unoccupied tracts of country around them, where less labour would be required, and where they would enjoy greater liberty of action. They would then of course gradually relapse into a state of barbarism in a greater or lesser degree, in proportion to their distance from the common centre.

As mankind require a greater extent of country to procure subsistence when in a savage state than when they are civilized, it necessarily follows that barbarians will overspread the surface of the earth in a shorter space of time than civilized men. It is thus that Providence has ordained that savages should spread the human race over every portion of the globe; but it was not therefore intended that they should continue in barbarism and ignorance.

That the gradual condensing of the population will in time lead to a considerable degree of civilization and knowledge among nations which have no intercourse with others more improved than themselves, there can be little doubt; but a direct or indirect communication with the parent race is absolutely requisite to

bring them to the highest state of moral and intellectual excellence of which mankind is capable. Thus, in Europe, civilization has always been extended from one country to another, and it certainly originated in the East.

Egypt was indebted for the first germs of its improvement to Judea, Greece to Egypt, Italy to Greece, and so on. In the present day it is to be hoped that such measures will be taken as will tend to improve the condition of the original inhabitants of the European colonies. Hitherto, in most instances, the manner in which these ancient races have been treated by European nations has had a directly contrary tendency; and, unless the present system be altered, instead of furthering the decrees of Providence in the preservation and improvement of these races, their dominion will prove a curse, and not a benefit to them.

Many arguments, founded on the different complexions of the various races of man, have been adduced to prove that they are not all sprung from a common stock. We are told that people of a fair complexion are often found in the warmer regions of the earth. This, how-

ever, it must be allowed, is an exception to the general rule, and should not, therefore, be taken as an argument in favour of the negative position while it may be accounted for by other causes.

It often happens that very considerable modifications of climate are produced by different elevations in territories under the same latitude, which in a great measure will account for the variations in the complexion of the inhabitants. On the other hand, every candid observer must admit that in most cases we find the tropical regions inhabited by blacks, and the more temperate climates by fair races.

It is indeed true that we sometimes find a fair race in a tropical climate, and a dark race in one more temperate; but it should be remembered that savage and barbarous tribes frequently change their abode by occupying the countries of the people they have conquered or exterminated. Thus, in the northern parts of the continent of Africa, the original negro inhabitants have been subdued, supplanted, or exterminated by the Moors, a comparatively fair race; while, in Southern Africa, the swarthy

Kaffres have driven the copper-coloured Hottentots before them, and occupied a large portion of their northern territories.

The language, manners, and external appearance of these neighbouring races are totally distinct from each other; and we can still easily determine the former extent of the Hottentot country by the names of the rivers and other natural objects which, in many instances, the Kaffre tribes still retain.

One circumstance regarding the Hottentots is remarkable; namely—that the Bosjesman Hottentots, who inhabit a more elevated and colder tract of country in the interior, are much fairer than the Hottentots of the colony, though there can be no doubt of their common origin, as their language and features are nearly similar.

It is probable that a residence of many ages is required to effect these changes in the complexion of the different races of mankind. It would take many ages, no doubt, to convert the fairer of our European races to the complexion of the negro; but if we suppose, which is by no means unlikely, that our first parents were of an intermediate complexion, like the

Moors, we can more easily conceive the possibility of all the gradations of colour being produced by the gradual influence of climate.

The fairness of the Hottentots at the more temperate extremity of Africa, where there could be no intercourse with Europeans, appears to be the most convincing proof that the peculiarities of complexion are merely the effect of climate. Had their features borne any resemblance to those of the European, the force of this argument would have been much weakened; but, on the contrary, they have the flat nose and woolly hair of the negro in a still greater degree, and speak a language totally distinct from that of any other known race in the world.

If the features of the Hottentots bear any affinity to those of any other races, it is only to such as they could not with any degree of probability be supposed to have had any intercourse with. They certainly, in some particulars, resemble the Chinese and Tartars; but no nations could be selected with whom the Hottentots at the extremity of Africa are less likely to have held any communication.

The peculiarities of formation observable in the different races of mankind may, at first sight, seem to offer a stronger argument against their common origin than the differences arising from complexion; but, if we reflect on the subject, the inferences drawn from such observations will not appear to be well founded. We every day have occasion to observe, on a more limited scale, peculiarities of features and complexion in particular families and individuals; but we never question the possibility of such families or individuals being the offspring of the same common parents from whom we ourselves are descended. We also notice that the different European nations are distinguished by certain characteristics. Thus, if we adopt this argument in respect to the negroes, we are compelled to admit that the various nations of Europe also are originally sprung from different parents.

If this argument be good for anything in one case, it is equally so in the other; and we are led to form conclusions so sweeping and general, that they extend far beyond the limits of probability. On the other hand, it is not diffi-

cult to imagine the modes by which national peculiarities in bodily formation may be produced. For instance, if a man and his wife who were remarkable for some singularity of conformation—such as a flat nose or thick lips—were to settle in some uninhabited region, might we not naturally expect that their posterity would possess the same peculiarities in at least an equal degree with their progenitors?

Judging from analogy, we may venture to assert that a family thus isolated from the rest of their species would degenerate when placed in climates or circumstances unfavourable to the perfection of their bodily proportions.

