

The Malays make excellent slaves when well treated; and are much more valuable than the others, from the quickness of their apprehensions, and the readiness with which they learn the different trades required in the colony. They frequently purchase their freedom, and become wealthy by their industry. They are all Mahometans, and hang together like the Jews and the sectaries of our own country, forming a distinct society, and employing their own people in preference to others. By this means, and their avaricious character, they soon become independent in their circumstances; and in their general conduct are much superior to the bulk of the European labourers in the settlement.

The next class in point of intellect to the Malays are those negro slaves who come from the western coast of Africa. In that part of the continent, the density of the population, and the facility of cultivation afforded by the tropical rains, have led to some advances in agriculture, which have raised the inhabitants somewhat higher in the scale of improvement than the pastoral tribes of the more arid por-

tions of Africa. The slaves descended from these races are consequently more habituated to constant labour and the exercise of their natural faculties; but, at the same time, they are stupid, and constitutionally heavy and phlegmatic.

I believe it is for these reasons that the slave-traders have resorted to the tropical parts of this quarter of the globe in pursuit of their iniquitous traffic, in preference to its more temperate and barbarous regions. A patient phlegmatic character like that of the Dutch, with a frame capable of enduring continued labour, are qualities of much greater utility to a West India planter than the possession of reasoning faculties, which would only tend to make the slave miserable and discontented with his degraded situation.

The slaves from the coast of Mozambique are the lowest in point of intellect of any in South Africa, and are so proverbial for their extreme stupidity that the greatest affront a Dutch colonist can cast on another's understanding is to observe that he is "als domme als een Mozambiquer;" or, as stupid as a Mozambique.

It is very absurd to assert that slaves have no sense of the injustice of their subjection, or feeling of its hopeless miseries. So far, however, it is true, that their consciousness of its iniquity is in exact proportion to the development of their faculties. Even supposing that they fancied their white masters to be possessed of a natural superiority over them—which belief, by the way, the slave-masters at the Cape carefully inculcate—and that they had not daily instances of cruelty and injustice before their eyes, the very circumstance of their seeing European labourers and freed blacks in a prosperous state must painfully remind them of their own unhappy condition. It necessarily follows, that the slaves must be most contented with their situation where there are the fewest free labourers, and where they are from other circumstances kept in ignorance of their natural rights.

We may, therefore, justly question the benevolence of those people who would by their instruction render the slaves more keenly alive to the injustice of their subjection, while they have no means of asserting their freedom; and

when, in their present condition, entire liberty would be attended with the most unhappy consequences to themselves as well as to the white population of our colonies. It would certainly be more humane, and at the same time more politic, to manage matters so that a gradual improvement in their condition should precede instruction. The slaves would thus be happier in the mean time, and would consider every concession as a boon for which they were bound to feel grateful, and peace would be preserved between the whites and the negroes.

There is another principle which should never be lost sight of: namely, that the more oppressed and degraded a class of men may have been, the more cautious and gradual should be the measures that are employed to restore them to their lost rights. But while we deprecate the sudden emancipation of the slaves, which would be probably attended with the most dangerous consequences in our West India colonies, we should at the same time urge the necessity of an immediate amelioration in their condition, to avert the still more fright-

ful consequences of refusing some concessions in favour of a people who are already but too sensible of their injuries, and who are indirectly stimulated to revolt by the interested and fanatical zeal of missionaries and teachers.

I by no means assert that the missionaries have any intention of exciting the slaves to rebel; but I have seen too much of their ignorant fanaticism, to doubt for a moment that such will be the natural effect of their mode of instruction and of their political feelings. Any one who is at all acquainted with the republican habits of our sectarians in England, and their concealed ambition, must see the inevitable consequences of their being placed as an independent body between the European colonists and the slaves.

The missionaries are themselves but the mere slaves of a party, half religious, half political; and, whatever their individual sentiments may be, their livelihood depends on their adherence to the prejudices of the parent society. They cannot act or speak without subjecting themselves to the animadversions of the other missionaries, who are ambitious of the applause of

their particular sects. The position they hold in the colonies makes them the natural depositaries of the injuries of the slaves, whether real or pretended; and when we consider that their interest, ambition, and feelings of humanity enlist them on the side of the negroes, their influence over these people must of course be a subject of much apprehension. Their situation, indeed, involves them in a most serious responsibility; for even the most benevolent intentions, when not regulated by sound judgment, may lead them into the most fatal mistakes. The worst of it is, that many of the missionaries spring from the lower classes of society, and are generally lamentably ignorant of human nature; and, in short, of everything but the religious dogmas of their sect, which are warped and perverted from the original simplicity of our religion by the narrowness of their understandings.

It may be said, that the missionaries have been the means of bringing to light many instances of cruelty towards the slaves, which, by opening the eyes of the British public to the abuses of power in our colonies, have led

to beneficial institutions, and some amelioration in their condition. Of this merit it would be unjust to deprive them ; and, as an individual, I cheerfully bear testimony to their utility to this extent. The objections I have to urge against them are confined to the general effects of an ignorant and prejudiced body of men establishing themselves as the friends and protectors of the slaves in our colonies, and consequently in a hostile position with regard to the masters, which must necessarily tend to foster discontent and insubordination on the part of the negroes.

