





W. H. Sturt, del.

VIEW OF CAPE TOWN.

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TRAVELS
AND
ADVENTURES
IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA.

BY
GEORGE THOMPSON, ESQ.

EIGHT YEARS A RESIDENT AT THE CAPE.

COMPRISING A VIEW OF
THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CAPE COLONY.

WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE
PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS OF BRITISH EMIGRANTS.

SECOND EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL BATHURST, K. G.

HIS MAJESTY'S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,

&c. &c. &c.

THESE VOLUMES
OF
TRAVELS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

ARE, WITH PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

SOUTHERN AFRICA has been traversed during the last fifty years by so many travellers, whose works are familiar to the public, that it is a common notion in England that there is nothing relating to that country of any general interest which is not already sufficiently known. This is not, however, the opinion of any person of intelligence who has recently been a resident or visitor at the Cape. The majority of the travellers who penetrated into the interior of the country in former times, were men enthusiastically and almost exclusively devoted to scientific pursuits. Discoveries in Natural History were their paramount objects. Man himself, whether

social or savage, was secondary, in their researches, to a new plant or animal: and as for matters relating to agriculture or commerce, they scarcely entered in any degree into their investigations. Barrow, indeed, was a traveller of views much more enlarged and diversified: his work on the Cape contains an able and luminous sketch of almost all that, in his time, was particularly worthy of notice; and Lichtenstein, likewise a man of general observation, elaborately filled up the outline. But the twenty years that have since elapsed, have produced important changes. The boundaries of the Settlement have been greatly extended; the circumstances of the old inhabitants, both white and coloured, have been much altered; a new population of British subjects has been introduced; the agricultural and commercial capabilities of the Colony have been more accurately ascertained; the geographical features of the interior regions, and the character and relations of the tribes who inhabit them, have been far more extensively investi-

gated:—and all this, and much more, remains undescribed, or but partially described, by succeeding writers.

More recently, Burchell has doubtless added considerably to the previous stock of information both as respects the Natural History of Southern Africa, and the condition and character of some of its native tribes. The work of the “Civil Servant,” published in 1822, contains also much valuable matter, though of a very different description from Burchell’s. A wide field, however, was still unoccupied; and even where other writers had preceded, a variety of important subjects remained to be discussed,—certainly not uninteresting to Englishmen, if a full acquaintance with the dependencies of the empire be considered necessary or desirable.

I have attempted to supply, in some degree, this desideratum: and I trust I may, without presumption, aspire to the approbation of my countrymen for the attempt, whatever may be the imperfections of the execution. My educa-

tion and pursuits have been mercantile, not literary or scientific. I have been a traveller partly from motives of business, partly from the impulse of curiosity. I entertained no idea of becoming an author, until the accumulation of materials, and the recently awakened demand in the Cape Colony for fresh information in regard to its condition and resources, induced me to revise my Notes and Journals, and to select for the press the portions now submitted, with some hesitation to the Public.

Before advertng more particularly to the matters embraced in the following Volume, I may notice cursorily some of my earlier excursions into the country, in order to give the Reader a clearer idea of my principal objects in travelling, and the opportunities I possessed for acquiring correct information on the various subjects I have brought under review.

In January 1821, I made an excursion to Albany (accompanied by my friend Mr. Simpson, of Cape Town,) in order chiefly to examine into

the prospects of the British Emigrants, who had been located there about eight months before, and to ascertain what branches of trade might be most successfully extended in that direction. Having gone by sea to Algoa Bay, we proceeded on horseback from Port Elizabeth (then a hamlet of only three or four houses), by Uitenhage, Graham's Town, and Fort Willshire, to the residence of the Chief Gaika in Cafferland; and returned by Caffer Drift, the Kowie Mouth, Bathurst, Uitenhage, the Lange-Kloof, Knysna, George Swellendam, and Hottentot's Holland, to Cape Town. This excursion, which occupied about six weeks, gave me an opportunity of seeing the districts along the southern coast of the Colony, as far as the Keiskamma River, and of becoming in some degree acquainted, by personal observation, with the character and condition of the various classes of inhabitants,—Boors, Settlers, Hottentots, and Caffers.