There can be no doubt that the stature of men depends, in a great measure, on the quantity or quality of the nutriment they have been accustomed to receive, particularly during the period of their growth; in the same manner as we observe that domesticated cattle are large or stunted in proportion to their pasturage—whether rich or poor, abundant or scanty.

We generally find that the children of settlers in our different colonies are taller and better proportioned than their parents; simply because they receive a proper quantity of nourishment with moderate bodily exertion during their growth. The same causes account for the superiority of stature observable in the higher ranks in our own country, where the lower classes have dwindled in size on account of hard labour and insufficiency of food in their childhood.

If the size of men depends upon their food and habits,—which we can hardly doubt,—we may naturally expect that their conformation may be no less affected by peculiarities in their mode of life. When all these circumstances are duly considered, and allowance is made for the probable effects of climate on the human constitution,—and also when the varieties produced by similar causes in the brute creation are observed,—the diversity in the colour and formation of the different families of mankind will in a great measure cease to be a subject of wonder, and we shall be more inclined to

regard our swarthy brethren with that respect and humanity of which ignorance and prejudice have so long and so unjustly deprived them.

Every generous mind must feel indignant at the heartless and ignorant assertion which we hear daily from many of our countrymen, that the coloured and negro races of mankind are naturally inferior to the whites.

They tell us that the negroes of Africa have never been civilized, and therefore infer that they are not susceptible of becoming so! This mode of reasoning is not more just than if we were to conclude that the Hottentots are incapable of improvement because they inhabit that point of Africa which is farthest removed from Egypt, and the other countries where civilization first commenced.

Such arguments are disgraceful to intellectual beings, and are the strongest proofs of a lamentable defect in the reasoning faculties of those who make use of them.

They forget that the ancient Britons were once savages, and were not civilized until after

the lapse of many ages of barbarism. If such opinions do not proceed from gross ignorance and prejudice, they can only owe their origin to the base sophistry of self-interest, and should be held in contempt and abhorrence by all men who are actuated by benevolent feelings towards the human race.

CHAPTER XV.

Baboons and Monkeys. — Mode of hunting the Baboon. — Habits of the Ant-Bear — Method of capturing the Animal.—Singular Instinct of the Honey-Bird.—Anecdote of the Fiscal.—Variety of Snakes.—The Puff-Adder. — The Ring-Hals, or Ring-Neck.—Remarks on Snake-Bites.—Adventure of the Author.—The Secretary Bird.—Remedy for the Bite of a Serpent.—Meaning of the term "Fascination."—The Snake and the Birds.—The Chameleon.—Scorpions.—The Tarantula.—Pheasants and Partridges.—The Paaw, or Wild Peacock.

Baboons and monkeys, which, after man, may be said to constitute the next link in the chain of existence, are found in great numbers in the mountains of Swellendam. The former, in particular, are very destructive to the gardens of the colonists who reside near their haunts. I have seen one of them deliberately help himself to a melon or pumpkin in the daytime, and walk off with it under his arm. But it is in

the night that they commit the greatest depredations in the gardens.

Baboons are often taken when young, and taught a variety of tricks. I remember a farmer near the frontier making a tame one exhibit his acquirements for my amusement: he made him perform several manœuvres with a stick, which he had taught him to handle as a soldier does his firelock.

The mode of catching the young baboons is curious. They are hunted by dogs, with which the larger ones often fight desperately; but they generally make off, leaving their young at the mercy of their enemies. To escape their more dangerous assailants, the young baboons often instinctively fly for protection to the hunters, and, leaping upon the backs of their horses, cling to them with their arms: they are then easily secured, and soon become attached to their masters. I have often been told by the colonists, that the baboons, when they are attacked by a leopard, frequently turn upon their enemy and tear him to pieces. I have never had an opportunity of ascertaining the truth of this story, nor can I easily believe it; though

there can be no doubt that the baboons possess extraordinary muscular strength, and are often an overmatch for the dogs when they are attacked.

I have already alluded to that very singular animal the ant-bear, with whose habits Europeans are already in some degree acquainted. The Cape colony almost everywhere abounds with ant-hills, which are always constructed of clay. Many of these are found to be perforated with holes made by the ant-bear, into which he thrusts his long sharp nose in search of his peculiar food.

I have only seen one species of this animal at the Cape, which is about five feet in length. It is possessed of extraordinary muscular power in the legs, to enable it to penetrate the indurated clay of a dry climate, in making its hole. I have frequently been engaged with some of our neighbours in digging them out, which was attended with very great labour. These holes often extend to the distance of twenty or thirty feet under ground.

The only way to get hold of the ant-bear is to sink a hole as near the termination of its

retreat as possible; for the moment he knows that he is in danger, he buries himself still deeper in the ground, stopping up the hole behind him with the earth he throws up with his powerful claws.

As soon as we could reach him, we tied a strong leathern thong to his hind leg and attempted to drag him out. In most cases, the animal was so strong that four or five of us were unable to move him with all our efforts. I have even seen them break a thong which was strong enough to hold a wild ox by the hind leg. When we could not get them out in this way, we had to shoot them in the hole.

My readers are already acquainted with the honey-bird, or *cuculus indicator*, from Mr. Sparrman's description. His accuracy has been questioned by Bruce, who gives a drawing of a bird that is indeed well known at the Cape; not the bee-cuckoo mentioned by Sparrman, but a bird called the fiscal, which I shall presently notice.