What should we think, if a set of men in England should constitute themselves the judges between masters and their apprentices, and listen to all the complaints of discontented servants against their employers, whether they were true or false? Would not this have a direct tendency to create the very evils they sought to remedy; and would not the servants be led to fancy that a hundred injuries and acts of oppression were committed against them, which had no foundation but in their own unreasonable and excited minds? And

would not the masters naturally feel exasperated by the interference of these people, and be in many cases provoked into arbitrary measures against their servants in support of their authority?

If this were the case in our own country, how much more would the observation apply to a slave colony, where the master is vested with more despotic power over his dependants, and where the working class are more ignorant and unreasonable!

I have been led into longer details regarding the slaves than I anticipated; but I hope to be excused by the reader, on account of the importance of the subject. I feel also that my remarks are liable to be misinterpreted by people of a different mode of thinking, or whose opinions may be formed on the partial statements or exaggerations of opposing parties.

In justice to my own motives, I therefore think it necessary to say, that I never have possessed, nor would I possess, a slave on any consideration; and that I have no common interest with, or personal feeling against, either the slave-holders or their opponents. I have

left South Africa for ever, and have offered my land there for sale, and intend to proceed to Upper Canada in a few months, where, God willing, I hope to earn an independent livelihood, and be able to bring up my family in virtuous and industrious habits, in a country which is more free from most of the sources of demoralization than any of our other colonies. It is now time to describe another and more interesting portion of the inhabitants of the Cape, respecting whom I have hitherto touched but casually.

At the period of the first settlement of the colony, the Hottentots appear to have been among the most barbarous of the savage tribes of Africa ; and they do not even seem to have had any regular form of government beyond the temporary authority of some petty chief in times of danger. Inhabiting a country which for the most part was, from its aridity, little adapted for cultivation, and abounding in game, it might naturally be expected that a number of petty tribes, thinly scattered over its surface, would have made but small advancement in agriculture and the other arts of life.

We are, however, not too readily to believe all the accounts of them which are given by some of the early travellers, to whose credulity there seems to have been no bounds. They have told so many stories of their filthy and disgusting usages, that by common consent the Hottentots have been considered by all civilized nations as a race sunk to the very lowest state of degradation of which human creatures are susceptible. It is not fair to judge of a people by external habits, and to conclude that they are as much debased in their minds as they are filthy in their persons. Were this the case, we should expect to find the Hottentots of the present day, who are much improved in respect to cleanliness, equally improved in point of intellect : but the fact is otherwise.

It is not a little amusing to read some of the early accounts of these people, and the curious conclusions to which travellers have been led by their superficial mode of reasoning as to their capability of being civilized. I think it is Kolben who relates an ingenious experiment made by a Dutch governor to ascertain whether a Hottentot could be "tamed,"

as he calls it. He mentions that the said learned governor, who seems to have regarded a wild Hottentot in the same light as he did a baboon or monkey, had seized upon one of these people when a child, and, after sending him to Holland, where he made the most astonishing progress in acquiring the Low Dutch language, besides various other accomplishments,—and, among the rest, to wear manufactured clothes in cold weather,—brought him back to the Cape to persuade the rest of his countrymen to wear breeches, and quietly put their necks under the yoke of the Hollanders.

The result of this curious experiment, which was intended to put the question at rest for ever as to the natural capabilities of these people, was, that the Hottentot, who seems to have been a very sensible fellow, saw quite enough of the character of the white population to prefer the society of his countrymen and relations to the luxuries and vices of the Dutch. It would have been happy for the rest of his countrymen had they been able to maintain their freedom, with all its accompanying privations, rather than submit their persons and lands to

the arbitrary rule of such masters as European nations have proved to the original possessors of their colonies.

The truly Dutch experiment to which I have alluded, is only calculated to excite a smile among sensible people; but the natural effects resulting from the shallow reasoning that gave rise to it, lead us to more serious reflections. The poor Hottentots were looked upon by the ignorant colonists as a people incapable by nature of improvement, and were treated like horses and oxen, as a part of the property of their conquerors. They originally were possessed of cattle and sheep in abundance, and the country teemed with game of all kinds, which together afforded them a subsistence proportionate to their habits and necessities. They have gradually been robbed or cheated of their flocks and pasture-grounds. And what have they got in return? Three words answer this question—Vice, Poverty, Oppression.

Not contented with the possession of everything that was valuable which originally belonged to this unhappy people, and as if for the purpose of cutting off every avenue by

which they might arrive at independence, the Hottentots were considered by the colonial laws as incapable of holding lands in the country of their fathers. They were thus consigned to hopeless poverty and degradation. What could be expected from such an execrable system but moral and intellectual debasement?

Happily for this much-injured race, a new order of things has, within these few years, dawned on the colony, and lands have, for the first time, been granted to the Hottentots; and it may confidently be expected that their industry will be increased and their morals improved in proportion to the inducements held out to exertion.

