



BRIGHTER SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

Off to the Cape—Sir Donald Currie—Need of Information—
The Cape as a Health Resort—The Union Company—The
Great *Scot*.

I AM off to the Cape. It is true a rolling stone gathers no moss, but no man can travel far without having his ignorance enlightened, his narrow views widened, his prejudices removed, and without coming home a wiser and better man. When many years ago my friend, the late gallant Admiral Sir King Hall, introduced me to Sir Donald Currie, I had no idea that at any time I should have the pleasure of sailing as a passenger on one of those grand steamers of his which have brought the Cape and England so close together.

The last ship of the Castle line has beaten all the others, having accomplished the passage between England and the Cape in a little more than sixteen days. I go out in the *Roslyn Castle*, which, till the recent achievements of the *Dunottar Castle*, had performed the journey in the quickest time. Captain Robinson, the able commander, is glad to hear I am going out with her. I am equally glad to put myself under the captain's care. We have sailed together before now, and I am able to speak of the captain as a gentleman and sailor of the highest type. I am glad to be in one of Sir Donald Currie's ships. They have carried the Grand Old Man and the Poet Laureate many a hundred miles. Why, I ask, should they not carry me?

Sir Donald Currie is a fine example of the pushing Scotchman who makes his own fortune, and does at the same time much for the welfare of the community. Born in Greenock in 1824, as soon as he was out of his teens he made his way to Liverpool in search of fame and fortune, entering the service of the Cunard Company, where he speedily distinguished himself—devoted himself most assiduously to the business of the company, and thoroughly mastered all the details of the shipping trade as there carried on. In 1846 he

was sent by the company to establish a line of steamers between Havre and Liverpool, which having successfully accomplished, after a residence of six or seven years in France he returned to Liverpool, and remained in the company's employ till in 1863 he commenced business on his own account by running sailing vessels between Liverpool and Calcutta, also taking a part in the Leith, Hull, and Hamburg Steam Packet Company. Early he seems to have realized Cowper's fine line, that—

‘Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.’

He made his way to London, finding that the home-ward cargoes of his Indian ships were mainly directed to the Thames. In 1872 he commenced his connection with the African trade. At that time the Union Steam Packet Company had a monopoly of the traffic with the Cape. In this attempt he was aided by the Cape merchants; and in January a small steamer, the *Ireland*, was despatched to the Cape by the firm of which Mr. Donald Currie, as he then was, was the head. Now he has no less than fifteen magnificent steamers constantly ploughing the watery highway between London and the Cape, halting at Lisbon, Madeira, the Canaries, Ascension, and St. Helena,

with half a dozen fine subsidiary steamers to carry on the inter-colonial service between the Cape and Natal and the Mauritius. Nor was the Castle Company, as Sir Donald's line is called, started a day too soon. In 1872 the discovery of diamonds in Griqua Land caused a sudden rush to the spot, and later the discovery of gold in the Transvaal increased the demand for greater travelling facilities between England and the Cape. In old days letters to the Cape paid one shilling, and were delivered in thirty-seven days. Now the postage is almost nominal, and the time taken for the delivery is almost one-half. In other ways Sir Donald has done good service. He arranged the diamond-fields dispute to the satisfaction alike of the British Government and the Orange Free State. If his advice had been taken, there is reason to believe that there would have been no Zulu war, and when that war broke out the Castle steamers rendered important service by the *Dunrobin Castle* starting from the Cape a day before her time with the news of the disasters at Isandula, and by one of them stopping at St. Vincent to bear to the Cape the intelligence of what England was about to do to restore her prestige, and to obliterate the evil consequences of her defeat. Sir Donald did more: he patriotically placed his fleet at the dis-

posal of the Government, to aid as transports of men and munitions to the seat of war. His forethought had saved four days of valuable time at the critical moment, and thus caused the relief of Ekowe by the troops under Lord Chelmsford. For this he was knighted, and none can doubt but that the honour was well deserved. It ought also to be mentioned here that the Fothergill gold medal of the Society of Arts was awarded Sir Donald, for the improvements introduced by him into his passenger steamers, having for their object the prevention of loss of life at sea from fire or accident. Sir Donald's Scotch constituents may well be proud of their M.P.

And now one word for the friendly critic. Why do you write about the Cape? Go there if you like, but why send home letters on a subject with which we are all familiar? I maintain that, as usual, the friendly critic is wrong, and that the very reverse is the case. Africa at the present time excites more interest than it has ever done before. All Europe is scrambling for a slice of the Dark Continent, and we have won, as we deserved, the lion's share. There was a time, which many of us can well remember, when men were sick of the Cape and its constant wars with the natives, and its chronic difficulties with the Boers, and the cry

was, 'Let us give up all idea of retaining the colony, and only keep the Cape as a house of call.' Fortunately for us, fortunately for the world, wiser counsels prevailed. 'When I left the Foreign Office, in 1880, nobody thought of Africa,' said Lord Salisbury, in a speech at Glasgow this year. 'When I returned to it in 1885 the nations of Europe were almost quarrelling with each other about the various portions of Africa they could obtain.' Through the Cape we reach the Promised Land; through the Cape we make our way to the gold and diamonds with which nature has plentifully adorned the land; through the Cape we make our way to the fertile land where the chartered company, under the direction of Mr. Rhodes, are going to settle—as fine a district and as rich in minerals and farm produce as any part of the world; through the Cape to where Mr. Booth (I never can call him General) is going to plant his London poor, and to the health resorts where our invalids may be restored to life. From the Cape the Christian missionary starts on his mission to spread civilization and Christianity amidst the tribes now degraded by a filthy and cruel paganism, which ought no longer to defile the face of this fair earth. It is to the Cape that the eyes of the feverish speculator in gold and diamonds most anxiously turn. It is

