



NARRATIVE

OF THE

SURVEYING VOYAGES

OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIPS

ADVENTURE AND BEAGLE,

BETWEEN

THE YEARS 1826 AND 1836,

DESCRIBING THEIR

EXAMINATION OF THE SOUTHERN SHORES

OF

SOUTH AMERICA,

AND

THE BEAGLE'S CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF THE GLOBE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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from India, and the Indian islands, where troops of elephants, noble forests, and impenetrable jungles, are associated together in every account. If, on the other hand, we refer to any work of travels through the southern parts of Africa, we shall find allusions in almost every page either to the desert character of the country, or to the numbers of large animals inhabiting it. The same thing is rendered evident by the many sketches which have been published of various parts of the interior. When the *Beagle* was at Cape Town, I rode a few leagues into the country, which at least was sufficient to render that which I had read more fully intelligible.

Dr. Andrew Smith, who, at the head of his adventurous party, has so lately succeeded in passing the Tropic of Capricorn, informs me that, taking into consideration the whole of the southern part of Africa, there can be no doubt of its being sterile country. On the southern and south-eastern coasts there are some fine forests, but with these exceptions, the traveller may pass, for days together, through open plains, covered by a poor and scanty vegetation. It is difficult to convey any accurate idea of degrees of comparative fertility; but it may be safely said, that the amount of vegetation supported at any one time* by Great Britain, exceeds, perhaps even tenfold, the quantity on an equal area, in the interior parts of Southern Africa. The fact that bullock-waggons can travel in any direction, excepting near the coast, without more than occasionally half an hour's delay, gives, perhaps, a more definite notion of its scantiness. Now if we look to the animals inhabiting these wide plains, we shall find their numbers extraordinarily great, and their bulk immense. We must enumerate the elephant, three species of rhinoceros, and as Dr. Smith is convinced two others also, the hippopotamus, giraffe, the *bos caffer*—as large as a full-grown bull, and the *elan*—but little less, two

* I mean by this to exclude the total amount, which may have been successively produced and consumed during a given period.

zebras, and the quaccha, two gnus, and several antelopes even larger than these latter animals. It may be supposed that although the species are numerous, the individuals of each kind are few. By the kindness of Dr. Smith, I am enabled to show that the case is very different. He informs me, that in lat. 24° , in one day's march with the bullock-waggons, he saw, without wandering to any great distance on either side, between one hundred and one hundred and fifty rhinoceroses, which belonged to three species. That the same day he saw several herds of giraffes, amounting together to nearly a hundred; and that, although no elephant was observed, yet they are found in this district. At the distance of a little more than one hour's march from their place of encampment on the previous night, his party actually killed at one spot eight hippopotamoses, and saw many more. In this same river there were likewise crocodiles. Of course it was a case quite extraordinary, to see so many great animals crowded together, but it evidently proves that they must exist in great numbers. Dr. Smith describes the country passed through that day, as "being thinly covered with grass, and bushes about four feet high, and still more thinly with mimosa-trees." The waggons were not prevented travelling in a nearly direct line.

Besides these large animals, every one the least acquainted with the natural history of the Cape, has read of the herds of antelopes, which can be compared only to flocks of migratory birds. The numbers indeed of the lion,* panther, and hyæna, and the multitude of birds of prey, plainly tell of the abundance of the smaller quadrupeds. As Dr. Smith remarked to me, the carnage each day in Southern Africa must indeed be terrific! I confess it is truly surprising, how such a number of animals can find support in a country producing so little food. The larger quadrupeds no doubt roam over wide extents in search of it; and their food chiefly con-

* Dr. Smith mentioned to me, that one evening seven lions were counted at one time walking on the plain, round the encampment.