A national character may be considered to be composed of two ingredients,—the character derived from physical constitution, and the character which is the result of habits and institutions. In treating of this subject, it is necessary to bear these two operating causes in mind, if we would arrive at anything like distinct conceptions of the matter. In observing any of the original and unmixed races of men, we cannot but perceive the striking uniformity

of character which pervades the mass of individuals of which they are composed. But when the different races become intermixed, the physical qualities of one race augment or modify those of another, and an endless diversity of individual character is produced, which prepares the nation where this intermixture has taken place for a more rapid advance in knowledge and attainments. To these physical causes, rather than to political ones, we may perhaps attribute the variety of individual character which we observe in Great Britain.

The contempt occasioned by the filthy and disgusting habits of the Hottentots, has led most travellers to consider them quite unworthy of their attention, and they have too hastily concluded that nothing noble or beautiful in the mind could exist under so foul and disgusting an exterior. Errors and exaggerations have thus been handed down, and servilely adopted by each succeeding traveller; so that, degraded as they now are by oppression and the vices of their masters, it is not easy to form a correct judgment of their original condition.

Vaillant, notwithstanding his romance and vanity, has given by far the truest account of the manners of both the Dutch and the Hottentots. Mr. Barrow's description of the inhabitants of the colony is also excellent, and, I believe, not at all too high-coloured, when we consider the time at which he wrote. The country was then in a state of high excitement from a relaxation of the laws, when the vices and peculiarities of the contending parties stand out in bold relief. His mind, however, was deeply imbued with British prejudices; and, though he shows much acuteness of observation, considering the few opportunities afforded by an official situation, we are by no means to take him for the surest guide as to the character of a people he saw only casually. He has fallen into a great mistake where he describes the Hottentots as a phlegmatic and apathetic race. They no doubt appeared so to him, from their being then crushed to the earth by the remorseless tyranny of the Dutch.

The Hottentots are possessed of acute, though not very powerful or durable feelings. Their character is one of singular weakness, joined to

the most lively perceptions and observation of external things. Their reasoning powers are of a mean order. They have not a little cunning when their suspicions are excited; but they are habitually honest, sincere, and confiding; and will rather steal than cheat. They are quick in noting peculiarities of character or manner, but are incapable of forming a chain of deductions from their observations. They are also peculiarly ignorant of relative value and numbers. Out of a dozen Hottentots, I have found only one or two able to count to the number of twenty; and I remember one of them, who was by no means inferior in other respects, refusing to serve me for ten rix dollars a month, telling me he had always got *five* from the Dutch. After vainly attempting to show him his mistake, I was at last obliged to take him on his own terms.

The Hottentots are fickle in the extreme; quitting on a sudden whim a place where they have been well fed and well treated for months, for another where they know they will be much worse off. If you ask them why they leave you, their usual answer is, "Almigtig! myn-

heer, ik heb hier geweest voor een hailen jaar.” —Almighty! sir, I have been here for a whole year.” If they have liked their situation, they will readily return to you again after they have had their ramble, and admit that they were great fools to change it, but that they were tired and wanted to roam a little.

The Hottentots are generous in the extreme to their friends and acquaintances, and can refuse them a share of nothing they possess. This is one cause of their general poverty, and that so few of them acquire any considerable property of any kind. Oppression has drawn the bonds of union closer between them, as is always the case in such circumstances. A Cape-Dutchman's sympathies are confined to his own family: he knows not the feeling of friendship beyond the circle of his immediate relatives. But the Hottentots are like one large family, bound together by common injuries, common feelings, and common interest. This union constitutes their happiness; and of this comfort tyranny cannot deprive them.

Theft is very uncommon among them, and they may safely be entrusted with anything

but intoxicating liquors, which they are not able to resist. I have been robbed of wine and spirits by them over and over again ; but their want of art in concealing their depredations of this kind showed sufficiently that deceit or dishonesty formed no part of their general character. Sometimes they will steal articles of food to supply their half-famished companions who are travelling along the road, but hardly ever for themselves. I have left all other articles completely at their mercy, when they might have helped themselves with little chance of discovery ; but I do not recollect a single instance of their robbing me of any article of clothing, which they might easily have turned into money or brandy at the licensed public-houses along the great roads ; which have been, I know, in many cases a source of great demoralization to the inhabitants, by being receptacles for stolen goods. I speak of the Hottentots as I found them, before they were additionally corrupted by intercourse with the lower classes of our own countrymen in the British settlements of the colony.

The most amiable trait in the character of

these people is their sincerity. It is a well-known fact that a Hottentot, when he is examined before a court of justice, generally tells the whole truth without disguise, though he is certain that his own conviction and punishment will immediately follow his confession. So often have I observed this noble trait in their character, that I would at any time attach more credit to the assertion of a Hottentot regarding any simple matter of fact, than to the oath of one of the lower classes of our own countrymen in the colony when they have any object to serve by deception.