to the ostrich farms of the Cape that Court ladies look for their fairest ornaments. There is not a soul in the United Kingdom but somehow or other is connected with the Cape, and while the disappointed ones come home, the young and the eager and the hopeful are ever pushing on to make a gigantic fortune or to die in some rude hut far, far from home and friends. And all is changing. What is truth to-day is the reverse to-morrow, and it is only by means of the newspaper that the stay-at-home traveller is posted up to date. In writing this I tell no well-worn story. In attempting to describe place and men and manners as they are, I venture on novel ground. As Sir Frederick Young remarked in a paper read not long since before the Royal Colonial Institute, 'the development and growth of all our great colonies is so remarkable, and the changes in their condition so phenomenal, that there is room for their history constantly to be rewritten whenever a fresh opportunity occurs.' This is especially the case with South Africa. Hence I follow with unequal steps my betters. The dwarf on the giant's back can see further than the giant himself. I have this great advantage over them, that I have a later outlook, though I am not a Trollope nor a Froude.

A word or two ought to be inserted here for the benefit of the health-seeker. An authority on the subject, Mr. Arthur Fuller, writes there are a large number of people who have perhaps an hereditary predisposition to consumption, and suffer from chest weakness, manifesting itself principally during the winter in England by prolonged cold settling in the chest, and being got rid of with difficulty, leaving behind a cough which lingers perhaps for months. Such persons, as we all know, are on the verge of consumption, and every winter they spend in the cold damp climate of England is a source of danger to them, which only too frequently proves eventually fatal. To the wealthier classes change is easy, and they should not scruple to avail themselves of it. They cannot do better than come out to South Africa and take advantage of its climate. They should leave England in September or October, before the winter commences. If they are energetically inclined and in sufficiently good health, nothing can be more invigorating than a course of climbing and mountaineering, either in the immediate vicinity of Cape Town, or making the village of Ceres their headquarters, from either of which places the most delightful of walking trips or mountain excursions can be taken. Again, we read

the Orange Free State stands out prominently as one of the finest climates probably for the treatment of phthisis in the world. Dr. Symes Thompson, in a paper read before the Colonial Institute, says as much, and adds the South African winter climate is more healthy for most invalids than the Australian. The Doctor remarks : ' That the climate is favourable to the development of the genus homo is shown by the fact that the descendants of the early Dutch settlers, who have been in the colony for two hundred years, are among the largest and most robust of men. It is not unusual to see men from six feet four inches to six feet six inches, not lanky, weedy, or ill-grown, but with bone and muscle more than proportionate to their height.' The great Karoo district, as I well know, is dry enough for anybody or anything, but I fancy it will not be long before that is cut up into building lots or small farm allotments. One of the chief charms of South Africa, go where you will, is, to my mind, the brightness of its sun and the clearness of its skies. That is marvellous to anyone who has been bred up under the influence of our gray, cold, murky climate, and practically it must have a good effect on the spirits and health of the inhabitants of South Africa anywhere.

It was an era in the history of the Cape when the Union Company was formed—a company whose origin is not lost in hoary antiquity, not dating further back than 1853, when it was established for the purpose of carrying mails and merchandise between Southampton and the Cape, hardly at that time the land of promise, the land of gold and diamonds it has since become. Its first operations were of a very modest character. It was to place five steamers on the line: the *Briton*, 491 tons, the *Dane* and the *Norman* 530 each, the *Saxon*, 440 tons, and the *Union*, 336 tons. In 1857 the company got the contract for the conveyance of mails between England and the Cape. The *Dane* was the first steamer sent out under the new arrangement. She was followed shortly after by the *Celt* and the *Norman*, after which it was agreed that the voyage should be undertaken monthly. In time the company carried the mails to Natal and the Mauritius. This last event took place in 1864, when two new vessels were added to the fleet, and in order to meet the increasing trade and importance of the district a bi-monthly service between England and the Cape was established.

Everybody now goes to South Africa. It is the pleasantest trip out of England—not so far as

Australia, nor on so stormy a sea as that restless North Atlantic, which ever divides the Old World from the New. It is often the case that a passenger who takes his passage to Madeira is so comfortable on board that he continues his trip to the Cape or Natal and back. Then think of the ever-increasing crowd of invalids who constantly are on their way to South Africa to escape our bitter east winds and gray skies in search of health. No wonder, then, that our great companies are ever building new and finer steamers to run between London or Southampton and the Cape. The Union Company has added to its fleet the *Scot*, the twentieth steamer on its list, which made its first trip on the last Saturday in July, and which is the finest, the largest, and the swiftest yet known. To such an extent does it annihilate time and space, that it is expected to accomplish the journey in fourteen days. Science seems now to have accomplished its climax, and the power of steam can no further go—at any rate, as far as the present time is concerned. What new discoveries may be in store, what those who come after us may achieve, it is, of course, impossible to foretell. Once upon a time, as I was coming into Liverpool on board a Cunarder, we met the *Serria* going out. ‘I have been,’ said an old gentleman

standing by my side, 'nearly a hundred times across the Atlantic. I have been seven weeks on the trip, and I have done it in seven days, and I expect in time, by means of electricity, to do it in seven hours.' It seemed to me that the old gentleman was a little over-sanguine. But it is clear if we continue as we have begun, further developments in our steamers may be expected to take place. As it is, the fleet of the Union Company consists of a total tonnage of 54,860, with a horse-power estimated at 60,400—all this, it must be remembered, built within a space of less than forty years.

