



W. C. C. del.

XV. ANTILOPE MELAMPUS:- THE PALLAH.

Cephalopus meyersi-The Druiker.

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PLATE XV.

1. ANTILOPE MELAMPUS.—THE PALLAH.

Rooye-bok of the Cape Colonists. *Paala* of the Matabili and Bechuana.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Adult male about three feet four inches high at the shoulder, and six in extreme length. Very light and high on the legs. Horns about twenty inches long, of an angular lyrate tendency; ascending obliquely upwards, outwards, and backwards; and midway at an obtuse angle, obliquely inwards and forwards; brown, coarsely annulated, and striated between for about two-thirds of their length; the rings often splitting into two, and forming prominent nobs on the front only, whilst they become partially, and sometimes altogether obliterated on the sides; the tips smooth and polished. Ears round, seven inches long, tipped with black. Tail thirteen inches long; pointed, white, with a dark brown streak down the middle. Colour of the head, neck, and upper part of the body, deep fulvous or rust colour. Sides and hinder parts yellow dun. Belly white. A dark brown streak down each buttock. A dark spot in place of the spurious hoofs, which do not occur in this species. A large cushion of brown hair between the hock and fetlock. A white spot before each eye. A dark spot between the horns. No trace of a suborbital sinus. Small bare space for a muzzle.

Female similar but hornless. Eye very large, soft, and full. Mammæ two. Gregarious in small families or herds. Inhabits the thinly wooded banks of rivers in the Bechuana country.

2. CEPHALOPUS MERGENS.—THE DÜIKER.

Düiker-bok of the Cape Colonists. *Impoon* of the Matabili.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Adult male about two feet high at the shoulder, and three feet eight inches in extreme length. Limbs solid. Horns four inches long, approximated, nearly parallel, standing a little outwards, with a longitudinal ridge on the front, traversing four or five annuli on the middle, but not traversing the wrinkles of the base. Forehead covered with a patch of long bright fulvous hair, terminating in a pencil. A dark streak down the chaffron. Three dark striæ inside each ear. A dark streak down the front of the legs, terminating in a black fetlock as if booted. Colour various; usually cinereous olive above, and white beneath. Tail eight inches long; black, tipped with white. Pasterns rigid. Spurious hoofs scarcely developed. A long suborbital slit traced down the side of the face, but no external opening visible. A small naked muzzle.

Female similar with very tiny horns, almost concealed beneath the long rufous hair.* Mammæ four. Solitary or monogamous. Common throughout the Colony, and especially so towards the sea-coast among bushes and brushwood.

* The females of the Cephalopine group are represented to be universally hornless; but every female specimen of the düiker that I have seen, possesses short horns, nearly if not totally obscured by the rufous tuft.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PALLAH, AND THE DUIKER.

And now along the grassy meads
Where the skipping Rooye-bok feeds
Let me through the mazes rove
Of the light acacia grove;
Now while yet the honey bee
Hums around yon blossomed tree,
And the pearly pintado calls
With grating cry at intervals;
And the Duiker at my tread
Sudden lifts his startled head,
Then dives affrighted in the brake
Like wild-duck in the reedy lake.

