supposition that a traveller in a country so thinly inhabited must always have an appetite for something. Accordingly, "What will you make use of?" is generally the first question. If there be a bed in the house it is given to the stranger; if none, which is frequently the case among the graziers of the distant district of Graaff Reynet, he must take his chance for a

form, or bench, or a heap of sheep skins, among the rest of the family. In the morning after a solid breakfast he takes his *sopie*, or glass of brandy, orders his slave or Hottentot to saddle the horses, shakes hands with the men, and kisses the women: *he* wishes them health, and *they* wish him a good journey. In this manner a traveller might pass through the whole country.

If the economy of the African farmer's house be ill managed, that of his land is equally bad. The graziers indeed, in many places, are not at the trouble of sowing any grain, but exchange with others their cattle for as much as may be necessary for the family consumption. But even those who occupy corn-farms near the Cape seem not to have any kind of system or management. They turn over a piece of ground with a huge mis-shapen plough that requires eight or ten horses, or a dozen oxen, to drag along; the seed is sown in the broadcast way, at the rate of about a bushel and a half to an acre; a rude harrow is just passed over it, and they reap from ten to fifteen for one. No manure comes upon the ground except a sprinkling for barley. In low situations near rivulets, where the water can be brought upon the ground, they reap from thirty to forty for one. Water in fact is every thing in Southern Africa. Not like the Chinese, whose great art of agriculture consists in suiting the nature and habit of the plant to that of the soil, which he also artificially prepares, the Dutch peasant at the Cape is satisfied if he can command only a supply of water. He bestows no kind of labor on the ground besides that of throwing in the seed: the rest is left to chance and the effects of an excellent climate. The time of seeding

is in the months of May and June; and of harvest, from November to January. The grain is trodden out by horses on circular floors in the open air; and the straw is left to rot or to be scattered about by the winds. But of their economy and condition I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

We remained a couple of days in the Hex-river valley in making preparations for crossing the desert, and in waiting the arrival of two grazing farmers of Graaff Reynet who were to meet us by appointment at this place. These people were not only likely to be useful in pointing out the places where water was generally to be found, but they were also a considerable addition to our strength in case of an attack from a savage tribe of Hottentots known in the colony by the name of *Bosjesmans*, or men of the thickets, because, lurking in the cover of the shrubbery, they are said to shoot their poisoned arrows against the unguarded traveller, for the sake of plundering him of his cattle. To oppose these *Bosjesmans* the farmers generally cross the desert in parties, and strongly armed. The poor savage, driven by imperious want to carry off an ox or sheep to his starving family, who has no other abode than the caverns of the mountains, often pays in the attempt the forfeit of his life; but it rarely happens that any of the colonists fall by his hands. Yet the name of *Bosjesman* is held in horror and detestation; and a farmer thinks he cannot proclaim a more meritorious action than the murder of one of these people. Having asked a boor from Graaff Reynet a few days before we left the town, if the savages were numerous or troublesome on the road, he told me he had only shot four of them, with as much composure and indifference as if he had

been speaking of four partridges. I heard one of these humane colonists boast of having destroyed with his own hands near three hundred of these unfortunate wretches.

The two graziers having joined us with each a waggon, and a numerous family of children, Hottentots, and Kaffers, we proceeded, on the twelfth of July, to the north-east, and in four hours gained the summit of the lowest part of the mountains that inclose the valley. The ascent, which rose by steps or terraces, might be about fifteen hundred feet in the distance of six miles. From the top towards the east there was little or no descent. Here the face of the country began to wear an entire new aspect. All the great chains of mountains on this side appeared only as hills, and as we proceeded they gradually vanished, or their tops only were visible, sinking into the horizon. A confined prospect of a rugged surface, broken into hill and dale, presented itself on every side. The eye wandered in vain to seek relief by a diversity of objects. No huge rocks confusedly scattered on the plain, or piled into mountains, no hills clothed with verdure, no traces of cultivation, not a tree nor a tall shrub, appeared to break the uniformity of the surface, nor bird nor beast to enliven the dreary waste. Vegetation was thinly scattered over a bed of brownish colored clay, and the low and stunted plants were almost wholly confined to the succulent tribe. Of these the most common were several species of *mesembryanthemum*, of *euphorbia*, *crassula*, and *cotyledon*. The grand family of *proteas*, and of the elegant *erica* had totally disappeared. The road was tolerably good, being carried generally over a bed of sandstone crossed with veins of fat quartz, and a kind of ponderous iron-stone.