I now come to the vices of the Hottentots. Though incapable of lasting resentment, they are passionate, savage, and cruel to their women and children on the slightest provocation. The men hardly ever come to blows in their quarrels; but the unhappy wife generally has to suffer for every temporary resentment of the husband, whether she has been the cause of it or not. On these occasions, the brutal husband often beats his wife in the most cruel manner, treads her under foot, and uses her in a way that would be death to a more delicate female. The wife, on

her part, is by no means deficient in the artillery of her sex, and uses her other natural weapons with great effect, scratching, biting, and tearing the hair with the most undaunted courage, until she sinks to the ground with exhaustion; but the tongue still wags with unabated volubility in an overwhelming torrent of oaths and contumelious terms, which aggravates her punishment, until the infuriated husband is driven half-frantic with disappointed rage. Contrary to the well-established maxim applied to such cases, I have sometimes interfered to prevent fatal consequences; but, finding that only tended to increase the evil, I was reluctantly compelled to allow them to belabour each other in their own way.

These shocking scenes are generally occasioned by drinking, to which vice they are very much addicted. Intoxication seems to have a much more infuriating effect on savages than on civilized men, which is simply because they are less habituated to self-restraint. It is for the same reason that a vulgar person may easily be distinguished from a gentleman under the like circumstances, and that the effects of in-

temperance are more pernicious to the former than to the latter.

There is, however, nothing rude in the manners of the Hottentots on ordinary occasions: they are extremely affectionate, and are very delicate in avoiding causes of offence, never contradicting or interrupting each other in conversation, unless they are excited by violent passions. Their conversation is at the same time coarse and unrefined, though less so than that of the Cape-Dutch.

Polygamy seems never to have been in use among them; and I have often been told by aged Hottentots that illicit correspondence between the sexes was formerly very rare, and severely punished by their laws. The superstitious respect which savages entertain for men of a different colour has been made a powerful engine of corruption against them; and European nations, instead of improving their morals, have become the active agents of their debasement. Most of the Hottentots within the boundaries of the colony are more or less of a mixed race, arising chiefly from the connexion of white men with Hottentot women. The

older Hottentots are, however, generally of a purer race; which shows that their corruption has been gradually increasing since the first settlement of the colony. The women seldom repel the advances of white men, for whom they have a decided personal preference, and they are generally faithful to them while the connexion subsists; they are so proud of these temporary engagements, that they seldom consent to live with one of their own nation afterwards.

It may seem somewhat extraordinary to Europeans, but it is nevertheless true, that the colonists, both Dutch and English, are very partial to the female Hottentots. This, of course, is carefully concealed by the Dutchmen from their wives; and they apply the most opprobrious epithets and affect the greatest disgust to the persons of the Hottentots on all occasions. Some of the features of these people do not certainly agree with the commonly received ideas of beauty; but they have expressive eyes and a liveliness and grace of carriage that render them far from being unattractive. The colonial female Hottentots,

indeed, are often strikingly elegant in their proportions, and they have all that lightness and ease in their motions for which all savages are remarkable: we need not therefore wonder that they are often preferred to the clumsy, torpid, and insensible Dutchwomen, with their stony eyes and jealous domineering manners.

The offspring of the Dutch by the Hottentot women are distinguished for uniting in their persons the vices of both races. In point of understanding, they are superior to the Hottentots; and, by what I have seen of them, I should think that, under other circumstances, many of them would show a decided superiority over the Dutch: they assume it over the Hottentots, with whom they live, and hate the white population, to whose society they can never aspire: they are also a taller and stouter race than the Hottentots, and share in some degree in the constitutional tendency of the Dutch to corpulence. The intermixture of races seems to improve the intellectual powers as much as it does the bodily proportions.

The true Hottentots are a small and slight race, with acute senses and lively irritable

tempers. People of this description seldom become corpulent; and I have never seen an instance of a Hottentot man becoming absolutely fat, though it is not at all rare among the females.

CHAPTER X.

Passion of the Hottentots for Music.—A Summer Evening.—Musical Instruments.—Extraordinary knowledge of Harmony.—Singular Anecdote.—Hottentot Airs.—Intoxicating Liquors.—The Karree Plant.—Medical knowledge of the Hottentots.—Plants of the Country.—Remedy for Snake-bites.—Feats of a Gift Drinker.—Poisonous Snakes.—Hottentot Superstitions.—Belief in Witchcraft.—A hideous Animal.—Stratagem of a cunning Woman.—Injustice towards Slaves.

THE Hottentots have a great passion for music, which generally accompanies a constitutional sensibility of frame, and disposes the mind for the reception of kind and benevolent feelings. I have often listened with great pleasure to the wild and melancholy notes of the "gorah" and "ramkee," when sitting in the cool of a placid South-African evening on the "stoep," or platform, before my brother's house, while the sun was sinking in unclouded beauty

behind the bold outline of the chain of mountains which formed one side of the romantic valley. There is something peculiarly calm and soothing in a summer evening in that country, when the dazzling glare of noon is past, and the air is filled with the sparkling fire-flies, and the crickets open in full chorus with their drowsy unceasing din.

At this delightful hour, we every night heard some old Hottentot in the servants' hut near the house playing on the "gorah," the sounds of which resembled the distant notes of the bugle. This curious instrument is formed by stretching a piece of the twisted entrails of a sheep along a thin stick about three feet in length, in the manner of a bow and string. At one end, the string is tied simply to the extremity of the stick; but at the other, it is fixed to a piece of flattened quill about an inch in length, cut in an oval shape to suit the opening of the lips. The other end of this piece of quill is then secured by a short bit of string to the opposite end of the stick, so that it is strained in a line with the string, with the flat side outwards. The instrument is played upon by

introducing the quill between the lips, and blowing in a particular way, holding the stick in a horizontal position. The peculiarity of the "gorah" is, that it naturally runs into the notes of the common bugle, which it also resembles in sound.