In 1891 the Union Company surpassed itself by building the *Scot*, which, in the course of the summer, many people went to the Albert Docks to behold. One's first impressions were decidedly favourable, and they were confirmed by subsequent study of the interior. She has two funnels, and I much prefer a big ship with two funnels to one. Her handsome grand saloon—its sides of carved sycamore, and its ceiling richly panelled—is placed on the upper deck, and as the promenade is all round, you are in no danger of an unpleasant experience I once encountered in the Mediterranean, of an angry sea bursting through the port-hole, which had been insecurely

fastened, and drenching everybody seated in that quarter as they were engaged in the pleasant occupation of getting their dinner. Underneath are the first-class sleeping cabins, richly furnished and well lighted and airy, even the under ones, which at times I have found to be dark and dolorous in the extreme. One special feature of the *Scot* is her large deck cabins for one person only. Beyond these are marble baths and a lavatory, all easy of access. The music room is a superb department, and the ladies' saloon deserves similar praise. As to the smoking-room—which is placed amidships, and not over the screw, as I have known it on some ships, where the noise in bad weather is often so great that you can scarce hear a word, and are tossed about in the most uncomfortable manner—it is to be questioned whether it can be surpassed as regards comfort and luxury by any steamship or sailing ship plying from the port of London; and this is a matter of no little moment when you remember how much the tedium of a long sea voyage is relieved by tobacco and whist. The second-class apartments are further on, and if the traveller cannot be comfortable in them, surely the fault must be his own, and not that of the company, who have so efficiently catered for his wants. But I

must add I was greatly surprised in the third-class cabins, placed aft, which are full of improvements, such as the washing apparatus and the little stands well supplied with decanters of water. Indeed, such is the comfort in the steerage that only a very few years ago the accommodation provided would have been amply sufficient for a first-class passenger. Everywhere there is a plentiful supply of electric lights and bells, and in case of danger or accident the *Scot* carries sixteen boats, ten of which are lifeboats. Four of these boats are Berthon's largest sized patent collapsible boats, which were found on a recent trial to be capable of carrying seventy people each. Altogether, accommodation is provided for 208 first-class passengers, 100 seconds, and 100 thirds, and the number of the latter can be increased by many hundreds should occasion require. As oil is said to calm the troubled waves, it is as well to add that a good supply of oil is included in the ship's stores. Lord Randolph seems rather to object to the commissariat department. I can only say that as regards the Union Company's ships or those of the Castle Line, I have never heard a complaint on that head. Indeed, over-eating on board, from the number of seductive dishes served up at table, is one of the chief things it

behoves a passenger who wishes to enjoy good health to be on his guard against.

Let me add a few further particulars. The *Scot* is by far the largest steamer that has yet been constructed for the South African mail service. Her length on the water line is 400 feet, her length over all is 502, and her gross tonnage is 6,850 tons. She is built entirely of steel, and on the cellular bottom principle. She has fourteen bulkheads, ten of which are carried to the upper deck. The *Scot* is fitted with two sets of triple expansion engines, built by Denny and Co., which are expected to develop 12,000 horsepower. There are six boilers, constructed of the best Siemens Martin mild steel. The builders took especial care in designing her aft end, and the brackets for carrying her twin propellers, as well as the stern frames, are of enormous strength. Every portion of the structure—such, for instance, as the plates for water tanks, which are usually separate—has been worked into the general structure of the hull, thus materially adding to its strength. The promenade deck is 237 feet long, thus affording the first-class passengers plenty of room for exercise and athletic sports, so much in vogue on these ships, and so essential for the physical well-being of all. One of

the most popular resorts on board a modern steamship is the barber's shop, and that of the *Scot* is quite worthy the rest of the apartments. On the trial trip a speed of nineteen knots an hour was obtained. The only disadvantage is that for many of the passengers the run will be too quick. Life at sea on board a first-class steamer is indeed worth living.





CHAPTER II.

The Thames in Winter—Dartmouth—Lisbon—Madeira—The
Canary Islands—General Joubert—Swazieland—Mr. Webb
—A Mother Carey Chicken—Incidents of the Voyage—
Arrival at the Cape.

WHATEVER you do, avoid the Thames in winter. Nothing was more wretched than the appearance of everything as we were warped out of the East India Docks, and slowly made our way into the highway of the Thames. It was snowing, and everything looked cheerless and uncomfortable, and the little black band of friends on the wharf, who waited to see us off, and to give us a parting cheer, seemed miserable enough, and all the more so to me as I had been spending a pleasant half-hour in the captain's cabin, where we were all very gay. Then came a night of darkness and cold such as I had never before experienced. It was an effort for anyone to seem cheerful, even

when we sat down to one of the good dinners always served up on board the *Roslin Castle*. On the deck promenading was especially unpleasant, as the icy blast of winter seemed to have marked us for its own, and then all around were lights confusing the eye, and yells from steamers passing and repassing, which by no means added to one's comfort and peace of mind. At one time it was anticipated that we should have to lie at anchor all night. Fortunately, it was not quite so dark when we got to the mouth of the Thames. Here we experienced a slight tossing, which had no effect on a seasoned vessel like myself, but which sent all my fellow-passengers to bed at an early hour, and left me alone in my glory to wade through one of Wilkie Collins's impossible novels. In due time I retired to my cabin, which, fortunately, I had all to myself, but where I unsuccessfully wooed nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep. It was too bitterly cold to sleep. I heaped everything on the bed I could find, except my trunk, but in vain. King Frost was master of the situation, and froze the genial current of my soul. I should never advise the traveller to go down the Channel in mid-winter. It is better far to take the train at Paddington, and get on board one's ship at Southampton or Plymouth, as the

case may be; and yet I must own, after a dolorous night, we had a bright sun on the morrow which made Dartmouth look more cheerful than ever as we slowly made our way into its picturesque harbour. I found a genial friend ready to welcome me and to fatten me up with real Devonshire cream—a very different thing to the article retailed in London under that name.