The habits of the honey-bird are by no means incorrectly described by the first-mentioned traveller, for I have often found honey in the

woods with their assistance. While I resided in Swellendam, I frequently went on honey-hunting expeditions, accompanied by one of our Hottentots, who carried a tinder-box to make a fire to smoke the bees out, and a leathern bag to hold the sweets.

This bird is easily distinguished by its impatient and importunate note. As soon as it sees any one, it flies round him to attract his attention with its peculiar chirp, and then flies off a short distance in the direction of the honey. But if the person turns back or takes a different course, the bird will follow and endeavour to induce him to continue his pursuit.

As soon as the honey-bird reaches the hive, he perches on some adjoining tree and remains silent: and even then the hunter has often great difficulty in finding the tree which contains the hive. The Hottentots, however, find the greater part of the honey by watching the flight of the bees, as the honey-birds are not very numerous in any part of the colony.

There is something exceedingly interesting in this sport. We are delighted with the singular instinct of our little coadjutor, and are

led through a hundred wild romantic scenes during the pursuit which we should never discover without his aid. We are reminded of the delightful tale of Sadak searching for the waters of oblivion guided by the little golden bird :—and who knows but the honey-bird, or some other like it, may have suggested the fable? There are few men who at times would not gladly drown their cares and sorrows in some such frivolous amusement as this; and happy are they who can forget them in the contemplation of the endless works of Nature, and can look on her calm heart-breathing beauties without a sting of self-reproach!

The fiscal is so named after a magistrate at Cape Town who formerly possessed great power under the Dutch Government. This little bird, which, as I have already stated, Bruce has mistaken for the bee-cuckoo, or honey-bird as it is called in the colony, has a curious custom of hanging up on a thorn any little snakes, lizards, or worms, it has destroyed. I had often observed these creatures suspended on the thorn-bushes, and was informed by the Dutch and Hottentots that the fiscal was in the habit of

executing this summary justice on the reptiles that he preyed upon.

There is a great variety of snakes in the district of Swellendam; but though few of the different species are poisonous, yet the dangerous kinds appear to be the more numerous. The puff-adder, the ring-hals, and the berg-adder, are very poisonous and very numerous. The first-mentioned derives its name from its puffing up or swelling out its neck when it is enraged. Its fangs are very much hooked; and the Dutch and Hottentots say that it leaps from the ground and throws itself over backwards when it attacks a person. I have, however, never seen an instance of this or any other snake leaping from the ground, during my long residence in the colony, and I cannot help doubting the truth of the story.

When a snake meditates an attack, he generally coils himself up, in which position he can easily dart his body forward to its full length without the tail quitting the ground. This cannot be called leaping, though it may often have that appearance to inaccurate observers. If we notice the conformation of those animals

which are capable of leaping farthest, we always find that they possess great rigidity of muscle joined to great elasticity, and but moderate flexibility; for great flexibility, in the human body at least, is generally accompanied by a degree of weakness. Snakes are evidently deficient in rigidity of muscle, and they possess flexibility in the highest degree. For these reasons I cannot, until I see it, believe that snakes can leap entirely from the ground either forward or backward. The puff-adder is generally found in the plains among rank herbage, and in gardens and hedges.

The ring-hals, or ring-neck, obtains its name from having a belt of white or yellow round the neck. It is more dangerous than the puff-adder, being less afraid of man. They are found in the same situations, have similar habits, but are less numerous than the first-mentioned. The berg-adders are found commonly on or near mountains; they are generally smaller and are less dangerous than those already mentioned.

All strangers in countries where these reptiles abound are apt to exaggerate their danger;

but in a year or two they think as little of them as we do of a lizard in England. I never knew an instance of a snake attacking or biting a person unless it was trodden on or molested; and even then they almost always give warning by hissing, or endeavour to effect their escape. During my residence in the colony, I have at different times trodden on them or kicked them in the grass unintentionally, but was never bitten.

On one occasion, shortly after my arrival in the country, I was much alarmed by a snake from which I saw no possibility of getting away. I had contrived a shower-bath between two walls, where there had formerly been a water-wheel to turn a mill. One day I had stripped to enjoy my daily luxury, and was going to pull the string, when a long green snake, which might have measured about a yard and a half, tumbled out of the thatch of the house and fell round my neck. I threw the loathsome reptile off as quickly as possible, and retreated as far back as the wall would allow me.

The snake, not half relishing the unceremo-

nious manner in which I had repelled his over-familiarity, reared himself up on his tail and continued regarding me for some moments with a most malevolent aspect. I could not escape, as my enemy guarded the only exit from the place, and I had no weapon to defend myself. He soon, however, to my great relief, retreated into a hole in the wall of the mill, where I killed him, to revenge the bodily fear into which he had thrown me, and to put an end to such disagreeable intrusions for the future.

It is remarkable that all snakes, whether poisonous or otherwise, seem perfectly aware of the fear and detestation which their appearance inspires in all animals, and never fail to brandish their forked tongue when disabled from making their escape. Fortunately they have numerous enemies to prevent them from becoming too numerous.