The "ramkee" is constructed on the same principle as a guitar, by stretching six strings along a flat piece of thin board, with the half of a gourd or "calabash" at one end, over which a piece of dried skin is strained, on which the bridge is placed. It is played on after the manner of the guitar; and, in the hands of a skilful performer, makes no contemptible music. This instrument has great compass, as the performer can produce the octaves by touching the middle of the strings lightly with the chin.

The Hottentot women have naturally very sweet voices; but those of the men are by no means so good. I have often been astonished at the facility and taste with which they pick up and select any tunes. Sometimes, when our Hottentot servant girls happened to hear some air played on the flute which struck their fancy, I was agreeably surprised in a few days to find

it sung all over the neighbourhood, with the addition of a second of their own composing, which was generally in excellent taste.

I took some pains to discover whether this knowledge of harmony was natural, or acquired from the missionaries : but I ascertained that the latter knew little or nothing of the science of music ; and they told me, that whenever they taught the Hottentots a simple hymn or psalm tune, they instantly added the second of their own accord, as if by natural instinct.

I am persuaded that the faculty of harmonizing simple airs is, strictly speaking, a natural power, and dependent on a peculiar formation of the organs of the ear, in the same manner as the faculty of deriving pleasure from melody. Thus we find that some nations possess one of these faculties in a great, and others in a small degree.

The Scotch, for instance, have a great natural taste for melody, and but little for harmony ; as may be shown from the general character of their music, which abounds in simple pathos, but is not so susceptible of improvement by the addition of a second as that of many other

countries. The seconds to airs composed by Scotchmen are generally of the most vulgar and insipid description. The English, on the other hand, have more taste for harmony ; but their national airs—if they can be said to have any national music—are vulgar, and deficient in pathos. The Germans, I believe, possess both these natural faculties in a higher degree than any nation in Europe, and in their taste for harmony seem to be superior to the Italians : their compositions are also full of genius and originality. .

I have often heard a whole family of Hot-tentots, including children of seven or eight years of age, join in singing an air or hymn without any apparent effort, each of them taking his particular part ; and yet I could not perceive the slightest discordance.

An old German officer, formerly in the Dutch service, and who supported himself by collecting specimens of natural history, told me, that once when he was residing at one of the missionary stations in pursuit of his occupation, he happened to play that beautifully pathetic air of Gluck's, *Che faro senza Euridice*, on his

HOTTENTOT AIRS.

(1.)

Very slow.

Faster.

8^{va}

Fine.

(2.)

Lively.

Fine.

HOTTENTOT AIRS.

(3.)

Lively.

The musical score consists of six staves of music in a single system. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is written in a treble clef. The first staff begins with the tempo marking 'Lively.' and contains a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff features a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The fourth staff continues the melodic line. The fifth staff contains another triplet of eighth notes. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots, followed by the word 'Fine.' written below the staff.

violin, when he was surprised to observe that he was listened to by some Hottentot women with the deepest attention, and some of them were even affected to tears. In a day or two afterwards, he heard his favourite melody with accompaniments all over the country, wherever his wanderings led him.

I know not what effect this air would have on the country people in England; but I am sure that the peasantry in Scotland would think it a very mawkish, unintelligible production.

I subjoin three genuine Hottentot airs, which I noted down from hearing them sung by one of their women. The first is a particular favourite among them; and the second and third are used to dance to, when played quick.

The Hottentots are not indebted to Europeans for their knowledge of intoxicating liquors, as is commonly supposed; though the introduction of brandy among them has had the effect of increasing the habit of drunkenness tenfold, by facilitating the means of gratification. They have long been acquainted with a particular plant which grows in some of the most arid situations of the interior of the

colony, and is only known to a few of them: this plant, as well as the drink which is made by its means, is called "Karree."

The root is dug up and carefully dried in the sun, and is then stamped to a powder between two stones, and kept in a bag, which is generally hung up in their huts. When the Hottentots find any honey in the woods or rocks, they dilute it copiously with water, made a little warm, and put into a bucket, which is covered over with a thick cloth. A small quantity of the powder is then added to the liquid, which it has the property of fermenting. So rapid is the process, that I have often seen them commence the operation at eight or nine o'clock at night, and be furiously intoxicated and beating their wives long before daylight the next morning. A remarkable circumstance connected with this plant is, that the quantity of the powder is very much increased, like yeast, at each brewing. When the liquid is sufficiently fermented, it is poured off; and the powder, now quadrupled in quantity, is taken out and washed in clean water, and then suspended in a small bag to dry. It is thus that the Hottentots keep up

their supply of this fermenting powder, and sell what they do not require to their neighbours. I have known them give a cow for half a cupful.

It is not from the report of the Hottentots that I state the circumstance of the powder increasing in quantity, having tried it myself with sugar and water, and had ocular demonstration of the fact: but sugar soon destroys the virtue of the powder. I have also used every endeavour to get a sight of the plant growing; but the Hottentots, to whom it is familiar, are so jealous of their secret, that I could never prevail on any of them to point it out to me. I have been told by a botanist who knew much of these people, that the "karree" plant is a species of *Mesembryanthemum*; but I cannot vouch for his correctness.

