

TEN YEARS
IN
SOUTH AFRICA
INCLUDING
A PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION
OF THE
WILD SPORTS OF THAT COUNTRY.

BY LIEUT. J. W. D. MOODIE,
21ST FUSILIERS.

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P R E F A C E.

IN submitting the following pages to the notice of the public, the principal object of the author has been to convey to the reader a true notion of the habits and mode of life of a colonist in the southern extremity of Africa.

From his long residence in this part of the globe, the writer had opportunities of seeing more of the Dutch settlers, and of the Hottentot and Kaffre tribes, than usually falls to the lot of the traveller. His frequent excursions into the woody jungles of this savage region also enabled him to observe the wild and magnificent scenery peculiar to the country, and to acquire much knowledge of the natural history of the colony, more especially as regards the elephant. Of the mode of hunting this animal, and the part which he took in this exciting sport, he has endeavoured to convey

an accurate idea. He thinks that the anecdotes and particulars he has introduced of other wild beasts, such as the wild boar, the tiger, the lion, the antelope, the rhinoceros, &c. will not be deemed destitute of interest.

In the Appendix, the author has given some very interesting anecdotes and particulars of the Hottentots and Kaffres, among whom it was his lot to pass ten years of his life, as well as some vivid pictures of the wild sports of the country, which cannot fail to be considered an acceptable addition to his own adventures. For these he is principally indebted to the travels of Lieutenant Rose—a gentleman who was four years in South Africa at the same period with himself, and to whom he has alluded in the course of his narrative.

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

decided advantage over them. Unless the cattle fly from them, they are not in much danger, particularly when several of them are together; for the hyenas are afraid of their horns, and never assail them but on the flank or rear; and even after they are severely bitten, large cattle or horses often make their escape from their huge jaws, which leave their marks ever afterwards. Horses generally run from them; but if they are shackled in the manner of the colony, (having their necks tied by a leathern thong to one leg,) finding that they have no chance of escape by flight, they turn round and face their enemy, when the dastardly hyena sheers off with a sulky growl. This is a most fortunate circumstance for the colonists, as they are often obliged, in travelling, to turn out their horses to graze through the night.

The hyenas in their predatory excursions are generally alone or in pairs. By the accounts of the old Hottentots, they seem to have been less in dread of man formerly, before fire-arms became common in this part of the colony. It is even said that they sometimes entered their huts and carried off their children. This I can rea-

dily believe, from the known boldness and ferocity of these animals near Port Natal, where the inhabitants live in great fear of them, and never venture to travel alone during the night.*

Hyenas are often hunted in the colony by tracking them to their dens in the mountains, and shooting them as they endeavour to make their escape. The colonists sometimes even catch them napping; and, while the foremost hunter enters their dark cave, the hyena continues glaring with affright at the torch which he carries in his left hand, while he delibe-

* Fire-arms have, indeed, wrought a great change in the character of many wild animals in Britain as well as in South Africa. A few years ago I visited the little island of Papa Westray in Orkney, where, on a small uninhabited islet adjoining, hundreds of seals were lying on the grass near the beach, which were so tame that they allowed us to come within forty paces of them before they attempted to move; and, when they at last took to their native element, they continued calmly looking at us with their heads above the water, only diving when we threw stones at them. This extreme tameness was simply owing to the proprietor never permitting a gun to be fired on the island. He caught great numbers of them for their skins and oil, by anchoring nets in the shallow water along the beach, in which they entangled themselves when they were driven into the water. He also got immense quantities of the eggs of gulls, and other sea birds, which were also exceedingly tame.

rately stabs it to the heart with a long knife. Many more are caught alive in traps, or wolf-houses, as they are called. These traps are generally constructed of wood, by fixing strong sticks in the ground, meeting at top like the roof of a house. They have either one or two doors at the ends, which, by means of a lever, are contrived to fall as soon as the animal seizes the bait, which is suspended in the inside. The hyena is exceedingly cunning and suspicious, particularly after an unsuccessful attempt to ensnare him ; and it is therefore the better plan to have a door at each end of the trap, which gives him more confidence to enter. I have often known them go round and round a baited trap, and not venture within the doorway.

When a hyena is secured in this way, the Dutch colonists, to revenge themselves on the misdeeds of his species, indulge in a cruel sport at the expense of their captured enemy. They get hold of one of his hind legs, and, drawing it between the bars of his trap, cut a hole through the sinew above the joint, and fix a heavy waggon chain to it, and then raising the