The secretary-birds, in particular, kill great numbers of them. This bird, which is held sacred in the colony, is often to be seen, especially in the eastern district, stalking with a formal ceremonious pace through the fields in

search of the snakes. As soon as he finds one, he strikes him with his long scaly legs, on which it is probable the poison could take no effect, and either kills him on the spot, or flies aloft with him in his claws, whirling him about to prevent his biting, and then drops him to the ground from a great height, after which he swallows him whole without more ado.

I have seen a young secretary-bird swallow a puff-adder whole, which was at least three feet in length, and thicker than a man's wrist. The secretary generally makes its nest on the top of a mimosa or other tree; and they hatch only two eggs at a time.

The animal called the ratel, which I shall have occasion to describe in the sequel, is also known to prey on snakes: this creature is now very rare in the district of Swellendam. Crows also devour small snakes; and I should suppose many other birds might be enumerated among their enemies, were we sufficiently acquainted with their habits. In hunting, I have often seen my dogs spring simultaneously on a snake, and tear him to pieces in an instant, without allowing him time to bite, and carefully avoid-

ing his head; for all animals seem perfectly aware of their danger from his fangs.

There are various methods adopted in the colony to prevent the dangerous consequences of the bite of a venomous serpent. The common way is, to tie a handkerchief tightly above the wound round the limb of the person, who is then recommended to make the best of his way to a spring of running water, where he must immerse his limb, and, cutting deeply into the flesh round the wound, allow it to bleed freely for some time. I very much doubt, however, whether this mode would be effectual when the person is bitten by a very dangerous snake.

Anything which promotes the circulation of the blood has a tendency to counteract the effects of the virus. With this intention, medical men generally prescribe frequent doses of some preparation of ammonia, which generally answers the purpose from its stimulating effects. The Hottentots also often suck out the poison with the mouth, or by means of a horn made for the purpose.

It has often been asserted, and as often

denied, that snakes have the power of fascinating animals for the purpose of destroying them. It seems to me that both parties in this question, as in many others, do not seem to have had a very clear idea of the subject in dispute. The term "fascination" is so equivocal in its meaning, that unless its signification be clearly defined, any argument founded on it must be merely an assumption. If fascination is meant to imply the power by which an animal is irresistibly drawn into danger in spite of itself, I must profess my total disbelief in the existence of such a power in the snake or in any other animal.

But there is another kind of what may be termed or mistaken for fascination, which I have often observed in a variety of creatures. Now, supposing some one of my readers, as has several times happened to myself, should, during a walk along a forest-path, absorbed in a reverie, suddenly meet a wild elephant or some other dangerous animal face to face, the chances are ten to one that both would be very much astonished at the unexpected meeting, and gaze somewhat sillily at each other for a few mo-

ments before either of them would attack or retreat.

I readily grant that should either of the parties turn tail, this kind of fascination would immediately lose its effect, and that the more frightened of the two would endeavour to effect his escape with all convenient speed. I believe this to be the whole amount of what is called fascination in serpents.

I shall now relate a little incident which may be applied either way, according to the judgment or fancy of the reader, but which in my own opinion will by no means tend to establish the existence of the power of fascination.

One day, while walking along the little stream before our house at Groot Vaders Bosch, my attention was attracted by the chirping of two or three little birds, that were fluttering over a peach-tree, which had grown up from a stone having been accidentally dropped among the bushes on the margin. On observing the spot more minutely, I saw a snake twisted spirally round the stem of the tree. The story of fascination immediately occurred to me, and I lost no time in concealing myself among the

wild geraniums to see the result. The snake had its eyes intently fixed on the birds, which continued to flutter round him—now approaching within a foot or two, and then mounting aloft in the air. This went on for several minutes, without the birds approaching nearer, or the snake making any apparent effort to catch them. At last the birds flew off, and their enemy slowly descended from the tree.

I often, during my walks, met with that singular animal the chameleon. The other species of lizards are very numerous, and often beautiful in their colours: none of them, however, as far as I could learn, is believed to be poisonous.

The scorpion is also frequently to be seen. As soon as it perceives your approach, it holds out its open claws, and hisses, erecting the tail at the same time. I have never found scorpions above three inches in length. They are not considered at all dangerous. I have known several people who have been bitten by them; but they told me that the only inconvenience they had suffered, was a slight inflammation for an inch or two round the part, and not worse than the effects of a sting from a bee.

Among the venomous creatures of South Africa, I may perhaps mention the tarantula, which is found in all parts of the Cape settlement, and in the district of Swellendam in particular. No instance of this spider being poisonous has ever fallen under my own observation; and I have great doubts if such be the case, so far as mankind and this colony are concerned.

In speaking of the birds peculiar to this part of the globe, I should not have forgotten the pheasants and partridges. The former in flavour resemble the common fowl, but in plumage they bear no comparison to the English pheasant. They are not easily shot, from the closeness of the bushes in which they harbour; but great numbers are daily taken by setting traps and snares for them in their haunts. We sometimes, in the course of a night, caught four or five brace of them in this manner. The partridges are inferior to the English ones in flavour.

The finest bird of the colony, but which has become very scarce in the older districts, is the paaw, or wild peacock, as it is called by the

Dutch: it is, I believe, a species of bustard. These birds are generally found in pairs, and sometimes are larger than the common turkey. This is the only bird which the Dutch colonists shoot; the smaller ones not being considered worth the powder and shot expended on them.

In enumerating the different animals of the district of Swellendam, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to confine myself to such particulars as are not generally known in this country, and have therefore refrained from minute descriptions of their external appearance, which have been often given by others better qualified for the task.