Like the Malays, the Hottentots have a great knowledge of the medicinal properties of the plants of the country. When they are sick, they are continually trying one thing or another to procure relief; and they thus often stumble on useful remedies. They were the discoverers of the "Buchu," or *Diosma Capensis*,

which they have long used internally as a stomachic, and externally, infused in brandy, for rheumatism, &c.

In treating other maladies, they are also very successful. I have known many virulent diseases to be effectually removed by decoctions from plants of the country; and one in particular, which occurred under my immediate observation, was cured by a Hottentot doctress, after the common European remedies had totally failed. During my residence near the frontier of the colony, I observed that one of my servants, a Hottentot, was in a most deplorable state. He had been taking various decoctions from plants, which were prepared by a woman; but they did him no permanent good, though they alleviated the symptoms of his disorder for the time. At last he became so ill that he could do no kind of work, and could not sleep at night from the racking pains he suffered in different parts of his body. I now found it necessary to send him away to obtain the advice of an European surgeon. Two or three years afterwards, I met him in the streets of Grahamstown, and, to my astonishment, quite recovered; for I

thought his case rather desperate. He told me that he had been under the care of an English surgeon for many weeks, without any benefit ; he had then applied to an old Hottentot woman, a famous doctress among them, who cured him effectually in a very short time.

The Hottentots use a great variety of medicinal plants ; but they generally make a great secret of them for their own gain. The " plat doorn" (*Arctopus echinatus*, Lin.) has long been known to some of the surgeons of the colony ; but though a decoction of the root of this plant often cures the natives, it has not been found successful with Europeans, alone ; but has produced excellent effects when joined with mercury. The leaves of the " wilde rabas" (*Gunnera perpensa*, Lin.), and the leaves of the *Phlomis leonurus* and *leonitis*, Lin., are often used along with the first-mentioned plant. A friend has furnished me with the botanical names of these plants, which I have copied, and give them merely as some of the remedies adopted by the Hottentots, in the hope of their being found useful ; but I cannot pretend to say that they are the best among the many

different kinds employed in the colony. The "wilde rabas" is also used in conjunction with another plant, the name of which I forget, but which I have seen in England. A variety of remedies are adopted for snake bites, among which a decoction from the leaves and root of the *mellitus* may be mentioned. Another specific has been lately found, called the "slangen wortel" (*Catula Capensis* and *anthemoides*).

The account given of the discovery of the virtues of this plant is curious. Two Hottentot or slave girls were herding sheep in the interior of the settlement, when one of them was unfortunately bitten by a very venomous snake. Her companion stayed some time with her to endeavour to get her to the Dutchman's house where they lived; but the effect of the poison was so rapid, that she was obliged to leave her and run home for assistance. When she returned from the house, which was at a considerable distance, with some of the other servants, she was surprised to find the girl, whom she had left in great pain, sitting up and much recovered. It appeared, that in her agony she had chewed a plant which grew by her side

without knowing what she did, and that it had the effect of counteracting the poison. This plant then got the name of the "slangen wortel," or snake-root.

The Hottentots often extract the poison from the most venomous snakes and swallow it, taking care that it does not touch the teeth or gums: they believe that it prevents them from being bitten by the snakes, or, if they are, from being injured by the poison. One of these "gift-drinkers," as they call them, lived near Groot Vaders Bosch, and many extraordinary stories were told us by the Dutch and Hottentots of his feats: among others, they said that they had seen him take some of the most poisonous snakes in his hand and provoke them to bite him, without his sustaining any injury.

I never had an opportunity, however, of ascertaining the truth of these statements; but there is no doubt of the fact of their swallowing the poison for the purpose stated. They say that they must take fresh doses of this curious preventive every six months at least, and that it is dangerous to be bitten by a more poisonous

snake than the kind from which they were supplied with the antidote.

The belief in the efficacy of this practice is so general, both among the Dutch and the Hottentots, that it would be worth while to make a few experiments to ascertain the truth before we entirely discredit the circumstance. It does not seem improbable, that by inuring the constitution to the action of the poison in this manner, it will be rendered less liable to its injurious effects when received into the circulation, in the same way as inoculation diminishes the virulence of the small-pox. Another circumstance they mention is, that the "gift-drinkers" cannot use milk so long as the influence of the poison remains with them, from its turning sour on the stomach. One thing, however, should be stated—namely, that though the poisonous snakes are most frequently met with, yet more than two-thirds of the different species found in the colony are innocuous.

Dr. Smith, now superintendent of the Museum at Cape Town, adopted a very ingenious mode of ascertaining what kinds of snakes were really poisonous. He was several years attached

to the army medical department at Grahams-town, where many cases of snake-bites came under his observation, which were principally among the Hottentots. He made a point of telling them on all occasions, that he could not cure them unless they found the snakes which had bitten them: by this means he soon succeeded in forming a tolerable collection of the most dangerous species, which convinced him that their number was much smaller than was generally imagined by the natives.