Having travelled about seven hours, in which time the oxen had not proceeded about fifteen miles, we entered a long narrow pass between two hills, the faces of which being nearly perpendicular and straight, conveyed to the eye a long natural perspective like that of a street, a name which in fact was given to the place 't *Straat*. The farther extremity of the pass opened into a level plain, inclosed by small hills, all detached from each other, and having every appearance of a volcanic origin, except that the sand-stone strata, which shewed themselves on their sides, were regular and undisturbed. The inclination of these strata in a considerable angle to the horizon, and the cone-shaped form of the hills, made it appear, from certain points of view, as if a spiral line of stone twisted itself round their sides like the ridge that encircles some of the volute shells. Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 33° at sunrise; at noon, exposed to the sun, at 80°, in the shade 55°; and at seven in the evening it was down at the freezing point.

The next day's journey was about five-and-twenty miles, to a place called *Constaaple*, so named after a Bastard Hottentot who had been tempted by a small spring of water to erect a hut and plant a few trees. The drought, however, had soon obliged him to quit this retreat. Two spreading oaks still remained to shade a spring of excellent water, which, however, soon lost itself in the sandy surface of the ground. Here the thermometer at noon rose to 80° in the sun, and at night was down to the freezing point.

On the fourteenth we travelled only twelve miles. The road, in some places, was rocky and uneven, and in others deep sand. Our oxen were now beginning to droop for want

of pasturage. This day's halting place, called *Mentjies hoek*, afforded a few rushes and abundance of succulent plants, among which the bullocks of Africa are accustomed to brouze for want of better food ; not a blade of any kind of grass had appeared since we entered upon the desert ; and the shrubs were very thinly scattered over the surface, except in the neighbourhood of the few springs that here and there occurred. At this place there were also the remains of a hut and a solitary oak overhanging a spring of clear water. Even these objects served, in some degree, to enliven, and to break, the uniformity of a barren desert. To the southward, the blue summits of a chain of barren mountains, called the *Zwarte Berg*, or black mountains, began to shew themselves in the distant horizon. A butcher from the Cape passed our encampment with about five hundred head of cattle and five thousand sheep that he had purchased in the *Sneuwberg*, or snowy mountains. The sheep were in tolerable good condition ; but the cattle were miserably poor. As the greatest part of the beeves that are killed at the Cape must travel from *Graaff Reynet* across this desert, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the Cape beef should be universally complained against. The knife is generally put into them the moment they arrive from a journey of forty or fifty days, in which, beside the fatigue of travelling, they have been exposed to the scorching rays of the sun at one season of the year, and the intense cold of the nights in the other, without any shade or shelter ; without any kind of food but the salt, acrid, and watery leaves of the different succulent plants that almost exclusively grow on the *Karoo* ; sometimes whole days without a drop of water, and most commonly such only as is muddy and saline ;



sometimes their hoofs become so tender by travelling upon the hot sand and gravel, that they are obliged to be left on the desert ; and they generally arrive at the town in so maimed and miserable a condition, as to be very unfit for what they are intended. Could the farmers near the Cape be once prevailed upon to sow turnips, which may be produced here equally good as in Europe, to plant potatoes, and cultivate the artificial grasses, the quality of the beef and mutton might be very materially improved. A few inhabitants who stall-feed their cattle, have their tables supplied with beef little, if at all, inferior to what is sold in Leadenhall market ; but the adoption of such a system would require more labor and activity, and more attention, than the body and mind of a Dutch farmer seem capable of supplying : his avarice, however great, is overcome by the habits of indolence in which he has been educated.

