

AN  
ACCOUNT  
OF  
TRAVELS  
INTO THE  
*INTERIOR OF SOUTHERN AFRICA,*  
IN THE YEARS 1797 AND 1798:

INCLUDING  
CURSORY OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE  
GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF THAT CONTINENT;  
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SUCH OBJECTS AS OCCURRED IN THE  
ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, AND MINERAL KINGDOMS;  
AND  
SKETCHES OF THE PHYSICAL AND MORAL CHARACTERS OF THE VARIOUS  
TRIBES OF INHABITANTS SURROUNDING THE SETTLEMENT OF THE  
*CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.*

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,  
A DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT STATE, POPULATION, AND PRODUCE OF  
THAT EXTENSIVE COLONY;  
*WITH A MAP CONSTRUCTED ENTIRELY FROM ACTUAL OBSERVATIONS  
MADE IN THE COURSE OF THE TRAVELS.*

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to be left on the desert ; and they generally arrive at the town in so maimed and miserable a condition, as to be very unfit for what they are intended. Could the farmers near the Cape be once prevailed upon to sow turnips, which may be produced here equally good as in Europe, to plant potatoes, and cultivate the artificial grasses, the quality of the beef and mutton might be very materially improved. Those few inhabitants who stall-feed their cattle, have their tables supplied with beef little, if at all, inferior to what is sold in Leadenhall market ; but the adoption of such a system would require more labor and activity, and more attention, than the body and mind of a Dutch farmer seem capable of supplying : his avarice, though great, is yet overcome by the habits of indolence in which he has been educated.

On the fifteenth, from the exhausted state of our oxen, three of which we had been obliged to leave behind, we made only a short stage of ten or twelve miles to the *riet fonteyn*, or the red spring, which took its rise out of a high cone-shaped hill, with a flat top, and ran in a feeble stream to the southward. The banks were skirted by a thicket of the *doorn boom*, or thorn-tree, a species of *mimosa*, called erroneously by the two Swedish travellers, who have published their researches in Southern Africa, the *nilotica*, or that which produces the gum Arabic. The pods of this is very long, and moniliform or divided like a string of beads ; whereas the karroo mimosa has short sickle-shaped pods. Armed from the summit down to the ground with enormous double thorns, pointing in every direction "like quills upon the fretful porcupine," it makes an

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impenetrable thicket to most animals except the rhinoceros, whose hide, though not proof against a musket-ball, as has been asserted by a great naturalist, has little to fear from the spines of the mimosa. The bark, being powerfully astringent, is preferred to that of any other tree in the colony for preparing leather from raw skins; and the wood, being hard and tough, is used for waggon-poles, and as lock-shoes for the wheels. The trunk of the tree gives out great quantities of a clear transparent gum, which, however, does not seem to have been applied to any kind of use. It is remarkable that almost every tree which furnishes tasteless gums or resins is covered with a bark that is highly astringent and austere to the taste.

The following day we crossed the bed of the Buffalo river, which was at least fifty yards in width; but the quantity of water in it was barely sufficient to form a current. The deep shelving banks, however, and the wreck of roots and shrubs, indicated at least its periodical power, which had forced through the *black mountains* to the southward a grand chasm in its passage to the eastern ocean. The whole surface of the country was here strewn over with small fragments of a deep purple-colored slate, that had crumbled away from the strata which in long parallel ridges lay in the direction of east and west. Scattered among these fragments were black tumified stones that had much the appearance of volcanic slugs, or the scorizæ of an iron furnace. Several hills of the shape of cones, some truncated near the top parallel to their bases, stood detached from each other on the plain, apparently thrown up by volcanic explosions; but a nearer view of the alternate strata of earth and sand-

sand-stone, regularly disposed in every part, shewed them to be the effect of water and not of fire. This part of the desert was more sterile and naked than had yet occurred. Scarcely a plant of any description threw its feeble leaves out of the flaty surface, except a few species of the mesembryanthemum, among which was one more luxuriant than the rest, whose leather-like covering of its fleshy cylindrical leaves served our Hottentots, when dried, for tinder.