The Hottentots have a great many superstitions, but none of them of a gloomy or appalling description: they sometimes talk about ghosts, but have little fear of them or of any other spirits. It may be observed, that the superstitions of a country generally are tinged by the character of the inhabitants, and by the nature of the climate and scenery.

In half-civilized regions, where despotism, priestcraft, and crime have reigned paramount—where the climate is changeable, and the scenery wild and gloomy,—we find the people the most prone to believe in the existence of spirits and supernatural agency. There is some-

thing in a damp and cloudy atmosphere which depresses the mind, and disposes it for the reception of melancholy and superstitious impressions. In a country where every natural and artificial object reminds us of past generations—where ruined edifices and the trees sighing in the wintry blast excite saddening reflections,—it is natural for us to fancy that the spirits of the departed still hover round their original tenements, and watch over the actions of their descendants. Thus, every ruined castle has its ghost to scare the benighted traveller; and every dark lane, where a murder has been committed, has its wailing spirit calling out for vengeance, and frightening the simple country-folks.

In a newly-settled colony, on the contrary, where everything is changing, and where the same house or district is rarely occupied by three succeeding generations, such superstitions can gain no resting-place; and the injured spirits, finding no one interested in their fate, and no suitable domicile on earth, remain quietly at home, leaving people to pursue their usual avocations undisturbed. The Dutch at the

Cape are not without these gloomy imaginings, which seem to be in a great measure of European origin, in addition to those of the natives.

The superstitions of the Hottentots are confined to the belief in witchcraft and the power of charms; and few of them are without some article to protect themselves against real and imaginary dangers. They carefully preserve a certain skin on the birth of a child, a part of which is put in a little bag and hung round its neck, to be worn through life as a safeguard against all kind of evils. When an elephant is killed, they also cut out some pieces of stick, which are usually found in a small cell in the skin of the head, and wear them about the neck, which they think effectually secures the wearer from the rage of that dangerous animal. Few elephant-hunters are without this potent charm. They also, as well as the Dutch colonists, believe in the existence of certain strange animals which have never been seen by any of the English inhabitants of the colony, though they positively assert having beheld them themselves. One of these creatures is known by the

name of the “dassic,” or rabbit-adder; which, they say, has the body of a snake, exceedingly short and thick, and a hairy head resembling a rabbit, but so horrible in its aspect that the unhappy beholder is deprived of the power of making his escape from its basilisk glance.

A Hottentot at the missionary institution of Bethelsdorp, when hunting in a thick wood in that neighbourhood, fancied he saw this dreadful animal, and died a few days afterwards in consequence of the fright. He gave one of the missionaries, from whom I heard the story, a minute account of its appearance. There is another fancy which is general among the Dutch, Hottentots, and Kaffres,—that people may be bewitched by burying knives, forks, spoons, or any other articles belonging to them, under the threshold of their doors.

I recollect a curious instance of this superstition in a Dutch family during my residence in the district of Uitenhage. The wife of the Dutchman had fallen ill of some disease which puzzled the native doctors and doctresses not a little. At last, an old Hottentot woman undertook to cure her: but, after exhausting

her store of medicines in vain, her skill began to be called in question. The cunning wretch, to save her credit, artfully contrived to bury some of the farmer's spoons under the threshold of the door, and boldly accused one of the female slaves of having bewitched her mistress. An immediate search was made under the door, and the spoons were found: this was proof positive, and the poor creature in vain protested her innocence.

Day after day the unfortunate woman was cruelly flogged, to compel her to restore her mistress to health. This had gone on for some weeks, when it accidentally came to the knowledge of a friend of mine, who reported the circumstance to the magistrate of the district, and the Dutchman was obliged to sell the slave woman, to put an end to the barbarities to which she was subjected; but nothing could persuade her master that she had not been the cause of his wife's sickness. This is one of the many instances of injustice and cruelty practised on domestic slaves, of the frequency of which we can form no conception unless we live among them for a considerable time, as they

generally submit passively to every injury rather than complain to a partial judge, who is usually a slaveholder himself, and naturally sympathizes with the master.

Without saying anything against the good intentions of individuals, it is vain to expect that anything like substantial justice will be done to this unhappy class by a set of magistrates who are or have been slaveholders themselves, and have moreover been brought up with all the usual prejudices against the coloured population.

In a country where the local magistrates are necessarily entrusted with great discretionary power, and where there are so few to check the abuse of authority, it is absolutely necessary that they should be selected from the more intelligent of our own countrymen, who are much less under the influence of such disqualifying feelings, and are not, like the Dutch, connected by relationship with the old colonists.

CHAPTER XI.

Decrease in the Numbers of the Hottentots.—Use of Spirituous Liquors.—Causes for a reduced Population.—Wild Beasts of South Africa.—Description of the Hyena—Mode of entrapping the Animal.—Cruel Amusement.—Habits of the Ant-Bear.—The Porcupine.—Wild Dogs.—Numbers of Jackals.—Depredations of the “Mousehond.”—Nocturnal Visits of the Porcupine—Mode of hunting the Animal.

WHILE treating of the Hottentots, it may not be considered irrelevant to advert to a fact which has often been noticed, though perhaps never sufficiently accounted for,—the decrease in their numbers.