STANDING at the head of the true Antelopes, a model at once of elegance and vigour, the rare and graceful Pallah first gladdens the sight of the traveller in Southern Africa upon the elevated tracts to the northward of Litakoo. After plodding our most uninteresting way for several hundred miles through the barren wastes which lie beyond the Colonial boundary, and gaining at length this more cheerful region, we advance through the wooded slopes and valleys that environ the mountain ranges of Kurrichane and Cashan. There, and especially under the latter, the species is observed, amongst a thousand other novelties, in daily increasing abundance; but still, amid the mimosa groves which trace the serpentine course of the principal rivers, or in some sequestered and thinly wooded vale in their vicinity, only is it to be seen. Rarely do the families consist of more than a dozen or twenty individuals of both sexes, the number of bucks found among the largest groups being usually limited to three or four. Shy, capricious, and secluded in its habits, I can recal few objects more picturesque than the graceful figures of a wanton herd, dancing and bounding through the thousand stems of the airy acacia grove, in all the poetry of motion. Whilst the delicate finish of their limbs is absolutely unrivalled, their soft radiant eyes, fringed, like those of a Persian beauty, with long silken lashes, sparkle with animation. In the exercise of their acute faculties of hearing and smell, they will stop at every whisper, erect their slender necks—toss their light heads—and stamping their taper feet upon the ground, seem ready to catch the faintest and most distant sound. Some are quietly ruminating or grazing in the shade—and the young fawns are tripping sportively at the tufted heels of their dams. Yonder buck with his amorously curled upper lip, and his long knotted horns reaching almost to his dun flanks, is darting like a meteor through the wood by a series of untiring circles, in an abortive attempt to overcome the coquetry of a retreating doe; whilst that knot of active ladies, amusing themselves with the exercise of the skipping rope, are lifting all four feet from the ground at the same time, and occasionally, like the springbok rebounding playfully over each other's backs.

Of the habits of this elegant and retired Antelope, few particulars have hitherto been obtained, and naturalists, I think, have most erroneously stated it to be an inhabitant of the open plain. Although in the course of our wanderings, we visited its head quarters, not one single specimen was observed throughout the champaign country, to which had it even occasionally resorted, it would surely not have escaped the notice of men, whose eyes, from morning until eve, were on the stretch for game. Along the sides of the Cashan mountains, and among the wooded valleys of the Limpopo, in all the favourite haunts of the stately Water-Buck, its red figure was the most frequently observed—several large herds being there resident, out of which no fewer than four bucks were more than once brought in during a single day. The flesh, like that of the tribe generally to which it belongs, although dry, is tender and palatable, and being much patronized by our faithful Zoroastrian domestic, we never let slip the opportunity of realizing a leg for his private consumption. By the Bechuana nations, to whose country it would seem to be entirely restricted, the species is universally recognized under the title of *paala*; whilst the Griquas and Bastaards, who occasionally pursue their hunting avocations to the northward of the Kamhanni mountains, have dubbed it rooye-bok (red buck), in allusion to its prevailing complexion. Professor Lichtenstein, who was the first to notice the animal, conferred the specific nomenclature of *Melampus*, from the singular tufted cushions of dark mealy hair with which the hinder fetlocks are decorated. These occur in no other Antelope, and in the Pallah, remind the spectator of the heels of Mercury, a similitude which its nimble motions are well calculated to sustain. In both sexes the succentorial hoofs are wanting—a brown dot supplying their usual place—and the horns occur in the males only. Gnarled and eccentrically inflected, these are not less remarkable for their angular construction than in their dimensions, and although slender enough, can boast of at least double the length to which, from its delicate and feminine proportions, the wearer would appear to be entitled. The scut, which as a

head ornament is greatly esteemed by the savages, tapers gradually to a point, and instead of being adorned with a terminal tuft, is decorated with a broad streak down its centre, corresponding with a parallel brown stripe on either buttock; whilst the abrupt gradation of colour on the body, descending from rusty red to the purest white, never failed to remind me of the tinted examples given in books which profess to illustrate the art of drawing in water colours.