I was far from considering myself, however, as yet sufficiently informed on such points, or in

regard to the general resources of the Colony. My curiosity was, indeed, rather excited than gratified; and I gladly availed myself of every new opportunity that offered, compatible with attention to business, of extending my observations. Such an opportunity again occurred in 1822, when, in consequence of the wreck of the ship *Grace*, near Cape Agulhas,* I had occasion to visit that secluded corner, and some of the adjoining districts.

In the latter end of August 1822, I made another circuit through the districts of Swellendam and George. My principal object was to investigate the commercial resources of those districts,—more particularly in regard to the exportation of aloes, a branch of colonial traffic which had at that time begun to assume some importance. I was accompanied by several Cape-Dutch gentlemen of my acquaintance, who possessed estates in that quarter of the Colony; and whose numerous connexions, also, in the wine

* *Vide* Appendix, No. IV.

and corn districts, afforded me a favourable opportunity of examining, on our route, the situation and prospects of these staple branches of colonial industry. After accompanying this party to Elbes-Kraal on the Gauritz River, and through various parts of the adjacent country, to survey the several bays, mouths of rivers, &c. I extended my journey across the mountains, on purpose to visit the remarkable grottoes of Congo, in the Zwartberg, (of which a minute description will be found in a subsequent part of the work,) and returned by Swellendam to Cape Town.

These preliminary excursions, besides the other purposes they embraced, enabled me to collect much statistical information, and prepared me to enter with greater advantage upon the more distant and arduous journeys which I undertook in 1823 and 1824. The details of these latter journeys I need not here anticipate, since the narrative of them occupies almost two-thirds of the book, and their chief objects and results will be found sufficiently explained as the reader

proceeds. A glance at the Table of Contents will show that my visit to the Bechuana country occurred at a most interesting crisis, and enabled me to survey the character of the natives in new and singular points of view, while unveiled by the excitement of extraordinary events.

In describing the present condition of the various Native Tribes, I have, moreover, had the good fortune to find the information acquired in the course of my own researches, corroborated and augmented from several most respectable quarters, which have been duly acknowledged in different parts of the narrative.

The third division of the work comprises a review of the present condition of the Dutch and British inhabitants,—of the agricultural, commercial, and financial circumstances of the country, and of its adaptation for farther Colonization; together with remarks and suggestions on various other matters, which, during an eight years' residence, have fallen under my observation.

An Appendix has been subjoined, in order to

embrace materials, which, however interesting, could not with propriety or convenience be included in the text.

The map, though not quite so complete in regard to the *interior* of the North-eastern regions as I could have wished, will nevertheless, I trust, be found to exhibit the most perfect delineation of the geographical features of Southern Africa that has yet been presented to the public. The whole of the Eastern frontier of the Colony has been carefully reduced from the recent military surveys; and the coast as far as Delagoa Bay compared with the scientific charts of Captain Owen. Cafferland, with its numerous streams and mountains,—the chief branches of the Gariep, so far as they have been traced towards their sources, the names and positions of the various Bechuana and Caffer tribes,—and the general features of the desolate tracts inhabited by the Bushmen and Namaquas,—have been delineated, partly from my own personal observations, partly from sketches furnished by Messrs. Melvill and Brownlee, and

partly from other authentic though miscellaneous materials. In the compilation of the map, I have to acknowledge the valuable aid of Mr. Knobel, Government Surveyor, in Cape Town,—who is already known to the public by his recent map of Albany, upon an extensive scale, and including the locations of the British settlers.

The plans of Cape Town and Graaff-Reinet will speak for themselves. The numerous plates (engraved under the superintendence of Mr. T. Fielding) have been accompanied, wherever it seemed requisite, with explanatory notices. It remains to say a few words of the frontispiece, engraved after an oil painting by my friend Dr. Heurtley.