The same circumstance has also been observed with regard to the aboriginal inhabitants of North America; and the causes commonly assigned for the depopulation are, the abuse of spirituous liquors, the smallpox, and other diseases imported by Europeans. It is obvious

that the first of these causes is the only one which can have an extensive or permanent operation ; for in other countries experience proves that the productive powers of nature in the animal kingdom more than compensate for the havoc occasioned by disease and pestilence, which always observe certain limitations of time and place.

Another fact should be noticed,—that it is not occasional excesses in the use of spirituous liquors which tend materially to shorten life, but the constant and habitual abuse of them. Spirits are, no doubt, very cheap in some of our colonies ; but it has never been satisfactorily explained how the natives, who have so little industry, can obtain a constant supply of an article which is not to be had for nothing. This supposition involves little less than a contradiction. It may be said that spirits have a more pernicious effect on the constitutions of people who have not been accustomed to them. This, I am aware, is a very general opinion ; but, so far as my own observation has extended, I have commonly found the reverse to be the case.

If we examine into the many instances we see of habitual drunkenness in our own country, we shall find that the propensity has in most cases been acquired *after* the body and constitution have come to their full growth and vigour ; and that those who have been addicted to drinking in extreme youth seldom continue the practice through life. Before the constitution is formed, it is materially weakened by sensual indulgences, and the individual becomes incapable of deriving constant gratification from such habits.

I have uniformly observed that the Hottentots suffer much less from the effects of any excess of this kind than Europeans. They have, indeed, a most inordinate craving for brandy, and are totally unable under any circumstances to resist the temptations it offers ; but no person who has the least knowledge of the colony can suppose that they have frequent opportunities of drinking to an extent sufficient to injure their health, or to render them less prolific.*

* Some further remarks upon this subject, adapted rather for the consideration of the political economist than for the general reader, will be found in the Appendix.

Europeans have certainly enough to answer for already in their treatment of the aboriginal inhabitants of their colonies, without their being taxed with exterminating them by the introduction of ardent spirits. But I cannot think that population will not exceed the means of sustenance in any country, unless some unnatural means be resorted to, to keep it within certain limits, or pestilence from time to time reduce their increasing numbers.

It is evident that savage races, who subsist on game or on their flocks, must necessarily require an infinitely greater extent of the surface of the earth to enable them to procure food than people in a more civilized state, when every acre of ground is made productive by agriculture. This is the case of the savage races of Africa, who, from the continual increase of their population, are obliged to extend their boundaries from time to time by attacking and exterminating neighbouring tribes.

Such has always been their practice; and it will continue to be so until civilization enables them to procure additional subsistence by rendering their lands more productive in food for

man. And while this savage state continues, they must feel all the evils of over-population as much as any civilized country in Europe. In so far only as the European colonists restrict their means of procuring food by the destruction of game, can they be said to diminish their numbers, by driving them into the practice of unnatural modes of preventing the inconvenient increase of population.

Could civilization be made to keep pace with the conquests of Europeans, instead of being a scourge to the original races in our colonies, as at present, the settlers would be their greatest benefactors, by teaching them to render the earth productive, and to subsist in peace and plenty on a much more limited territory than they formerly required.

Much of what I have said on this subject may be applied to the state of the slaves in our West India colonies, and will, I have no doubt, tend to counteract the inferences drawn from the alleged or real decrease of the slave population in these countries. That cruelty to this unfortunate class has had this effect to a certain extent, is probable; but it is equally unjust and

uncharitable to lay the whole blame of their decrease on the slave-holders.

I am no advocate for slavery, which is indefensible on every principle; but I would wish to see something like fairness and candour on both sides of the question. When I come to speak of the frontier districts of the settlement, I shall have occasion to revert to the Hottentots, and to offer some observations on the progress of the missionaries in their work of conversion and civilization. I shall now proceed to describe the animals found in the district of Swellendam.

Many of the wild beasts which formerly frequented this part of the colony have either been extirpated, or have fled into the interior before the destructive weapons of the colonists, on account of the scarcity and small extent of the woods in this part of the country—particularly from the want of the mimosa thorns, on the roots of which they delight to feed. The elephant does not appear to have been originally found here. The names of some places, however, preserve the memory of the rhinoceros and the buffalo; as “Rhenoster Fontein,” the

Rhinoceros Spring, and "Buffel Jaagt's Rivier," which last commemorates some buffalo-hunt of the first settlers. Both the rhinoceros and the buffalo have totally disappeared from the district of Swellendam.

There are still some leopards; but they are seldom seen, and are much reduced in number. The hyenas, or wolves, as they are called by the Dutch, seem to increase with the population; their long dismal howls are heard every night as they prowl about the country, and are answered by the troops of dogs at the farmhouses that join with them in full chorus. There are two kinds of this animal found in the district: one species conceal themselves through the day in caves and holes among the craggy summits of the mountains, and the other in holes in the earth near the coast. I have not seen either of the species above two or three times in the day-time during my long residence in the colony.

The hyenas, destructive as they are to cattle, horses, and sheep, are exceedingly cowardly towards man. They do not even venture to attack large cattle, except when they have a