On the fifteenth, from the exhausted state of our oxen, three of which we had been obliged to leave behind, we made only a short stage of ten or twelve miles to the *riet fonteyn*, or the reed spring, which took its rise out of a high cone-shaped hill, with a flat top, and ran in a feeble stream to the southward. The banks were skirted by a thicket of the *doorn boom*, or thorn-tree, a species of *mimosa*, which the two Swedish travellers, who have published their researches in Southern Africa, have erroneously called the *nilotica*, or that which produces the gum Arabic. The pods of the latter are very long, and moniliform, or divided like a string of beads ; whereas the karroo mimosa has short sickle-shaped pods. Armed from the summit down to the ground with enormous double thorns,

pointing in every direction "like quills upon the fretful porcupine," it becomes an impenetrable thicket to most animals except the rhinoceros, whose hide, though not proof against a musket-ball, as has been asserted by some naturalists, has little to fear from the spines of the mimosa. The bark, being powerfully astringent, is preferred to that of any other tree in the colony for preparing leather from raw skins; and the wood, being hard and tough, is used for waggon-poles, and as lock-shoes for clogging the wheels in steep roads. The trunk of the tree yields large quantities of a clear transparent gum, which, however, does not seem to have been applied to any kind of use. It may be remarked that almost every tree, which furnishes tasteless gums or resins, is covered with a bark that is highly astringent and austere to the taste.

The following day we crossed the bed of the Buffalo river, which was at least fifty yards in width; but the quantity of water in it was barely sufficient to form a current. The deep shelving banks, however, and the wreck of roots and shrubs, indicated at least its periodical power, which had forced through the *black mountains* to the southward a grand chasm in its passage to the eastern ocean. The whole surface of the country was here strewn over with small fragments of a deep purple-colored slate, that had crumbled away from the strata which in long parallel ridges lay in the direction of east and west. Scattered among these fragments were black stones, whose surfaces were blistered or tumefied, not unlike in appearance to volcanic slaggs, or the scoræ of an iron furnace. Several hills of the shape of cones, some truncated near the top parallel to their bases, stood detached from each other on the

plain, apparently thrown up by volcanic explosions ; but a nearer view of the alternate strata of earth and sand-stone, regularly disposed in every part, shewed them to be the quiet deposition of water rather than the violent ejection of subterranean fire. This part of the desert was more sterile and naked than any which had yet occurred. Scarcely a plant of any description threw its feeble leaves out of the slaty surface, except a few species of the mesembryanthemum, among which was one more luxuriant than the rest, whose leather-like covering of its fleshy cylindrical leaves served our Hottentots, when dried, for tinder.

About ten miles beyond the Buffalo river we encamped for the night upon the banks of a small running brook called *Geelbeck*, winding round a flat sandy marsh overgrown with rushes, and abounding with springs whose waters were strongly impregnated with salt. All the naked sandy patches were thinly sprinkled over with a fine white powdery substance not unlike snow : it was found in the greatest quantities where the cattle of travellers had been tied up at nights ; and it was observed almost invariably to surround the roots of a frutescent plant that grew here in great exuberance. I collected a quantity of this white powder, together with the sand, and, by boiling the solution and evaporating the water, obtained from it crystals of pure prismatic nitre. A small proportion of a different alkaline salt was also extracted from the liquor. The plant alluded to was a species of *salsola*, or salt-wort, with very minute fleshy leaves closely surrounding the woody branches. It is known to the country-people by the Hottentot name of *Canna* and is that plant from the ashes of which almost all,

the soap, that is used in the colony, is made. These ashes, when carefully collected from the burnt plants, are a pure white caustic alkali, a solution of which, mixed up with the oily fat of the large broad tails of the sheep of the colony, and boiled slowly for five or six days, takes the consistency and the quality of an excellent white soap. This species of salsola grows in almost every part of Southern Africa, but particularly on those plains known by the name of Karroo, and in such abundance that, supposing the plant, after being cut down and burnt, to be reproduced in five years, the quantity of soda, or barilla, that might annually be made from the ashes would be sufficient, beside serving the colony, for the whole consumption of Great Britain: and as enormous sums of money have always been, and continue to be, drawn from England to pay the imports of this article, it may perhaps be considered as an object worthy of further inquiry. According to the present system, however, of letting out the government farms, and the high price of labor, none of the country-people would find it worth their consideration as an article to bring to market. The Hottentots, indeed, might be encouraged to prepare it; but the great distance from Cape Town, the only market in the colony, and the badness of the roads, will always operate against a supply of the natural products of the country being had there at any reasonable rate. Another shrubby plant, with glaucous spear-shaped leaves, is generally found among the salsola, the ashes of which also give a strong alkaline lie; but the soap made from this plant is said to have a bluish color, and to be of a very inferior quality to that made from the former. The plant was not in flower; but it appeared to be the *atriplex albicans*, a kind of orache.