Dartmouth, with its green hills, seemed lovely to the eye that has looked too long on snow. It is little changed since I was here last. The saintly Flavel's old church, I am sorry to say, has been renovated. Sir Edwin Arnold has sold his pleasant house and is living in Japan, and the antique old houses, which are the glory of the town, are being replaced by new ones, which may be more convenient, but which are not so well worth looking at. We are leaving in a fog. Our numbers have been increased by the arrival of passengers by the London train. We have also an extra mail, for ours is the first ship which has gone out since the postage to the Cape—thanks to Mr. Henniker Heaton—has been reduced from fourpence to twopence halfpenny—a step in the right direction, which may lead one day, possibly, to the realization of an oceanic penny postage. I

ask the officers how far into the Channel the fog will follow us, but they give me little hope. Never mind—

‘If I stoop

Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God’s lamp
Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom ; I shall emerge one day.’

The lines, if I remember aright, are Browning’s—perhaps you may doubt it, as they are really intelligible. Altogether, the prospect is not cheering for the Bay of Biscay. Unfortunately for my peace of mind, I read a letter in the *Western Morning News* from Mr. Whitley, of the Meteorological Society. He writes, and I quote it for the benefit of those whose business is on the deep waters, referring to severe storms in January: ‘In a paper read to the Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, I endeavoured to examine the meteorological elements of these storms, and I came to the following conclusions: The cold, especially when accompanied by snow and continued frost, is, in the South-west of England, a storm-breeder, and after severe cold of many days’ standing in winter, heavy gales may be expected, and when at such times northerly winds shift to east and west a storm is near, and other things being equal, the force

of the storm will be in proportion to the amount of difference in temperature between the cold air of the land and the warm air of the sea.' If the wind veers to the south, Mr. Whitley writes, sailors should keep a sharp look-out. I show this letter to one of our officers, and his comforting reply is, 'That is so.' Not very cheering that. However, in my humble opinion, there is many a worse place in bad weather than a well-found steamer under the control of a good captain, and managed by a good crew.

I believe I said that no one should sail down the Channel in the winter season. Let me add that no one should go for pleasure to the Cape at this season of the year. It is not as regards the Cape as it is with respect to Australia, that you can secure a calm passage almost all the way if you select the right time; but the fact is, January and February are the worst months of the year, and the voyager should avoid them as much as possible. I am sure all of us would have enjoyed our trip all the more, so far, had we chosen any other month. To begin with, we were caught in the storm which was predicted by the meteorologist of the West, and never have I seen a rougher sea than that which we encountered between Lisbon and Madeira—that isle which is so

dear to the English in delicate health. It confined me to the saloon all the time, as I had no wish for broken bones. It sent all the young ladies, whose bright eyes at dinner outshone the electric light, to their cabins. Only one female made her appearance, a grim and gaunt woman of uncertain age—the sort of woman the intending emigrant or tourist should marry. Beauty, my dear boy, I would say to such an one, is only skin deep; choose in a wife what will wear well. Look at me and take warning. My wife cannot stand the sea, and, unfortunately, when I travel I have to go alone. Had I married that sweet virgin of cast-iron, I should have had someone to share my anxieties and heighten my joys as I make my perilous way across the mighty deep. The storm seemed to affect us all. I never heard the wind roar louder than it did last night, and even the ‘fiddles,’ which by way of precaution had been utilized in the saloon, failed to answer their purpose, and plates and glasses, and cups and saucers, slipped about in wild disorder, scattering their contents wherever they were not wanted, and staining the snowy tablecloths of the saloon with all the colours of the rainbow. At my own table, out of eight, but two put in an appearance yesterday; and even this morning, under the

genial influences of the Madeira climate, and a less boisterous sea, the number of absentees is very large. At Madeira, in addition to a few passengers, we land a solitary specimen of the Portuguese soldier—apparently no formidable foe—and a packet of Dr. Koch's lymph, which I saw last week entrusted as a precious deposit to the captain's own particular care. You will be glad to hear that as soon as we got out of the foggy Channel and got into the Bay of Biscay we went along splendidly. It is said of a certain gentleman that he is not so black as he is painted. I am sure that it is so as far as the dreaded Bay of Biscay has been concerned, the terrors of which have been much exaggerated for sensational purposes. I remember once hearing of a ship-owner who had a crack steamer which encountered successfully a severe storm. An enterprising artist took it into his head to depict it in all the agony of its combat with the winds and waves. He took it to the ship-owner, expecting to find him ready to purchase the picture and have it engraved. 'Have it engraved?' replied the ship-owner, 'not if I know it! I should never get a passenger were the public to see that painting.' The Bay of Biscay, alas, is not private property. It can hurt no vested

interests to have it depicted in the most fearful colours by sensationalist writers, whose aim is, let us hope, to tell the truth—but, alas! in too many cases, a good deal more.

Lisbon—alas! the steamers don't call there now—in the streets of which Camoens begged for his bread, and in the cemetery of which Dr. Doddridge and Fielding are buried, ought to have a chapter to itself. It is worth all that has been written about it, though I had to pay 300 Reis for a ticket to take me there and back; but when you remember that 300 Reis is but the equivalent of an English half-crown, you will admit that it is not such an extravagant price after all. As it was, I did better than some fifteen of my fellow-passengers, who chartered a boat to take them ashore at a shilling a head. Alas! they made nothing by their bargain, economical as they deemed it. They had to come back by the tug along with me, and each paid two shillings and sixpence for the return, thus spending a shilling more than I did. But they and all of us were charmed with Lisbon, which is built on a lofty hill or series of hills, overlooking the broad waters of the Tagus, as grand a piece of water as you can see anywhere. I have, I own, but a poor opinion of the Portuguese. Perhaps

old Cobbett prejudiced me against them. I have too vivid a remembrance of his description of a Portuguese love-making in his 'Letters to a Young Man,' almost too disgusting to be tolerated. And yet you scarce pass a square—and Lisbon seems all squares—in which you do not find a marble monument, to show how a grateful country venerates its heroes. It is curious to note how all these heroes lived ages ago. It is old-fashioned to quote Tom Campbell, nevertheless, I own his lines recur to me :

'What are monuments of bravery
Where no public virtues bloom?
What avail in land of slavery,
Trophied temple, arch, and tomb?'