CHAPTER XVI.

Farming Establishment at Groot Vaders Bosch.—Hottentot and European Servants—Their Wages—Their usual Occupations.—Laziness of the Hottentots.—Low Price of Wheat.—Residence of the Author's Brother.—Subscription of the Farmers.—Difficulty of disposing of Grain.—Failure of the Wheat-crops.—English and Dutch Farming.—An Eccentric Character.—Craving of the Hottentots for Brandy.—Singular Anecdote.—Customs of the Hottentots.—Comforts of Savage Races.—Journey to George Town.—Travelling in Waggons delightful.—A Romantic Country.—Irrigation of the Land.—Hottentot Powers of Imitation.—Singular Youth.

I NOW return to our agricultural proceedings at Groot Vaders Bosch. My brother, who was much more devoted to his books and speculations than to the practical and daily business of a farm, which in South Africa, above all, cannot be managed without constant personal superintendence, gladly handed over this part of the concern to me; and in consideration of my

trouble, I was to share in the profits of the farm. I was glad of the opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of agriculture in the colony before I should commence operations on my own account.

Our farming establishment consisted of three or four Scotch labourers and five or six Hottentots with their families. Hottentots are quite indispensable on a farm in this colony for managing the working oxen and milch cows, as Europeans who have not arrived in the country at an early age cannot easily acquire the necessary dexterity in these matters.

Two of our European servants were good ploughmen; but they could not yoke in or manage the half-wild oxen without the assistance of the Hottentots. Though the latter receive but little wages, they are by no means such cheap servants as might be imagined, when we consider that their wives and families must be supported by the farmer, though he receives very little work from them in return.

The common wages of a Hottentot in this part of the colony are from three to five rix dollars (*4s. 6d.* to *7s. 6d.*) per month. This appears

a very small sum; but when we calculate the expense of maintaining their families, and the very limited demand for produce, and also the great distance of the markets in a country without inland navigation, I am persuaded that it is the full value of their services. It is true that the Hottentots are often grossly cheated by the roguish farmers; but the competition for labourers and the difficulty of procuring them are now so great among the colonists, that we cannot suppose that they receive much less generally than the true value of their labour.

The Hottentot men milk the cows, and perform all the work connected with the cattle: all that their wives do is to churn the milk and wash the butter. If the females are employed in the house of the farmer, they always receive wages or clothing; but in general they will not consent to do any kind of work for any one but their husbands.

No people are more capable of enduring continued and severe labour than the Hottentots; but they are always intolerably lazy. I cannot easily convey an idea of the annoyance they continually occasioned me. I could not turn

my back for ever so short a time but they immediately left off work, whatever they might be employed upon. Sometimes, when we were getting our wheat trodden out, I had occasion to leave them for half an hour; but, when I returned, I generally found several of them sound asleep among the straw, and the others deliberately smoking their pipes. I soon saw that they were quite incorrigible in this respect, and that it was only by keeping constantly with them that I could expect to get anything done.

The work that a Hottentot delights in is driving a waggon: here, wielding his long whip right and left among ten or a dozen oxen, he is quite in his element. The worst of him is, that in the enjoyment of his favourite employment he does not care one farthing for his master's interest, and cruelly abuses his cattle on all occasions, if he is allowed.

The price of wheat was exceedingly low the first year of my residence in the district of Swellendam. It was, indeed, hardly possible to dispose of it in any quantity; and the little that was sold fetched only from *2s.* to *2s. 6d.*

per bushel. The crop had been abundant, and though, as I have already mentioned, the farmers grew but little more than they required for their own consumption, yet the population being almost all producers, there was necessarily but little demand for the surplus at so great a distance from Cape Town, which is the only market for the produce of the western districts.

My brother had fixed on his present residence in the hope that the mouth of the Breede river, which was known to be accessible to small vessels, and only forty miles distant, would become frequented by the colonial coasters. However, some time was required to effect these arrangements, as there were then no stores at the Breede river for the reception of goods; and, besides, it was not an easy matter to induce any of the Cape Town merchants to risk their property in entering a port with which they were so little acquainted.

Three or four years afterwards, my brother succeeded in raising a subscription among the neighbouring farmers, which enabled them to build a large store at the mouth of the river,

which is now called Port-Beaufort; and at last some of the merchants were induced to send their vessels to receive the wheat and other produce of the farmers in exchange for manufactured goods, &c.

The effect of establishing this outlet for the produce of the district was almost immediately felt in the increased industry of the agriculturists, who now grow three times the quantity of grain they did formerly. This shows the absurdity of taxing the Dutch farmers with indolence, when the principle of self-interest, or avarice, of which they possess so large a share, had no scope for being brought into action.

At the period however of which I am now speaking, not being able to dispose of his grain at a fair price, my brother kept a large quantity stacked on the ground, which he sold the following year on the spot at the rate of *7s. 6d.* per bushel, being treble the price of wheat in the preceding year.

The year 1820, to which I allude, was the commencement of a succession of bad crops, or rather a nearly total failure of the wheat in most parts of the colony, in consequence of a

disease called " the rust," which had not been known in the country for forty years before. As may be supposed, our wheat-crops, under these circumstances, proved by no means a profitable speculation.