The hills that surround the plain of Geel-beck are composed of a dark purple-colored slate; and among these hills we were gratified with the sight of a small herd of that beautifully marked animal the *zebra*, and a great number of another species of wild horse, known in the colony by the Hottentot name of *qua-cha*. This animal was long considered as the female zebra, but is now known to be a species entirely distinct. It is marked with faint stripes on the fore-quarters only; it is well shaped, strong limbed, not in the least vicious, but, on the contrary, is soon rendered by domestication mild and tractable; yet abundant as they are in the country, few have given themselves the trouble of turning them to any kind of use. They are infinitely more beautiful than, and fully as strong as, the mule; are easily supported on almost any kind of food, and are never out of flesh. The zebra has obtained the character of being so ferocious and ungovernable as never to be completely tamed, perhaps undeservedly from some very imperfect and injudicious trials. The success of an attempt to domesticate animals that are naturally fierce or timid, would seem to require more perseverance and patience, more labor, and more address, than fall to the share of a Dutch peasant. A vicious animal, taken from a state of nature, is not to be tamed with the point of the knife, or the lash of the whip; animals in a wild state are more impatient of pain than such as are already rendered docile and accustomed to the cruelties exercised upon them by man; and wounds and harsh treatment serve only to make them more fierce and unmanageable. At the landrost's of Zwelendam I saw a male and female zebra that, while young and attended to, were said to have been mild and docile; but by neglect, and probably by teasing, they had become exceed-

ingly vicious. One of the English dragoons persisted in mounting the female. She kicked and plunged, and laid herself down, but to no purpose ; the man kept his seat ; till taking a leap from the high bank of the river, she threw both herself and the rider into the water ; but, still keeping hold of the bridle, she dragged him to the shore, when, walking up quietly to him, she put her head down to his face and completely bit off his ear.

On many parts of the great desert we saw numbers of ostriches scowering the plains and waving their black and white plumes in the wind. This is a signal to the Hottentots that their nests are not far distant, especially if they wheel round the place from whence they started up ; for when they have no nest they make off immediately on being disturbed, with the wing-feathers close to the body. There is something in the economy of this animal different in general from that of the rest of the feathered race. It seems to be the link of union, in the great chain of created beings, that connects the winged with the four-footed tribe. Its strong-jointed legs and cloven hoofs are well adapted for speed and for defence. The wings and all its feathers are insufficient to raise it from the ground ; its camel-shaped neck is covered with hair ; its voice is a kind of hollow mournful lowing, and it grazes on the plain with the qua-cha and the zebra. Among the very few polygamous birds that are found in a state of nature, the ostrich is one. The male, distinguished by its glossy black feathers from the dusky grey female, is generally seen in company with two or three, and frequently as many as five, of the latter. These females lay their eggs in one

nest, to the number of ten or twelve each, which they hatch all together, the male taking his turn of sitting on them among the rest. Between sixty and seventy eggs are said to have been found in one nest; and if incubation has begun, a few are most commonly lying round the sides of the hole, having been thrown out by the birds on finding the nest to contain more than they could conveniently cover. The time of incubation is six weeks. From its not being known that the ostrich is polygamous, an error respecting this bird has slipt into the *Systema Naturæ*, where it is said that one female lays fifty eggs.

The eggs of the ostrich are considered as a great delicacy. They are prepared in a variety of ways; but that made use of by the Hottentots is perhaps the best: it is simply to bury them in hot ashes, and through a small hole made in the upper end to stir the contents continually round till they acquire the consistence of an omlet: prepared in this manner we very often, in the course of our long journies over the wilds of Africa, found them an excellent repast. In these eggs are frequently discovered a number of small oval-shaped pebbles, about the size of a marrowfat pea, of a pale yellow color and exceeding hard. In one egg we found nine and in another twelve of such stones.