They want to fight England. Let them pay her back what they owe her, when we helped Portugal to retain her national freedom and her national life.

Lisbon rejoices in fine houses, as if they never expected to see another earthquake; houses richly ornamented on the outside—pargetted, I think they call it, with what look like plates of red or blue or yellow tint, as at the great central railway-station; but in many of the adjacent squares the houses are all pure white, and they look much better than these more fantastically ornamented ones. The market is a

magnificent one, and admirably supplied, and it is there that you see the people of the district in every variety of costume, and even in the depth of winter all of the gayest character. For instance, a porter's trousers of blue will be mended with a bit of chintz of the gaudiest character, and a boy in rags will wear a red or blue Phrygian wool cap as gaudy as any he can find. The women are equally fond of gay colours, and a market woman will have a blue shawl over her head, a bright-coloured bodice or petticoat, and stockings which do not match, but which at any rate are gay. In some of the less important streets the drains drip into the road from the outside of the houses. The streets are full of life, and the carts drawn by mules ever come and go. The hotels are decent and not dear. One could spend pleasantly a week in Lisbon. Away from the Tagus, the streets are dark and lofty, evidently intended to keep out the sun; but the sanitary arrangements of the city are abominable. The Portuguese of to-day are as dark as gipsies and poorly built. We have nothing to fear from them, though I did see a great map of Africa over the porch of a theatre, which represented Portugal as having a large extent of territory in that Dark Continent—a continent which they have kept

dark and handed over to the slave-owners for many a long day. I left Lisbon with regret. On a fine day, says the captain, it looks like an earthly paradise, but the day I was there it rained. Nevertheless, the climate is pleasant after that of London. It was the depth of winter in England, yet here the weather was quite warm.

In due time we arrived at Madeira, which looked pleasant enough in the sunshine after all the cold weather we had at sea. But at Madeira everyone is grumbling—the natives because they have had so few English this season, the English because the weather has been so bad. Madeira did not particularly take my fancy. The white houses climbing up the brown rocks appeared pleasant, but it must be terribly monotonous living up there, though I hear good reports of the accommodation provided for visitors. The native wine, according to all accounts, is very bad.

As to the town of Funchal itself, little can be said in its favour. As a matter of course, the arrival of the *Roslin Castle* led to a tremendous invasion on the part of the natives, who took possession of one side of the ship's deck for the display of their wares, consisting chiefly of netted silk shawls and embroidered

articles, of which I am no judge, but which, from all I could make out, could be purchased as cheaply almost as in London. The deck chairs, however, to be bought in Madeira are better and cheaper than the article you can get at home, and I should advise the traveller to delay the purchase of his deck chair till he gets to Madeira, and then to offer the eager salesman about half what he asks. The gold rings, with the signs of the zodiac, on sale are interesting as souvenirs to give to friends, but are not particularly cheap; and as to the boys who dive for coins, they are not to be compared for an instant with the curly-headed, dark-eyed, glistening little imps, whose tricks and winning ways at Aden charm every spectator. I should be sorry to send a lonely, delicate invalid to Madeira. The way to the sunny spot is not a pleasant one. The chances are you have quite as much tossing as the nerves of an invalid can stand. There is, I believe, fine country in the interior, with grand views; but from the ship you see nothing of that, and, like the Canary Islands, through which we soon sailed, everything looks brown and bleak and bare, something like the old rocks on the grand old coast of Scotland. Indeed, I tried to fancy Funchal presented somewhat the appearance of Rothesay; but

I fear the good people of that truly lovely spot would not feel flattered by the comparison. One thing I must say for Madeira, its custard apples were delicious, and its bananas and guavas were not bad, but its mangoes were a dreadful failure; in fact, the worst I have ever seen. Of its gorgeous flowers we had ample evidence everywhere; they put, alas! our fair damsels—and we had a decent lot of them on board—quite in the shade. In about twenty hours after leaving Funchal we search for the famous peak of Teneriffe in vain. It is nowhere visible; there is a heavy cloud on the top. It is needless to state that on the last voyage the Peak was plainly to be seen, and looked grand, rising up into the blue sky with its cap of snow. Some people are always unfortunate as regards such things. If they go anywhere it was fine the day before, though, unfortunately, on your arrival it is cold and wet. I am one of that unfortunate class. I have no doubt but that the passengers by the next boat of the Company will have a fine view of the Peak and Teneriffe. The islands belong to Spain, but I question whether they are of much use to her or to anyone else. It is getting the custom to come back by one or other of the Castle steamers and stop a

little while at the islands. One of them has, I hear, a very good hotel.

As I have said, we have passed the Canary Islands, and I must remark that the unfortunate invalid who finds himself dull at Madeira must find them infinitely duller. From the sea they are simply uninviting. Las Palmas, the port and capital, is situated on the north-east part of the island of Great Canary, and is built on a narrow plain, which lies at a distance of about 300 yards from the sea, rises abruptly to the height of 200 feet, and thence the land runs back to the interior for three or four miles, perfectly destitute of vegetation. The port is four miles from the town, and between them stretches a yellow sand, affording good opportunity for bathing. There come to the port steamers from all parts and of all nationalities for coaling, and the number is increasing yearly, as the sheltered position of the port admirably adapts it for such a purpose. The highest temperature is recorded in October, the lowest in March, but even then it is higher than that of the British Isles. One of the disadvantages of the place is the wind, with its accompanying dust. The great advantage of the climate is that outdoor exercise may be taken nearly every day throughout the winter.

But then the invalid has little or nothing to amuse him. At the present time Las Palmas boasts three English hotels and two Spanish, formed to be patronized by visitors; but of none of them have I heard very much praise. It may be that a few patients are benefited, especially if consumptive; and the medical man of the place writes: 'Asthma, chronic bronchitis, and chronic rheumatism are often benefited whilst residing here.'