Though upon so small a scale, this view affords perhaps at once the most accurate and pleasing picture of Cape Town and its environs that has yet been published. The spectator is supposed to stand with his back to Table Mountain, near the grand reservoir, about a mile distant from the sea-shore. The Government Gardens occupy

the space immediately in front. To the left lies the town, half overshadowed by the Lion's Rump, the view being taken about sunset. To the right of the steeple of the Calvinist Church, which appears conspicuously in the centre, lie the Barracks, a long range of buildings, with the Castle immediately adjoining. In the low ground, still farther to the right, may be seen the mouth of the Salt River, an inlet of the sea which forms a swamp for the space of a couple of miles inland. Immediately over this is the high land of the Tigerberg; and directly across the bay, over the anchorage ground, the view is bounded by the Blueberg mountains,—to the left of which the Koeberg terminates the range. The mouth of the bay, with Robben Island at its entrance, is shut out from the view by the Lion's Rump.

The view of Table Mountain from the Parade, supplies some of those remarkable features of our African capital, which Dr. Heurtley's picture could not embrace. For the drawing, as well as for the portraits of the Bechuana Chiefs, Peclu

and Teysho, and various other embellishments of the work, I am indebted to the valuable pictorial aid of Mr. De Meillon. To the worthy old naturalist, Mr. Wehdemann, also, I must express my obligations for furnishing me with several of the drawings of animals which I have introduced.

Such is a brief sketch of the contents of the volume now presented to the public. The author is far from flattering himself that he has fully attained all the objects he aimed at, or that he has not left much for future and more accomplished travellers to supply; but he nevertheless ventures to hope that his work, though but little enriched by science, or embellished by style, will be found to possess at least the interest that plain sincerity may aspire to,—and that the various information he has furnished, may prove, in the present eventful circumstances of our South African possessions, neither unappropriate nor devoid of utility.

GEORGE THOMPSON.

CONTENTS

OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

PREFACE Page v

PART I.

EXCURSION TO THE EASTERN FRONTIER OF THE COLONY,
AND TO THE COUNTRY OF THE BECHUANAS.

CHAPTER I.

Travelling Accoutrements. Village of George. Auteniqua-land. Picturesque Scenery. Wood-cutters. An Ornithologist. The Knysna. Passage across the Centerberg. The Lange-Kloof. Kromme River. Port Elizabeth. Page 3

CHAPTER II.

Bethelsdorp. Uitenhage. Quagga-Flat. Fatal Adventure of the Boor Marè. Theopolis. Beautiful Country. Kowie Mouth. Thornhill Location. Excursion to the Mouth of the Great Fish River. Village of Bathurst. 23

VOL. I.

b

CHAPTER III.

Graham's Town. Journey up the Fish River. Hottentot Herdsman. Somerset Farm. Zwagershoek. Cradock. Thriving Condition of the Graziers.	Page 44
--	---------

CHAPTER IV.

Journey over the Mountains. Description of the Town of Graaff-Reinet. The Landdrost Stockenstrom. Condition of the Sneeuwberg Boors. Journey across the Sneeuwberg ridge to the Northward.	69
--	----

CHAPTER V.

Lions. Deserted Dwellings. Zeekoe River. Bushmen. Back Settlers. The Cradock River.	91
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

Deserted Griqua Hamlet. Perils of the Wilderness. Lions. Escape from Drowning. Yellow River. Korannas.	114
--	-----

CHAPTER VII.

Campbell's-dorp. Griqua Town. Mr. Melvill. Internal Dissensions among the Grikwas. Their origin, progress, and present state. Huil, the Bushman Chief.	136
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

Rumours of the Mantatees. Arrival of Mr. Moffat. Griqua Council. Journey to Kuruman. Description of the Town. Interview with the King. Ceremony of Boialloa, &c.	156
--	-----

CHAPTER IX.

Great National Council, or Peetsho. Speeches of the King and Chiefs. Further Reports respecting the Mantatees. Secret Council of the Warriors. Progress of the Missionaries at Kuruman.	176
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

Excursion to the Eastward. The Wanderer Arend. Kuruman Fountain. Return. Further Rumours of the Invaders. Second Excursion. Arend's Account of the Interior Tribes. Page 195

CHAPTER XI.

Journey to Lattakoo. Strange Appearance of that Town recently deserted. Rencounter with the Host of Mantatees. Return to Kuruman. Preparations for flight. 213

CHAPTER XII.

Arrival of the Griquas. Another Peetsho. Friendship and Festivity. Return towards the Colony. Barolong Refugee. Passage of the Gariep. Koranna Kraal. 231

CHAPTER XIII.