For the reasons I have formerly stated, a farmer in this colony, who is not situated within a moderate distance of a market, would do well to confine his attention to the rearing of live stock, which can be brought to market at a much smaller expense and require less labour in their management.

My brother's vineyard and orchard did not prove more profitable to him than his wheat-crops, beyond the luxuries they afforded for his table. There was no sale for fruit in the neighbourhood, where it was exceedingly abundant, and the inferior wine produced from the vineyard paid little more than the expense of cultivation. The Dutch farmers, however, turn these articles to some account by carrying them in their waggons several hundred miles to the frontier districts, where they exchange them for cattle and sheep.

The possession of slaves, together with the

labour of their own families, enable the Dutch to cultivate their ground at a much smaller expense than the English farmers, who are generally of a higher class in society, and cannot bring themselves to relish these long journeys from home, and the drudgery of retailing their produce about the country.

One of the people who had come out to the colony with my brother, and who was a gardener by trade, had taken his orchard at a moderate rent in hopes of turning it to some account. This man was quite an original in his way, and possessed a large share of all the peculiarities of his countrymen, joined to a great deal of eccentricity acquired from his solitary mode of life.

He was, besides, a man of decided talent, and, like many of his profession in Scotland, had contrived to pick up a great deal of general information from a variety of sources which it would have puzzled himself to particularize.

In his habits, he was a perfect hermit: he allowed his beard to grow and frizzle luxuriantly round his chin, and his tall straight person was covered with clothes of his own making.

As he was not the best of tailors, he adopted the most summary mode of fashioning his garments according to his own vague idea of the shape of his person. He had not entirely failed in fabricating his leather trousers after the cut of an old pair he had brought out with him: but the jacket was his masterpiece; for, just as much from whim as want of skill, he contrived to cover his body by cutting a hole in the middle of a piece of cloth for his head to go through, allowing the two ends to fall down before and behind below the middle of his body, where it was secured by a leather belt.

He had taken up his residence in an old mill in the orchard, which was some hundred yards from any other habitation and buried among the trees, with the double view of being near his work and removed from the society of the other people, for whom John Weir entertained a great aversion.

His domicile was fitted up in a true Robinson Crusoe fashion. His bed was formed of rough sticks covered with rushes instead of a mattress, and slung by the four corners from the roof of the room; and he had constructed a

rude sofa and table of similar materials. Here John resided, apparently happy and contented with his situation.

But there were times when his social propensities would get the better of his habitual misanthropy; and, on some occasions, when the other people were indulging themselves with an extra glass of brandy and a Scotch reel with the Hottentot girls, John, charmed with the sounds of the fiddle, would quit his retreat in the orchard, and rushing into the midst of the revellers like a creature dropped from another world, calling out at the same time to make room for him, would seize one of the *fair* dames by the hands, and, whirling her into the middle of the room, cut the most extravagant capers, making his legs fly about in all directions, to the manifest danger of the bystanders. After indulging his most extravagant freaks for a few hours, and appearing the merriest of the party — shouting, yelling, and singing — this singular mortal would retire quietly to his den, where he would immure himself for whole weeks on a stretch, seeking no one's company, and asking no one's assistance in anything.

John was a devourer of books, and I used often to take him some to read, and hear his acute and extraordinary remarks on their contents. Astronomy was one of his favourite studies, and every piece of wood about his habitation was covered with the calculations he had made to satisfy his mind on various points connected with that science.

Like a true philosopher, he would not allow himself to be led away by the opinions of any author he read, unless his mind was perfectly satisfied of the justness of his reasoning. My brother and myself were the only individuals in the place with whom this extraordinary being would condescend to enter into any long conversation; which he did in the most familiar terms, conceiving himself quite on an equality in point of intellect, but without the smallest disposition to forwardness or insolence in his manner.

John had ample leisure to digest what he had been reading over-night, while engaged during the day in cutting and drying peaches and other fruits in the sun: he had thus sufficient employment for mind and body at the same time.

The only thing that seemed at all to disturb his tranquillity was when some Hottentot girl ventured to approach his domicile. On such an occasion, he might be seen running after her at full speed, in the vain hope of overtaking her and of preferring his suit. The dames, on their part, though by no means insensible to tender emotions on ordinary occasions, had a decided aversion to the appearance of this singular character, and, as they fled, loaded their pursuer with opprobrious epithets, comparing him to a wild boar or a porcupine,—to the aptness of which similitude his bristly chin bore ample testimony.

I have already alluded to the craving the Hottentots have for brandy. We were constantly annoyed with their importunities for "soupies" or drams of their favourite liquor. Sometimes they begged a "soupie" on the score of the weather being cold; at others, they were troubled with the cholic or a headache; —all complaints, in fact, were to be cured by brandy.

The most ingenious and original device, however, was practised on one occasion by the wife

of one of our Hottentot farm-servants, who came occasionally to churn at the house. After trying entreaties without any effect, she went out during a heavy shower of rain until her clothes were thoroughly soaked; and then, very deliberately stripping herself of every article she wore, walked into the room where we were sitting, carrying her dripping garments in her hand, and boldly demanded of my brother "if it was handsome in him to refuse her a glass of brandy, when she had got all her clothes thus wet in his service?" He was of course glad to get rid of so extraordinary an apparition on her own terms

The Hottentot house-servants in this country are never furnished with beds, as they are accustomed to sleep on the ground wrapped up in a sheepskin blanket. We had two girls in the house who slept on a cane-bottomed sofa in the hall, without any covering but their usual clothing; for neither the Dutch nor the Hottentots ever divest themselves of anything but their outer garment when they go to bed.