We have not yet reached summer seas, though in a few days we shall be at Cape Verd. Winter clothing is no inconvenience at present. The winds are strong and cool, and this morning, as I was promenading on the lower deck, I caught a shower bath four times, and I am still damp, though I have come down into the saloon to write and dry. I own I was rather fearful of the heat, but at present we have had no heat to do anyone harm.

We have some interesting passengers on board. In a large company, however mixed, you are sure to find such. Of these the principal is General Joubert, the famed leader who beat back the English expedition and made the Transvaal an independent Republic.

As I was trying to make a Portuguese official in the

fine post-office at Lisbon understand my need of a post *carte*, I heard myself addressed familiarly in the well-known accents of the tongue that Shakespeare spoke—with this difference, that there was in the speaker's pronunciation a slight mixture of what I have heard called the sweet Doric of the North. My friend, however, was not a Portuguese—in fact, he was a Scotch M.P., famed for the rather advanced opinions to which he owes his seat in Parliament: it was Dr. Clark, the M.P. for Caithness. 'What are you doing here?' he said. 'I am off to the Cape,' was my reply. 'Oh,' said he, 'you will have General Joubert for a fellow-passenger. I have just left him.' When I returned to the *Roslin Castle* I found the General, with his wife and son and daughter, peacefully taking tea. As he sits at my table, I tell him I was one of the Transvaal Committee, and wrote a pamphlet which all my South African acquaintances told me would ensure me the proud distinction of being tarred and feathered as soon as I landed at Cape Town. The General and myself are soon on the best of terms. I tell him an Englishman, with the exception of keeping the Sabbath, is like the Scotchman, who keeps whatever he can lay his hand on. 'Oh no,' says the General with a smile, 'the

Scotchmen are not like that. But,' continues the General, 'I like the English, and wish to be friendly with them.' 'Well,' I said, 'you managed to make us familiar with your name.' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'I did very little. That was a small affair.' 'Well,' said I, 'you only did what you had got to do.' 'That was what I felt,' was his reply, as we walked down together to breakfast in the saloon. No one on board looks less like a *militaire* than the General. Indeed, he does not look half so much of a general as Mr. Booth. Emerson says every hero becomes a bore at last. As regards the General, Emerson is decidedly wrong.

General Joubert looks more like a plain farmer than a mighty man of war. He is a deeply religious man, and holds that the Lord was on his side. He seemed to pass his time chiefly in reading religious works and newspapers. Now and then I caught him droning out some old Dutch psalm to his wife as they were seated together in a quiet corner. He had been to London to see if he and the British Government could not settle the question of Swazieland. The Boers want it, and the English say it belongs to them, and that the people have no wish to be under the Boers. Swazieland covers an area of

8,000 miles. It is described as possessing a mountainous boundary, and an interior combining hills, long stretches of choice arable land, and well-wooded flats. Roughly speaking, it is bounded on the north by the Transvaal and part of the M'nanga mountain range; on the south by the Transvaal and Zingias country; on the east by the Lombobo mountains; and on the west by the Umgenya mountains and the Transvaal. The climate is healthy, and although hot in summer is fresh and bracing during the winter months. Game is plentiful. It abounds in timber of good quality, and is also wonderfully rich in gold. The whole of the country has been granted in concessions for farming, grazing, mining, etc.; and here is the difficulty, as the Boers who hold the farms are disturbed by the miners, who want the soil underneath the farms. By the convention entered into between the British Government and the South African Republic in 1884, the independence of the Swazies within the boundaries of Swazieland, as laid down in the convention, was fully recognised. The Swazies—there are some 60,000 of them—are the most warlike of all the Kaffir tribes in South-east Africa, and have ever been consistent allies of England. Their army took part against the Zulus in

the struggle of 1879, and in the same year they materially contributed to the success of the British army against Secocoeni. According to General Joubert, they would have been swept away on one occasion had not the Boers come to their rescue. One morning I said to the General that his countrymen ought to get hold of Delagoa Bay. The General was quite indignant. 'Never,' said he warmly; 'never will I fight against the Portuguese. They were the first to become our friends.' The General is reputed to be very wealthy; nevertheless, he is said to live in all the simplicity of his people, who are little altered, as regards their manners and customs, by all the wealth that has been poured in upon them of late. When he left the steamer, one of my fellow-passengers said to me: 'It will be long before he gets such good dinners as he has had on board the *Roslin Castle*.' Nevertheless, I never saw anyone so tired of the sea and so anxious to be on shore as the General. He is of Huguenot descent, but the French sparkle has long died out or given way to the Boer influences. When I congratulated him on his French extraction, he did not seem to think much of it. 'I am an Africander,' was his reply; 'I belong to the Transvaal.' And the Boers may well be proud of their only

general. I hear that the Boers do not shoot so well as formerly, when they had to depend upon the gun for their daily supply of food. It was the custom of the old Boer to try his son as a shot, whip in hand. Two shots were allowed the boy; if he failed on the second, down came the whip on the poor lad's back—let us hope only for that once.

Another interesting personage on board was Mr. Webb, the friend of Livingstone and the owner of Newstead Abbey, a Yorkshireman, and physically one of the finest men I ever saw. He is a coal proprietor, and is said to draw £20,000 a year from his mines. Yet even he was not happy: he suffered much from tic douloureux and a pipe that was always getting blocked up. A pipe that does not draw is a nuisance that might tire out the patience of a Job. Mr. Webb is a frequent passenger to the Cape in order to escape our English winters. It is said that he will have to rebuild the old abbey, as the foundations are in danger from the mining operations carried on underneath. That will be a pity, for the house of a poet of the Byron stamp must be sacred to many eyes. Mr. Webb was accompanied by his daughter, a young lady almost as tall as her papa. In these degenerate days it is well to see such people, to remind us of what

men and women under favourable conditions may become. There are dwarfs enough in Central Africa; it is a pity to breed them at home.

