

THE
Present State
OF THE
REPUBLIC
OF
LETTERS.

For *January*, 1731.

V Q L. VII.

— *Pungar vice cotis, acutum
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi.*
Horat.

L O N D O N :

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THE
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OF THE
Republick of Letters.

FOR JUNE 1731.

ARTICLE XL.

The Present State of the CAPE OF GOOD HOPE. VOL. II. Containing the Natural History of the Cape, or a particular Description of all the sorts of Animals and Vegetables in that Neighbourhood; as of Beasts, Birds, Insects, Sea and River-fish; Trees, Shrubs, Plants, Herbs, Roots and Flowers: Likewise an Account of the Mineral Productions, and of the Sea, River, and Spring Waters there. Together with some Observations on the Cape-Winds and Air. To which is prefix'd, a Topographical Account of the Colonies
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lonies there, as of their Extent, Rivers, Springs, Mountains, Roads, Places of Note, &c. Written Originally in High German, by Peter Kolben, A. M. Done into English from the Original by Mr. Medley. Illustrated with Copper Plates. Printed for W. Innys, at the West End of St. Paul's. 1731.

THE Account Mr. Kolben gives us, with his usual Sincerity, of the *Quadrupeds* which fell under his Observation in the Countries about the *Cape of Good Hope*, is both Improving and Entertaining, in particular as he points out many false Relations concerning these Animals. It must needs be acceptable to such as are Enquirers into Nature. The Author begins his Remarks with the *LION*, the Sovereign of the Brute World.

Some Modern Writers, says he, have affirm'd, that the Bones of a *Lion* are not so hard as the Ancients (*Pliny, Aristotle,*) thought them; but these Moderns are mistaken. The hollow, which runs through the Shin-bone of a *Lion*, is as small as that which runs through a Tobacco Pipe; and that when this Bone is broke to pieces, and the greasiness in the same is exhausted by the Sun's heat, those pieces become as hard as Flints, and altogether as smoth and solid; not the least Vacuity or Interstice being to be seen; and they serve altogether as well as Flints to strike Fire with.

Mr. Kolben thinks, that a very considerable part of the *Lion's* Strength lies in the hardness
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of his Bones. When he comes up with his Prey he knocks it down dead, and never bites till he has given the mortal blow, and the blow he generally accompanies with a terrible roar. In the Year 1707, a *Lion* at the *Cape* knock'd down a middle siz'd Ox, and made his way with him over a Brick Wall of a considerable height. From this the Reader will infer sufficiently concerning the *Lion's* Strength, and the hardness of his Bones.

When the *Lion* is wroth, or pinch'd with hunger, he erects and shakes his Mane, and thwacks his Back and Sides very briskly with his Tail. When he is in this Action 'tis certain Death to come in his way; and as he generally looks for his Prey behind Bushes, and Travellers discover not the motion of the Tail till too late, a Traveller now and then falls into his Paws. But if the *Lion* shakes not his Mane, nor makes any motion with his Tail, a Traveller may reckon upon it that he shall pass safely by him.

The Flesh of a *Lion* eats something like Venison, and has no ill Taste.

Of the LEOPARD.

The *Leopard* or *Panther*, and the *Tyger*, hold for fierceness the next place to the *Lion*; the *Leopard* differs in nothing from the *Tyger* but in size and the manner of his Spots. They will eat of no Creature which themselves do not kill. The Flesh of a *Leopard* or *Tyger* is very white, tender and well tasted; in Mr. *Kolben's* Opinion, much finer eating than the finest Veal; and the Flesh of the young ones is as tender as that of a Chicken.

Of the ELEPHANT.

The *Cape Elephants* are much larger than those of any other Country. The Male and Female retire for the consummation of their Loves to some unfrequented Part, and remain there together till Conception: The Female goes with her burthen two Years. The *Hottentots* sometimes gather the Dung of *Elephants*, for smoaking, in the want of Tobacco; the Scent and Flavour of it in smoaking are pretty much like the Leaves of Tobacco. It would be no easy task for a Man well mounted to keep up with an *Elephant* when he rides the Ground.

Of the RHINOCEROS.

The colour of the *Cape Rhinoceros* is a dark Ash, approaching to a Black. His Skin is like that of the *Cape Elephant* without Hair, and full of Scars and Scratches; but so hard, that 'tis difficult to pierce it with a sharp Knife. Upon his Snout grows a Horn of a dark Grey, and somewhat bent, the greatest length it acquires exceeds not two Foot. He will catch up Stones with it and throw 'em to a vast distance: With this Horn he tears up Ground, the Roots of Trees, and any thing else when angry. On his Forehead, in a right Line from the Horn on his Snout, grows another Horn, which upon an old one is not above six Inches high.