The smaller Antelope delineated in the annexed plate, is a denizen of the same *locale* as the Pallah; and although claiming from its diminutive stature an extremely limited portion of attention, was yet never neglected when accident placed it in our way. The pair which furnished the originals of this portrait, were on my own shoulders borne three miles to the waggons from one of the central steppes of the Cashan mountains, whither, having gone out alone, I killed the buck as he sat on a projecting ledge—knocking over his disconsolate relict with the second barrel as she stood gazing in mute amazement at her mate's death-struggles. The pasterns of this robust and sturdy little animal, which are singularly rigid, have the appearance of being encased in Blucher's, or ancle boots; two other of its most remarkable features being the long suborbital slit that traverses the whole length of its Roman features, and the pencilled *toupet* of bright fulvous hair arising from the forehead, neither of which occur in any other of the Antelopes. Writers have noticed three distinct species of the Duiker, but the peculiarities in the horns that have led to this division are so trivial, that I should rather feel disposed to place them to the score of age, disease, or accident, few specimens being exactly alike. The animal is extremely common in many parts of the Cape Colony, and on the outskirts of the deep forests which border the sea-coast especially—wherein on my return from the interior I killed several—it is even more abundant than beyond the boundary. Occurring either singly or in pairs, the little dwarf is usually found crouching amid the shelter of bushy localities, and the dexterity with which it seeks to foil its pursuers among the intricacies of these, has gained for it the Dutch soubriquet in which it rejoices. Aroused from its snug *form*, the 'Artful Dodger' clears with one vigorous and elastic bound the nearest bush, and diving low on the other side among the heather and brushwood, continues alternately leaping and plunging whilst it flies straight as a dart to the nearest thicket—before seeking an asylum in which, and not unfrequently also during its retreat, it rises like the hare upon its hinder legs, and having thus reconnoitred the foe above the intervening vegetation, wheels with an impatient sneeze to the right about, and proceeds ducking and bounding as before.

The approved Colonial mode of hunting the Duiker-bok is with dogs—and whilst thus topping the covert, or darting from one copse to another, the little wretch, despite of all its dodging and artifice, is easily slain with a hat full of buck shot discharged from a piece of ordnance of such calibre, that four fingers might be introduced without much squeezing! Like the rest of the Cape venison, the flesh is utterly destitute of fat, a deficiency which the thrifty Dutch housewife seeks to remedy with her usual skill by calling in the aid of a sheep's tail. The animal is often to be seen running tame about the farm houses, but it never ceases, even in a domestic state, to take the note of alarm from the least sound to which it has been unaccustomed—thunder invariably causing it to fly to the nearest shelter in order to hide itself away.

Broadly characteristic is the singular scenery here portrayed of all those African rivers along whose wooded banks the Pallah most delights to roam—and of the Mariqua in particular, where the first herd was observed by our party. It was early in the afternoon when we reached the banks of this long sighed for stream, some thirty miles below the point where it issues from the mountains of Kurrichane. Emerging unexpectedly from an extensive wood of venerable thorn trees we descended by a winding path to a lawn spread with a thick and verdant carpet of the greenest turf. This was succeeded by a belt of drifted sand-hillocks, bordered, in their turn, by a grove of the many-stemmed acacia, which on either hand margined the river far as the eye could reach. Robed in a rich scarf of yellow blossoms, they diffused around the most grateful of odours; and the whole effect was heightened by detached clumps of slender mimosas, hung with fragrant festoons of flowering creepers, under the screen of which, troops of clamorous pintados, and bands of graceful Pallahs were hurrying from our approach. Whilst threading these mazes, a peep of the river itself was suddenly obtained. A deep and shady channel, about twenty yards in width, and flanked with reeds, was lined next the water with an unbroken tier of weeping willows. Leaning 'in pensive guise' over the little stream, their drooping branches would positively have embraced but for the force of the crystal current which, as it foamed and bubbled over the pebbly bottom, swayed them with it. Swarms of new and interesting forms here hold their accustomed retreat; and the grass in the neighbourhood having that very morning been set on fire, the conflagration had caused every straggler in the vicinity to flock to this sanctuary, on the borders of which we accordingly 'set up our staff.'

Silvery and bright peeps Aurora over the scathed and blackened mountain top, moving with her refreshing breath the light leaves of the scented acacias, whose graceful forms, scattered in careless confusion by the hand of nature, are still glistening with the falling dew-drops. The long lines of mimosas resound with the incessant *ceuk ceuk* of the restless pintado, accompanied by the chirruping of a host of smaller birds which are hopping among the fairy foliage, as its tiny leaves quiver to the zephyrs.

Wide waving groves a chequered scene display
And part admit, and part exclude the day;
Fit dwelling for the feathered throng,
Who pay their quit-rent with a song.