We have now entered on the most monotonous part of our trip. We expect to see no land, whether of white sand or barren rock or green hill, till we reach the Cape. One morning we had a slight sensation while at breakfast by the appearance of a postman apparently with a bag full of letters. The mystery was soon explained. Captain Robinson has a little fair-haired daughter, whom he has brought out for the benefit of her health—an object I was glad to find subsequently was completely attained. The young lady was to have an ‘At Home,’ and that packet of letters consisted of invitation cards to all the passengers. We have on Sunday morning sermons; the preacher is a Canon of the Episcopal Church, and the mischief of it is that he is a second-class passenger. How, I ask, can a second-class traveller succeed as a preacher among my fellow-passengers, who all travel first-class, and who seem to me to have great ideas of wealth, and whose intellects, capacious as they are, all seem to run in that direction? The idea is absurd. I think the Canon ought to have come out in the first cabin. There are very few in

the second-class, and scarcely any in the third. We have the usual committee to get up the usual conventional amusements. I have kept out of it. It is enough for me to rest and be thankful. But the young ladies must have their dances, and a certain amount of organization may be necessary. What I miss is the barber's shop, always placed near the baths, so that while waiting for one you may step in and have a chat. Besides, the barber has a general stock of nostrums, and you are sure to find yourself destitute of something with which you ought to have supplied yourself when on shore. I believe in the *Dunottar Castle*—the pride and ornament of the Castle Line—they have a barber; here we have only a bar.

For the sake of gentlemen of leisure who, as I hope many will, would follow in my steps, or of invalids on their way to some South African sanatorium, I would say a word or two about clothing. A wise man will take as little luggage as he can, and therefore it is the more important that that should be of the right character. Before leaving England I asked a gentleman what kind of weather I had a right to expect. His reply was, 'You will have two warm days at the equator, and at the Cape you will find the climate like that of our English autumn.' As my informant

had lived in South Africa long, I attached undue importance to his reply, and consequently failed to furnish myself with a sufficient amount of light summer clothing. This was a great blunder, as we had more than two warm days at the equator, and after we had crossed the line the sun was very hot all the way to the Cape. At any rate, the heat was at no time overpowering like that of the Suez Canal, or the Red Sea, or the Indian Ocean, parts where I should at my time of life be afraid to trust myself again. One of the amusing incidents of the voyage was the capture of a beautiful little Mother Carey chicken, a bird it is impossible to bring to England, as it always dies in confinement. It is black, and somewhat of the size of a swallow, with a little dash of white under the tail. It has a small head and a long neck. It seemed wonderfully timid, and I was glad to find that it was soon set free again. The black in the back seemed to me brownish, as if the sun and sea-spray had dimmed its brightness. The odd part of the affair is that it flew on to a lady's head and was caught there. It is rare a lady's head does so much mischief; as a rule, I have found that a lady's face is generally the more powerful attraction. But there is no accounting for taste!

Our Captain Robinson, I must say, of all the captains with whom I have sailed the stormy main, is by far the best I have ever known for organizing amusements of all kinds, and his advertisements of such matters are some of them full of fun and wit. One of the greatest successes of all was a character ball, which was held towards the end of the voyage, and it was quite wonderful to me where all the fancy dresses came from. Some of them were clever enough to have made a sensation anywhere. One of the conditions in connection with the ball was that each guest was to send a reply to his or her invitation in verse, which were all read out in the course of an afternoon tea. It was amusing to watch the throes of the would-be poets. Some succeeded, others failed. I was not present at the reading, but several who were told me there was one copy of verses very much applauded, and truthfulness compels me to add they were mine.

One of the best entertainments we had on board was a mock Judge and Jury in the saloon, in which a major in the Army, admirably dressed and in official costume, performed the solemn duties of his exalted position with a mock dignity that was vastly amusing. To my great amusement, when I dropped in—which

I really did accidentally—I found I was being prosecuted for the publication of a book of Australian travel, which was said to be full of treason against our gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. Fortunately, after an able defence by a leading member of the Bar, I was acquitted; but I fancy that was mainly owing to a terrible threat uttered by the Judge in his severest manner, to the effect that if the jury could not come to a speedy decision he would have to order them to be shut up by themselves till they had read the unfortunate performance through. The jury of ladies and gentlemen gave in at once, and I was free.

One of the questions I have often discussed is as to which is the safer—a steady ship or one that rolls. It seems to me that they are equally disagreeable in bad weather; but, says one of the officers, a ship that rolls is the safer, as the rolling of the ship clears the water off, whereas in a steady one it may remain, and the ship may founder. If this be so, we in the *Roslin Castle* have had every reason to congratulate ourselves. We had a head wind for some days, which impeded our progress, and made us late; but as we got within a few hundred miles of the Cape that left us, and we had one on our beam instead, and we had quite enough rolling—a rolling

which made my sides ache, which prevented me from attempting to walk the deck, and which confined me mainly to the saloon, which is not pleasant when the weather is warm, as it chanced to be, and the port holes were closed. The young people on board like the rolling, and think it fine fun. I do not; but it is really astonishing how easily young people are amused. Fortunately, the sea is lovely to look at. Nothing can be brighter or bluer. And then there are the stars—

‘Whoever looked upon them shining,
And turned to earth without repining;
Nor wished for wings to flee away
And mix with their eternal ray?’