As soon as their work was over, when it was moonlight, these damsels, who were sisters, went

out of doors, where they were soon joined by several girls from the outhouses, and they would dance and sing for half the night without intermission: there seemed to be no possibility of exhausting their extravagant animal spirits. Thus they pass their youth in thoughtless mirth; and, when they are somewhat sobered by years, they take equal pleasure in chattering round their fire through the greater part of the night, in telling their adventures, and in describing the character and mimicking the manners of the different masters they had lived with.

People in this state of society may be said to be children all their lives; and, could we weigh their happiness in a balance with that of their masters, I believe we should find that, in spite of their many discomforts and privations, they enjoy fully as great a share of it as the more civilized race. Fortunately for the lower and oppressed classes in all communities, Providence has not left their happiness entirely dependant on the will of their masters, but wisely provided many compensating circumstances in their favour, over which power and wealth can exercise no control.

Their levity and freedom from care constitute a large portion of the comforts of the Hottentots: they live but for the present moment. When they have plenty of food, they share it with their friends, and enjoy themselves: when they have little, it gives them no uneasiness, custom having made them able to endure opposite extremes with little inconvenience. They can go to sleep at will, and their rest is never disturbed by anxiety for the morrow. Such a life, which would be insupportable to men who have acquired civilized habits, is not only tolerable but agreeable to savages, whose enjoyments are not to be measured by our own.

My brother had for some time been proposing to visit the district-town of George, which is situated about one hundred and twenty miles from Groot Vaders Bosch. Several of the people whom he had brought to the colony were employed in felling and sawing timber in the extensive forests of that district, which supplied the principal part of the timber used at Cape Town. Most of these men still owed him a great part of the money they were bound by their contract to pay him for the expenses of

conveying them to the colony, and his presence on the spot was requisite to enforce the payment of their debt.

To make the best of his time, my brother determined on travelling with his waggon drawn by twelve of his strongest oxen, with the view of bringing back a load of yellow wood planks, which are generally used for house-building throughout the colony, this kind of timber not being found in the forests of Swellendam.

It was late in the day we had fixed for starting before we had all things necessary for our journey stowed away; so that we only got about ten or twelve miles from home before the sun went down. In a country where there are no inns for the reception of travellers, a journey in a waggon is like a voyage by sea; we must lay in ample stores of such things as cannot be purchased along the road, besides as much furniture as may be absolutely requisite for comfort. We therefore took a mattress and bedding, which served us both to sleep on; and filled the waggon-chest, on which the driver sits, with stores of bread, flour, tea and sugar, &c. &c.

To people not over-particular about their comforts, in a climate such as this a waggon covered from the heat of the sun by a tent is by no means an unpleasant mode of conveyance; and it possesses this advantage, that it enables the passenger to be quite independent of the company or hospitality of the farmers along the road, when he prefers it:—for me, a jaunt in a waggon was always delightful in the extreme. As a matter of course, we took our guns with us to get a shot at any antelopes or other game we might see near the road.

In the first few miles of our journey, there was nothing remarkable in the appearance of the country, excepting the romantic character it derived from the magnificent chain of mountains on our left. As we quitted the valleys in their immediate neighbourhood, however, the soil, though rich and productive in its nature, became more arid. When we came to the Duivenhoeks river, which is a rapid and constant stream, the country assumed a new character.

The soil, which was a clay, was of an exceedingly bright red colour, but very dry. Yet,

notwithstanding the aridity of the ground and the scantiness of the grass, it was almost everywhere covered with low bushes, on which the cattle and sheep were browsing; and they were the fattest cattle I had yet seen in the colony.

This kind of red clay soil is generally called "karoo" by the Dutch, and is always exceedingly productive in wheat, and yields the finest fruit of any in the colony when it is occasionally irrigated by a stream of water to correct its extreme aridity.

The command of a constant stream to moisten his ground gives the farmer a great advantage in a country of this description, as he can by its aid sow his grain when he likes, and is quite independent of rain, which is so necessary in other situations; and it is observed that the wheat grown in this manner is the whitest and finest in the colony.

We rested for the night at the Duivenhoeks river, where our Hottentots soon made a fire and prepared our repast. On these occasions, they generally make a separate fire for themselves at a few paces distant, round which they

sit talking for half the night, laughing at and mocking the oddities of all the masters whom they have formerly served: we of course were spared, *at present at least*, as we could hear every word they said. The Hottentots have great powers of imitation; and, to increase the effect of their drollery, they sometimes divide the characters they represent among them, each taking his particular part of the dialogue, as in a play.

We were some hours in bed in the waggon before our attendants had exhausted their stock of gossip and jokes, when, rolling themselves up in their sheepskin-blankets, they laid themselves down contentedly on the ground round the fire with their pipes in their mouths, and continued smoking till they fell asleep.

One of these thoughtless mortals was a lad of fourteen or fifteen years of age, who had been a long time in my brother's service. He was a half-breed between a Mozambique slave and a Hottentot woman, and was the lowest, in point of intellect, of any human creature I have ever met with who was not born an idiot.