Softness and beauty characterize the whole landscape. Each tree admitting through its foliage as much of sun as it casts shadow, there is even in the depth of the grove an airiness of colouring not less graceful than remarkable. Throughout the endless vista of stems scarcely one solitary trunk is to be seen. From every hillock of sand arise a dozen or more slender stems, supporting a canopy of minute leaves, interspersed with golden blossoms—some of the lower branches already in the 'sear

and yellow leaf' of age, having snapped spontaneously in the middle, and dropped their withered heads upon the ground. Ever and anon, as we wind among the more sacred glades, a Duiker springs from the brake, and clearing with a bound the tops of the waving grass, pigmy-like vanishes amid the gloom of an adjacent thicket. Then a flock of slate-coloured pintados may be descried through an opening avenue, busily raking up the earth, and striving by weltering in the dust, to free themselves from a host of parasitic tormentors. Flocks of forty or fifty of the screaming fowls gather as we advance, and precipitately abscond before our path. Elevating their crested heads, they shuffle along in laughable confusion, shaking their hunched backs, and uttering that far from melodious cry with which the ears of all are familiar. Now in their onward progress they have aroused a shy herd of ruminating Pallahs, of which the dun leader comes skipping gallantly to the front, where, with

"airy step and glorious eye,"

he begs leave to inquire, on behalf of a large parcel of mincing females, what may be the cause of this alarm? A crack of the rifle, which lays him sprawling on the red sand, proves the instantaneous reply. Freedom in their looks and independence in their tufted heels, away go the survivors, scampering and galloping amid their native groves. In two seconds more they are both out of danger and out of sight, the mortal remains of their fallen leader being in the mean, time, unceremoniously strapped upon the back of a pack-horse, there to keep company with a Duiker, three brace of guinea-fowl, and a pair of leathern trousers—which latter, having been vacated by the bandy legs of Frederick Dangler—are now crammed full as they can hold of the gigantic eggs of the ostrich.

Africa must be considered the great nursery of the *Numida Meleagris*. Her western shores have always formed the peculiar habitat of the species, which there unite in even much more extensive flocks than we met with in the interior of the continent—flying in large bands, and resorting at stated hours to the neighbouring springs or rivulets, whence at sunset they retire to the woods and perch upon the loftiest trees. The title by which they were generally known to the ancients would render it probable that the specimens first imported into Europe, were brought from Nubia, though the testimony of Varro proves them to have been sufficiently rare before the African coast was visited by Europeans. During the zenith of the Roman empire, the bird was held in the highest estimation, and considered a delicacy at the banquets of the great; but with her decline it became lost altogether in Europe until eventually restored by the Spanish navigators.* To the Dutch Colonists of the Cape, the guinea-fowl is known by the facetious appellation of *Jan Tudentaal*, and in many of the more remote districts, where it is still common, considerable troops are to be found lying among long grass and undergrowth along the dry beds of rivers. Flushed by the farmer's dog, they ascend, whirring like pheasants, high above the tops of the stunted trees; and when weary, not unfrequently perch upon the branches. On our way to Graaff Reinet, we were first treated on Mynheer de Klerck's estate near Somerset, to the to us then novel sport, but subsequently, towards the tropic, a day seldom passed without our seeing them around our bivouac in abundance. The Pintado in its wild state exhibits the fleshy caruncles on the cheeks, and the callous crest on the cranium, rather less developed than in our domestic bird; but it possesses the same lively, restless, and clamorous disposition; the monotonous cry, which has aptly been compared to the creaking of rusty hinges, being often incessant for hours together. Morning and evening the wary troops emerge into the green glades to feed, and about roosting time their wretched noise becomes so perfectly stunning as uniformly to betray the position on which they design to pass the night. Under many of the isolated trees which grow along the river banks in the interior, the ground is absolutely white with their ordure; and although usually difficult to be approached during the day, we could frequently about dusk perceive them flying up in the manner of tame fowls, one after another to their perch, until the loaded branches had become such a positive poultry-house, that the larder might easily be replenished with any number.

* Cuvier.



Head of Pallah, as preserved by Capt. Harris