But it is really singular how much in favour this ‘round trip,’ as it is called, seems to be with English people. Many of my fellow-passengers have come for it, and it alone. A couple of them are ladies—one of them a married one, who seems to take the whole thing as calmly as if she had simply taken a passage on board a Thames steamer for a day at Gravesend or Rosherville. She has left her husband and her home, and, with no one to look after her, takes a voyage from which her father and mother would have shrunk with terror and alarm. With the com-

forts of our modern steamers nothing is easier. You pay your passage, and you have no more bother till you come back. On the Donald Currie line, as on most others, the officers are gentlemen, and behave as such; and ladies, single or married, old or young, good-looking or the reverse, are well looked after. Other passengers are middle-aged men, who seem to have nothing to do but to escape our English winter. Of course a great number of Germans are on board. They are the Scotch of Europe, always anxious to better themselves, always ready to leave their Fatherland, always eager to turn an honest penny. Most of them seem to have done well at the Cape and the Transvaal. They are no match for the young men we get turned out from our public schools as athletes, and we have some fine specimens of these on board; but in business, and in the art of making their way, I fear our English young men stand no chance with them. At any rate, I would prefer to back the Teuton. It is true he is more sentimental than an Anglo-Saxon, but he does not let his sentiment interfere with his money-making. As I write, one of them, a big, yellow-haired fellow, more than six feet, and by no means a lad, is composing poetry to Frau and kindred far away; but he has done good

work in all parts of the world, and at any rate has got butter to his daily bread : and yet he has been writing poetry all the morning. The German woman differs even more from her English sister. There is a German lady on board who would fain have me play chess with her. I dare not, the sweet old maid is so full of gush.

At length we are at the Cape, and to-night I am writing in quiet in the harbour, and all the noise and tumult of the winds and waves and steam-engine and screw are things of the past. Yesterday at this time it was all I could do to sit on deck—walking was quite out of the question. To-night there is not a ripple on the water—not a sound in the air ; while over us is an Italian sky, along which the silver moon in beauty makes her way. We sighted Table Mountain, rearing its giant head in the clouds, about three hours before we reached it. It was an impressive scene. On our left was a dim outline of land, and before us the mountain, which, like another Gibraltar, has testified the greatness of the British Empire to many an age, and which to the storm-tossed mariner has been a welcome sign of a haven of rest. As we drew nearer the outline became more clear and better filled up.

The Table Mountain at first seemed to be the end of a long chain. Then we saw it, as it were, guarded by a mountain peak on either side. Now it looks much smaller, while at the base stretches the ancient city for many a mile. It does not strike one as an imposing place. As a builder, man cannot compare with the Creator—with Him who stretched out the heavens as a curtain and laid the foundations of the earth, and holds the waters in the hollow of His hand. Our arrival had been long expected, and as we made fast to the quay there was quite a crowd of anxious friends, who rushed on board, and were received with what our French friends term effusion. I had written to an old colleague of mine on the *City Press*, who had planted himself under the Southern Cross, but whether he was alive or dead I knew not, nor even where he lived. However, my letter had found him. There was a letter for me as soon as we had come to anchor, intimating that in consequence of official duties he could not come to meet me, but expressing the hope that I would at once take a cab and drive to his house, where everything was prepared for me, and where he hoped that I would stay as long as I liked, an invitation which I shall certainly accept on my return from Natal. It

will be a treat indeed to grasp the warm hand of a friend once more. One has many acquaintances, but friends, alas ! are rare. After a certain age one has a difficulty in making them. However, I am lucky to find one at the Cape. I shall be glad to see him, but I shall be gladder still to bid him good-bye and start for my native land and home again.





CHAPTER III.

Cape Town—The People—The Wine District—The Press—
Religion at the Cape.

I AM sitting on *terra firma* once more. My head is still rolling, but my body is at rest. Last night I could not get a wink of sleep, all seemed so unnaturally calm. All day long there had been a grand fleecy cloud of white on the top of the mountain, and when that is there it means wind. The worst of it is the wind raises the dust, and though in Cape Town the streets are watered, the burning summer sun soon dries up the moisture, and the dust is as bad as ever. If it were not for the dust there would be not a drawback to the enjoyment of the bright days and splendid moonlight nights of a Cape Town summer.

Cape Town to look at is not much of a place. To begin with, it boasts few fine buildings; perhaps the

best are the new Houses of Parliament, which are worthy of the colony, and the offices of the Standard Bank, a noble building in the main street just as you enter from the dock, and worthy of the reputation the bank has attained as the best and most prosperous in the Cape—where just at this time I find it is the fashion of banks to smash up in a manner peculiarly unpleasant to depositors and shareholders. The new Library and Museum in the Avenue is also a fine building. The houses are all yellow and low, most of them with a flat roof; the streets are by no means attractive, nor are there many good shops. Adderley Street is the best in the town, but we should not think much of that at home. Opposite the Cathedral is a monument to Bishop Gray, and in front of the Houses of Parliament is a statue of Queen Victoria—and that is all I see in the way of ornamentation. The best thing in the place is the Avenue, where, surrounded by fine oaks planted by the Dutch two hundred years ago, and for which they deserve honourable mention, you can enjoy the refreshing shade. On one side is the Government House, and on the other the Public Library and the Botanical Gardens, which are shut in from the public on the other side by an ugly wall, which in England would be considered as disgraceful

for a cow-yard. On the other side of that wall is the street where I am staying with my editorial friend, who looks all the better for his sojourn at the Cape. The houses there are pleasant, but directly you step out of them you are in the dust. Apparently it has never entered into the heads of the city fathers that a little bit of concrete or asphalte there would be a grateful boon. I said so to the respected mayor, who quite agreed with me, but intimated that they had a great deal to do, and with very small means. Of one thing Cape Town may be proud: it has no poorhouse. There are no poor there. The workmen find good employment, and at good wages. I have come in contact with many printers who are making their three or four pounds a week. I doubt whether the shop-keeping class are doing so well. The population is not large, and as one said to me, 'If you are doing well for a few years somebody is sure to come and oppose you, thus hurting you, and doing himself no good.' My reply was that was the way of the world all over. The old Dutch element in the place is very strong, and permeates everything. The Dutch element soon overmastered that introduced by the French Huguenots. It will yet, I fancy, in politics, at any rate, prove a match for the Anglo-Saxon.