At this place it was considered prudent to furnish our Hottentots, who attended the cattle, with fire-arms, the neighbourhood having of late been much infested by parties of Bosjesmen. They had not been out with the oxen above an hour before they were seen returning with six strangers under

their guard. They were not, however, Bosjesmens, but three runaway slaves, and three Hottentots, one of the latter of which was a girl about twelve years of age. This party had lived for some time upon the desert entirely on animal food, which they had procured by lurking near the usual halting-places of butchers and farmers, and driving off in the night-time a few sheep. Tired of such a mode of life, they were very glad to escape from it by entering into the list of our attendants.

On the seventeenth we proceeded about twenty-four miles over a rising country, finely marked by hill and dale, but altogether barren, except that here and there were straggling over the surface a few species of the mesembryanthemum, or fig marygold, among which were large patches of the curious and elegant ice-plant. At night the thermometer was down to the freezing point, and the following morning it had descended to 30°. The Black Mountains, about fifteen miles to the southward, had lost that part of their character to which perhaps they owed their name, and were covered with deep snow. The nights had been so intensely cold and piercing, since we entered upon the desert, that our horses, being accustomed to the stable, immediately grew sick and low-spirited, and two of them this day died under the severity of the weather. A third had a very narrow escape. We lost several of our oxen; but these died rather for want of food than from the coldness of the nights.

On the eighteenth we crossed the *Dwyka*, or Rhinoceros river, and encamped on its banks. The bed of the river was a



fine-grained blue sand, and it generally exceeded a hundred yards in width; but the collected streamlets, creeping over its surface, would scarcely have furnished a quantity of water sufficient to turn a mill. The rivers that cross the Karroo have this difference, which distinguishes them from rivers in general, that, notwithstanding all the tributary streamlets that may fall into them, the greater the distance from the source the less water they contain. As it seldom rains on the desert, they have no supply but from the springs; and the water, in its passage from these, is continually losing of its bulk both by absorption and by evaporation. Though the surrounding country was destitute of vegetation, a thick forest of mimosas covered the banks of the Dwyka, and followed it through all its windings. This plant grows indeed on every part of the desert, on which it is the inseparable companion of all the rivers and all the periodical streamlets. Should a traveller happen to be in want of water, the appearance of the mimosa is a sure guide to the place where it occasionally at least is to be found.

On the evening of the nineteenth we encamped upon the banks of the *Ghamka*, or Lion's river. Its distance from the Dwyka is about twenty miles of the most beautiful road I ever beheld. There was neither stone nor loose sand, nor rut, to break the equality of the surface, which was level as that of a bowling-green, and consisted of a hard bed of clay bound together, and colored brown, with iron. Not a swell of any sort intervened to interrupt the line of the horizon, which was as perfect as that viewed over the surface of the sea. Here, too, as on that element, the mind was as little distracted by a

multiplicity of objects; for in vain did the eye wander in search of tree, or lofty shrub, or blade of grass, or living creature. On every side a wide spreading plain, barren as its southern boundary, the Black Mountains, presented nothing but a dreary waste, "a land of desolation." On approaching the river Ghamka the face of the country changed a little for the better. Large mimosas skirted its banks, among which were also mingled a species of willow with a narrow serrated leaf, a *rhus*, and the *lyceum afrum*. A considerable stream of water rolled over the bed of the river. Here we meet with hares, partridges, mountain geese, and wild ducks of two kinds, in great abundance. The blue schistus broke out on the banks of the river, and still continued to run directly east and west in parallel ridges.

That part of the Lion's river where we were encamped was distant only about twelve miles from a chasm or kloof in the Zwarteberg, in the very mouth of which was said to be a farmhouse, and several others behind the mountains. As these houses all belonged to the district of Graaff Reynet, the landrost was not without hopes of procuring the loan of fresh teams of bullocks. Many of our own had already died, others were left on the desert, and the rest were quite exhausted by the effects of the cold, of bad water, and little food. We therefore quitted the direct road, and turned off towards Zwarteberg. A few miles before we arrived at the kloof, a party of men, mounted on horseback, were observed to be making for the waggons in full gallop. In coming up with the first, they stopt short and fired a discharge of musquetry. They loaded again, rode up to the second, and fired a second volley: this they repeated before every waggon, and then set