The Sense of smelling is wonderful in the *Rhinoceros*; he catches the Scent of any Creature that is to Windward of him, if it is of his Prey, he marches towards it in a right Line, tearing his way very furiously through all opposition

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sition of Trees and Bushes, &c. And, if he is not provok'd, he attacks not a Man, unless the Man is in a red Coat. When he seizes a Man he flings him over his Head with so great a force that the Man is kill'd by the fall; the Beast then feeds upon him by licking, with his rough and prickly Tongue, the Flesh from the Bones. If a *Rhinoceros* surprizes an Elephant, he rips up the Elephant's Belly with the Horn of his Snout, by which means the Elephant's Entrails tumble out.

The Horn of the *Rhinoceros* will not endure the touch of Poison; if Wine is pour'd into one of the Cups that are turn'd out of this Horn, it immediately rises and bubbles up as if it were boiling; and if there be poison in it, the Cup in an instant splits, &c. The Chips made in turning of the *Rhinoceros's* Horn, are esteem'd of great Benefit in Convulsions, Faintings, and many other Distempers.

The Blood of the *Rhinoceros* taken in a Glass of Wine, or in a Dish of Coffee or Tea, is of great vertue for the opening of Obstructions, and the healing of inward Sores.

Of the WOLVES.

There are two sorts of *Wolves* in the *Cape Countries*, one agreeing in every particular with ours in *Europe*; the other is spotted all over like a Panther or Tyger, call'd therefore Tyger-Wolf: The Lion, Tyger, and Leopard, are bitter Enemies to this last sort of Wolves.

Of the SEA-COW.

This Animal, call'd by some Authors *Cossib*, by *Telezsius* and *Thevenot*, *Sea-horse*, is of

the size and colour of a *Rhinoceros*. The Skin of the *Sea-Cow* is an Inch thick and more, and so tough that 'tis a difficult matter to kill this Creature with Shot, therefore the *Cape Europeans* always aim at her Head.

But the most remarkable things in a *Sea-Cow* are her Teeth. On the nether Jaw are four large ones, which shoot out a considerable way from the Mouth; two of these are on each side, the one crooked, the other strait; they are each as thick as an ordinary Ox's Horn, and about a Foot and a half long, and weigh each about ten Pounds. They are extremely white, and every thing that is made of them continues so without any manner of alteration; on which account they are more valued than *Elephant's* Teeth, the ordinary Ivory being apt to turn yellow.

The *Sea-Cow* remains upon her Bed in the Sea or River till Hunger calls her ashore: When she first raises her Head above Water, she turns it this way and that towards the Shore, to smell if any danger be near: And she smells a Man at a considerable distance lie he never so close, and likewise every Animal that is an Enemy to her. If she smells no Danger, she hastens to Shore, and as soon as she arrives there falls a grazing. But if she gets any scent of any Enemy, she spouts up the Water with which she is loaded, and down again she goes to the bottom, and remains there so many Hours, that a Man that waits till she rises again must have a vast Patience. The Man therefore that goes out to shoot her, and discovers her Head above Water, must discharge before she turns her Head towards him, for almost in the moment she does so, she smells him and is gone, &c.

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The Flesh of a *Sea-Cow* is a most delicious Food, whether roasted or boil'd. 'Tis much coveted at the *Cape*, and is sold there for 12 Pence and sometimes for 15 Pence a Pound, and is to every hand there a most agreeable Present.

The rest of Quadrupeds our Author relates, are, the Buffle, the *African Elk*, the wild As, the Roe-buck, the Goat, Hogs, the Porcupine, the Baboons, and their robbing of an Orchard. The Wild Goat, the Cat-a-Mountain, the Mole, the *Indian Mouse*, or *Egyptian Water-Rat*, the Rattle Mouse, the Ermin, the Fox, the Hare, the Hart, the Rabbet, Cats, Rats, Horses, Sheep, and the Stinkbingssem, the most stinking Animal under the Sun: When his Pursuer, Mr. Kolben says, is come pretty near him, he pours out from his Tail so horrid a Stench, that neither Man nor Beast can endure it; &c.

Of the BIRDS.

The finest and loveliest Bird Mr. Kolben saw in the *Cape Countries* is the *Phoenicopterus*, 'tis larger than a Swan, the Neck is much longer than that of a Swan; it is as white as Snow: The upper mandible is crooked, the under Mandible is much thicker and much hollower.

GEES.

There are three sorts of Wild *Geese* in the *Cape Countries*; the tame Geese are not many, the *Europeans* there setting no great value on them, either for their Flesh or their Feathers. Sea Feathers are much softer, and they chuse rather to Stuff their Beds with the Feathers of Sea Fowls. Great value is set on *Wild Geese*,

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notwithstanding they are so numerous, and so easily shot, that you may almost at any time kill what number you please there.

OSTRICHES.

The *Ostriches* lay their Eggs in the Sand, but they don't leave them there to be hatch'd by the heat of the Sun, as several Authors assert; for after they lay their Eggs in the Sand, they hatch them wholly by sitting upon them, as other Birds do theirs; and the Male and Female perform that Office by turns, and that's what Mr. *Kolben* has seen himself many a time.