If there is any truth in phrenology, the shape of

his head sufficiently indicated his character. His forehead was narrow and contracted, and there was a remarkable preponderance of the animal organs. His head was besides exceedingly small, and fixed on his neck in the same manner as a monkey's. My brother constantly supplied him with clothes, which he took in lieu of wages; but, as soon as they got dirty, he threw them away, and came to his master for more. He had thus incurred a debt which five or six years' service would hardly have sufficed to discharge. He possessed cunning, but it partook much more of instinct than of reason. He had all the thoughtless improvidence of his mother's race, joined to the innate stupidity of his father's.

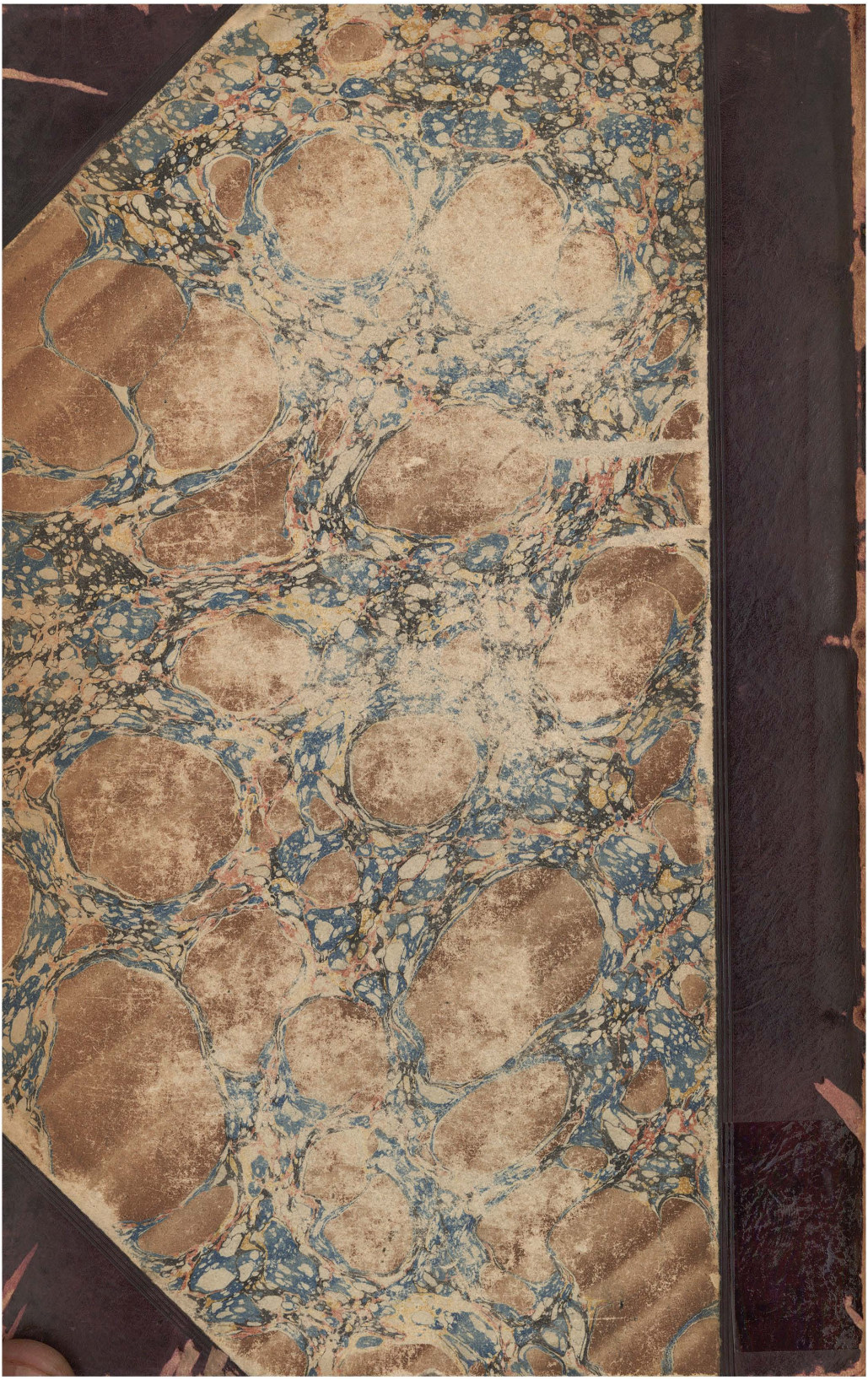
Yet this creature could manage a waggon tolerably well; and he was, moreover, an excellent horseman—in so far, at least, as courage and a sure seat entitled him to that somewhat dignified appellation. His mode of acquiring this accomplishment deserves notice. So great was his passion for riding, that he used to get up in the night-time, and, taking a whip and a leather thong for a bridle in his hand, would steal

quietly to the pen where the calves were kept, and, mounting one of the largest of them, would flog him till he carried him wherever he liked.

When one of the calves was exhausted with this exercise, he would take another and serve him in the same way. He had played this prank so often with our horses, that we were obliged to lock them up at night; but it was a long time before we discovered this new resource of his, by the emaciated appearance of the calves.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.




MOODIE'S
SOUTH
AFRICA
VOL.
I.