

JOURNAL OF A RESIDENCE

AT

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE;

WITH

EXCURSIONS INTO THE INTERIOR,

AND

NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY, AND THE NATIVE TRIBES.

BY

CHARLES J. F. BUNBURY, F.L.S.

||

Foreign Secretary of the Geological Society.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1848.

name of the Houw-Hoek. The road over this mountain, which may be considered a kind of continuation of, or supplement to, Sir Lowry's Pass, was the work of the same officer and the same government, and cost no more than 600*l*.* It is hardly necessary to add that it is very well executed.

With the exception of this Houw-Hoek Pass, (and even this can hardly be called picturesque) the country that we travelled over in this long day's journey, from the Hottentot Holland Mountains to the Zonder-Einde (Endless River), was drearily monotonous; wide plains and low round hills, uniformly covered with stunted bushes, without trees or cultivation, offering nothing either to please the eye or excite the imagination. In truth, the same remark might be applied to a great part of the country between Cape Town and the Eastern frontier. The want of verdure in the scenery of this colony generally, (though, of course, there are exceptions here and there,) is very striking; there is little grass, and most of the shrubs, which make up the great mass of the vegetation, have either leaves so minute, and of a substance so dry and juiceless, that they give no verdant or cheerful effect to the landscape, or else are covered with a whitish wool or down, which entirely hides their green. In this latter class is to be ranked the prevailing *Rhinoster bosch*, or *Rhinoceros bush*

* See a paper, by Major Michell, in the *Journal of the Geographical Society*, vol. vi. part 2.

(*Stoebe rhinocerotis*), which literally covers leagues and leagues together in the districts of Zwellendam and George; it is a low, half-shrubby, grey, cottony plant, in form resembling a miniature cypress or juniper.

The soil of all this tract is a very hard ironstone gravel; the road execrably rugged, in spite of the goodness of the material, for no care whatever is bestowed on it; and as it is generally on a slope, the rain water from the higher ground cuts furrows across it, which are deepened by every succeeding winter. The jolting occasioned by travelling in a horse-waggon on such roads, is beyond all description; I despair of giving an idea of it to those who have never experienced the like; suffice it to say, that at the end of the second day's journey I ached in every joint and muscle from the shaking, and felt pretty much as Don Quixote is described as feeling after his adventure with the carriers. It is in crossing the deep gullies and dry torrent beds, which are very numerous, that the jolting is most severe: the descent into these is almost always excessively steep and rough; arriving at the brink, the drivers put their horses to their speed, thunder down headlong into the ravine, and dash up the other side at the same pace with a prodigious uproar. In spite of the excessive discomfort of this mode of travelling, it is impossible not to admire the skill with which the Dutch farmers drive eight or ten horses in a team, at

river. Some general and comprehensive name is very much wanted for this important chain, which is known in various parts as the Zwellendam, the Auteniqua, and the Zitzikamma mountains. In the "Encyclopædia of Geography" it is erroneously called the Langekloof, a name which belongs to the valley, and not to the mountains that bound it.

This long valley, although crossed by numerous streams, is on the whole of a remarkably arid and monotonous appearance. Indeed, short of actual desert, I can hardly imagine any thing more wearisome: not a tree, not a house, or trace of cultivation for miles together; scarcely a bush above three feet high; nor a tinge of green, except along the margins of the streams, whose course is indicated by a narrow stripe of reeds and rushes. A great part of the ground is covered exclusively with the melancholy grey rhinoceros bush. The mountains on the south are extremely steep and rugged, rising into a number of sharp pyramidal peaks, and would be picturesque if set off by a tolerable foreground; but without this they are too barren and savage for beauty; as their flanks exhibit nothing but naked, grey, stratified rock, like the cliffs of Table mountain, without a tree or blade of grass. The streams, as I have said, are numerous, and though small, are never entirely dried up, so that it surprises one to see their fertilising influence extend so little way. An industrious and enterprising people would have turned

in their predatory and hostile incursions, as they can muster in force, and even approach to within a few miles of Graham's Town, without being observed.

Not more than twenty years ago, I have been told, the Fish River Bush swarmed with elephants and other wild beasts. Mr. Clarke once saw fifty elephants together near Trompeter's Drift, about thirty miles from Graham's Town; but the active war waged against them for the sake of their ivory, by the Albany settlers, the more frequent passage of men and cattle through those wild tracts, the patrolling and fighting in the bush during the late Caffer war, have put these aboriginal inhabitants to the rout. At the present day, it is said, not an elephant is to be found in any part of the Fish River Bush. The rhinoceros and buffalo still exist there; but the former, the most dangerous of all the wild beasts of this country, is become extremely rare. The hippopotamus, or sea-cow, as the Dutch call it, though much reduced in numbers, is still to be found near the mouth of the river. All the large kinds of antelope have become far scarcer than they were formerly within the bounds of the colony, and some are quite extinct. The high, open table plains, called the Bontebok Flats, lying to the north-east of the Winterberg, are still famous for the abundance of large game. Many officers who had visited them for the sake of hunting, assured me that the immense multitudes of wild quadrupeds, especially of the quagga, the gnou or wildebeest, the

blesbok, and the springbok, which were there to be seen, were really astonishing. Lions are frequently to be met with on these Flats, though much reduced in number by the exertions of the sportsmen. It is said that the lion will seldom attack a man, at least a white man, unless provoked; when roused, he generally walks away at a slow pace, and with an air of great deliberation and tranquillity, seeming to say, "I will let you alone, if you let *me* alone;" but if pursued or fired at, he attacks in his turn with great fury. I had always supposed that he was an animal of solitary habits, but the officers who had hunted on the Bontebok Flats all concurred in asserting that it was usual to meet with several lions together, sometimes as many as seven or eight.

I must not enlarge on the wild sports of South Africa, which I did not myself witness, and of which a copious and amusing account has been given by Captain Harris. When I was at Fort Beaufort, I saw some admirable drawings, executed by an officer of the 27th regiment, and which gave a most lively idea of the style of hunting on the Bontebok Flats.

In the neighbourhood of Graham's Town I met with few wild animals, though I wandered over the hills for several hours almost every day. The ground, indeed, is everywhere perforated by the burrows of the ant-eater or *Aardvark*, and the broken and excavated ant-hills bear witness to his operations; but he very rarely stirs out of his hole by day, and I never

was able to meet with him. The hyæna, which is common in this neighbourhood, is likewise a nocturnal animal. One day, as I was walking along the top of the high hill already mentioned behind the barracks, I had a good view of a large bird of prey, which I easily recognised as the bearded eagle, or Lämmergeier of the Swiss. I was already aware that this noble bird was a native of Southern Africa, as well as of the Alps and the Himalaya, but I did not expect to see him at such a moderate elevation above the sea. Perhaps he had his home among the cliffs of the Winterberg, and had come thus far in quest of prey.

The climate of Albany is considered very healthy, although subject to sudden and violent changes of temperature. It is, on the whole, remarkably dry; rain is unfrequent, and very uncertain in the time of its occurrence, but when it does come (as I have already mentioned), it is always from the south or south-east, as in that direction the country is open to the sea. The dry winds from the west, north-west, and north, often blow with great violence, and are excessively annoying; for, like the south-easters at the Cape, they raise stifling clouds of dust. During part of the time we remained here, indeed, whenever it did not blow hard, the weather was extremely pleasant, and the air singularly clear and pure. The sunsets were often strikingly beautiful, the western sky being all in a glow of the deepest and clearest gold or orange, while the light clouds oppo-