Korannas. Bivouac on the Banks of the Cradock. Westhuizen's Kraal. Migratory Springboks. Journey through the Nieuwveld. Village of Beaufort. 250

CHAPTER XIV.

Journey through the Great Karroo. Description of the Cango Caverns. Arrival at Hex River. Drostdy of Worcester. Franschehoek Pass. 273

CHAPTER XV.

Proceedings of the Griqua Commando. Defeat of the Mantatees. Barbarous Conduct of the Bechuanas. Prisoners, Language, Dress, and Weapons of the Invaders. 287

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Melvill's Narrative of Transactions after the Battle,
and of his Excursion to Rescue the Women and Children of
the Invaders. Page 309

CHAPTER XVII.

General Remarks on the Caffer Tribes. The Bechuanas.
The Amakosæ and Amatymbæ. Tribe of European Lineage.
Conquests of Chaka, Chief of the Zoolas. 330

CHAPTER XVIII.

Origin of the Mantatees. Their Irruption into the In-
terior, and devastating Progress. The Ficani, Amazizi, &c.
Their Attack upon the Amatymbæ Caffers, and Approach
towards the Colony. 361

 PART II.

EXCURSION TO THE COUNTRY OF THE BUSHMEN, KORAN-
NAS, AND NAMAQUAS.

CHAPTER I.

Journey to the Roggeveld. Colonists of the Northern
Frontier. Wars with the Bushmen. Band of Caffer Emi-
grants. Serpent-charmers. Origin of Bushman Animosity.
More humane Conduct of some of the Colonists. 387

CONTENTS.

xxi

CHAPTER II.

Journey to the Hantam. Hottentot Guides. Departure from the Colony. Intercourse with the Bushmen. Salt Lake. Excessive Drought. Kat's-kop River. Page 407

CHAPTER III.

Further Interviews with the Bushmen. Gamka River. Hartebeest River. Miserable Condition of a Horde of Korannas. Sufferings from Thirst and Famine. . 431

ILLUSTRATIONS

TO THE FIRST VOLUME.

1. View of Cape Town, Table Bay, and Environs, to face		the Title
2. Thornhill, near Port Frances . . .	.	36
3. Graham's Town . . .	.	44
4. Plan of the Village of Graaff-Reinet . . .	.	74
5. Gnoo and Quagga . . .	.	94
6. Portrait of Peclu, son of King Mateebè . . .	.	170
7. Peetsho, or Great Public Council of the Matchapees . . .	.	178
8. Portrait of the Chief Teysho . . .	.	183
9. Matchapee Warrior and Woman . . .	.	190
10. View in the Cango Cavern, by Torchlight, No. I. . .	.	276
11. Ditto ditto No. II. . .	.	280
12. Warlike Weapons . . .	.	307
13. Utensils and Ornaments . . .	.	339

VIGNETTES.

	Page	Described at Page
1. Black Eagle of the Cape . . .	23	— 13
2. Old Hottentot Herdsman . . .	52	— 52
3. View in the Tarka . . .	69	— 70
4. Travelling in the Wilderness . . .	114	— 121
5. Bechuana Portraits . . .	156	— 165
6. Rhinoceros . . .	195	— 208
7. Koranna Kraal . . .	250	— 251
8. Mantatee Portraits . . .	309	— 320
9. Zoola Portraits . . .	330	— 355
10. Bushman and Woman . . .	407	— 421

ILLUSTRATIONS

TO THE SECOND VOLUME.

1. Table Mountain, from the Parade,	to face the Title.
2. Springbok and Koodoo	12
3. African Wild Dogs	28
4. Missionary Village at Kamiesberg	96
5. Mansion of D. Van Reenen, Esq.	110
6. Plan of Cape Town	236
7. Newlands, the Country Seat of the Governor	256
8. Commercial Exchange	280
9. Table Bay in a Gale	303
10. Map of Southern Africa	430

VIGNETTES.

	Page	Described at Page
1. Hippopotamus	24	26
2. Hottentot Guides	38	54
3. Great Ant-eater	79	85
4. Settler's Cottage in Albany	146	147
5. Calvinist Church in Cape Town	232	237
6. Marine Villa at Camp's Bay	256	237
7. Lighthouse at Green Point	303	237