About ten miles beyond the Buffalo river we encamped for the night upon the banks of a small running brook called *Geelbeck*, winding round a flat sandy marsh overgrown with rushes, and abounding with springs whose waters were strongly impregnated with salt. All the naked sandy patches were thinly sprinkled over with a fine white powdery substance not unlike snow: it was found in the greatest quantities where the cattle of travellers had been tied up at nights; and it was observed almost invariably to surround the roots of a frutescent plant that grew here in great exuberance. I collected a quantity of this white powder, together with the sand, and by boiling the solution and evaporating the water, obtained from it crystals of pure prismatic nitre. A small proportion of a different alkaline salt was also extracted from the liquor. The plant alluded to was a species of *salsola*, or salt-wort, with very minute fleshy leaves closely surrounding the woody branches. It is known to the country-people by the Hottentot name of *Canna*, and is that plant from the ashes of which almost all the soap, that is used in the colony, is made. These ashes, when carefully burnt and collected, are a pure white caustic alkali, a  
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Each nest, however, has a separate entrance on the under side, and has no communication with its neighbour from within. Sometimes one of these clumps of nests will extend a space of ten feet in diameter, and contain a population of several hundred individuals. The aloe dichotoma, being the only plant met with on the hills of this country approaching to the size of a tree, except the mimosa, which grows only on the borders of periodical rivers, is generally the resort of these gregarious birds, where they construct their temporary dwellings, when nature calls upon them to fulfil the end of their creation.

It was on one of these edifices that the Hottentot screened himself from the sight of the lion. Having remained silent and motionless for a length of time, he ventured to peep over the side of the nest, hoping that the lion had taken his departure; when, to his great terror and astonishment, his eyes met those of the animal, to use his own expression, "flashing fire at him." In short, the lion laid himself down at the foot of the tree, and stirred not from the place for four-and-twenty hours. He then returned to the spring to quench his thirst, and, in the mean time, the Hottentot descended the tree, and scampered to his home which was not more than a mile distant, as fast as his feet could carry him. The perseverance of the lion was such, that it appeared afterwards he had returned to the tree, and from thence had hunted the Hottentot by the scent within three hundred paces of the house.

It seems to be a fact well established, that the lion prefers the flesh of a Hottentot to that of any other creature. He has frequently

quently been singled out from a party of Dutch. The latter being disguised in clothing, and the former going generally naked, may perhaps account for it. The horse, next to the Hottentot, seems to be his favorite food; but on the sheep, perhaps on account of his woolly covering, which he is too indolent to uncase, he seldom deigns to fix his paw.

From the Cape to the Khamies berg, very little occurs in the animal kingdom to interest the natural historian, especially one who may have made a previous journey to the eastward, where almost the whole tribe of quadrupeds peculiar to Southern Africa may be met with. In a Namaaqua hut I observed the skin of a Jackal, with a black bushy tail, that seemed to be different from any I had seen on the other side of the continent. It was covered with thick fur. The dogs of the Namaaques were of the same sort as those of the Bosjesmans; and it was here observed of them, that their tails, contrary to the description of Linnæus, given as the specific character to the domestic dog, were almost invariably recurved on the right side.

In our descent of the mountain, we were driven to seek shelter from the violence of the rain in a mixed horde of Bastaards and Namaaques. The chief was of the former description. In his younger days he had been a great lover of the chase, and his matted hut within still displayed a variety of the skins of animals that had fallen before his piece. He boasted that, in one excursion, he had killed seven camelopardales and three white rhinoceroses. The latter is not uncommon on the skirts of the colony behind the Hantam mountain, and seems to be a variety

only of the African two-horned rhinoceros. It differs from it in color, which is a pale carnation, in size, which is considerably larger, and in the thinness of its skin; all of which may perhaps be the effects of age. These people seemed to live very happily together. They had horses, and cattle, and sheep, and gardens of no inconsiderable extent, well stocked with pumpkins, onions, and tobacco.

We met also, at this kraal, one of the nation above mentioned under the name of Damaras. From his appearance I took him to be a Kaffer, and he was unquestionably of that race of people. He represented the Damaras as a very poor tribe; that their country along the sea-coast produced nothing for the support of cattle; and that their whole existence depended on exchanging copper rings and beads, which they themselves manufactured, with the *Briquas* to the east, and the Namaaquas to the south. From the Orange river to the Tropic, under which these people live, runs a chain of mountains, that, from the various accounts of travellers, are so abundant in copper ore, that it is every where found upon the surface. From this ore, it seems, the Damaras are in possession of the art of extracting the pure metal. This man's account of the process of smelting the ore was as satisfactory as simple. They make a kind of charcoal from the wood of a certain mimosa, of which he gave me a large bean, by smothering it when burning clear, with sand. They break the ore into small pieces. Thus prepared, they lay the materials in alternate strata, within a small enclosure of stones, on a clayey bottom. They set fire to the charcoal, and blow it with several bellows, each made from the skin  
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