'Tis another untruth, says he, when Authors relate, that *Ostriches* forsake their young as soon as they see them out of their Shells; for the young ones are not able to walk, till some time after they get out of the Shells; and during that time the old ones tend and feed 'em with Grass. When the young ones can walk, they accompany the old ones till they are of Strength to take care of themselves, and till they are so, the old ones are very watchful to keep 'em out of Danger, and are enrag'd to such a degree when they happen to lose one of 'em, that 'tis dangerous at such a time to go near 'em.

If any Body does but touch the Eggs in the Nest of an *Ostrich*, the *Ostrich* will forsake 'em.

'Tis a mistake in Authors to say that *Ostriches* will digest Pebbles, pieces of Iron, and the like; since Mr. *Kolben* made the Experiment, and found that the said Pebbles, Iron, &c. come from 'em in the very same condition in which they were swallow'd.

The rest of the Birds our Author mentions we shall not relate, but only remark that the *Cape Europeans* take very little delight in singing Birds;

Birds; they shoot and put them upon the Spit with other Birds.

Of the SERPENTS.

Mr. *Kolben* in giving account of several Serpents, follows *Gesner*, *Carron*, and *Francisci*. He quotes a curious one call'd the *Tree Serpent*.

Some Persons at the *Cape*, when they get *Tree Serpents*, send them in Spirits as Presents to their Friends in *Holland*; or else they melt the Fat of 'em, and mixing it with something or other, make a Candle with the mixture, which has a very surprizing Effect; for this Candle, in the Night time, makes the Room it burns in appear to be full of Serpents.

The Poison of a *Hair-Serpent*, in the *Cape* Countries, is reckon'd to be more malignant than that of any sort of Serpent.

There are in the Hands of the *Cape Europeans* a great many Stones call'd *Serpent-Stones*, but they are artificial ones; these Stones are a never failing Antidote against the Poison of all sort of Serpents. 'Tis in the *East-Indies* that these Stones are prepared by the *Brachmans*, who alone are possess'd of the Secret of the Composition, and will not let it go out of their own Body for any Price in the *Christian World*. Our Author saw one of these *Serpent-Stones* tried upon a Child at the *Cape*, who had receiv'd a poisonous bite in one of its Arms, but it cou'd not be discover'd from what Creature: The Stone being applied to the Wound stuck to it very closely, without any manner of Bandage or Support, drinking in the Poison till it could receive no more, and then it dropt off. The Stone was then laid in Milk that it might purge it self of the

the Poison, and it did so presently, the Poison turning the Milk yellow. The Stone, as soon as it was purg'd, was again applied to the Wound, and when it had drank in its Dose, it was again laid in Milk; and this was reiterated till such time as the Stone had exhausted all the Poison; after which the swell'd and inflam'd Arm was quickly heal'd.

Of the INSECTS.

In the *Cape of Good Hope* there are Sea-Insects, as well as *Land and River Insects*; the *Sea-Louse* and *Sea-Flea* are of the first sort, and are a great plague to Fishes, who sting themselves in a fury upwards and downwards, and then whisk away as quick as they can to a Sea-rock, or a Stony Shore, in order to rid themselves of these Enemies by rubbing themselves against it.

The *Cape Bees* lay up their Honey in Clefts or hollow Trees on the tops of high and steep Rocks: To the tops of these Rocks the *Hottentots* climb up and get the Honey, and sell it to the *Europeans* for a little Tobacco or Brandy.

There are divers sorts of *Caterpillars* at the *Cape*; a young one comes quickly to Maturity, soon after which it clings and fixes it self very closely to a Plant, Tree, or Flower, sometimes to a Wall. Quickly after it is thus clung, a crusty Matter grows over it in the nature of a Shell, and in fourteen or fifteen Days time the *Caterpillar* changes and becomes a charming *Butterfly*, the Wings of which are enamel'd with Gold, and various other beautiful and lively colours.

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There are many other Insects the Author relates, but they are less curious, and it wou'd be tedious to mention them all.

Of the FISHES.

Both the Sea and Rivers at the *Cape* afford plenty and variety of Fish, but we shall here only name two or three that are more particular among them.

There are in the *Cape* Sea two sorts of *Sharks*, the first sort is very large, many of them being from twelve to sixteen Feet long; the Jaws are so large, and the Gullet so wide, that he can swallow a full dress'd Man: For this Reason our Author puts the question, whether it is not most probable that it was the *Shark*, rather than the *Whale*, that swallow'd the Prophet *Jonas*.

There is no Creature that is so plagued with Enemies as the *Flying-Fish* in the Water, they are almost every moment in danger of being devour'd by the Dolphins, the Sharks, and other Fishes; and out of the Water, when they are upon the Wing, on which they put themselves to escape their Enemies in the Deep, they are in Danger of being snatch'd up and devour'd by Birds of Prey. They fly very quick as long as their Wings remain well moisten'd; being depriv'd of this Moisture, down they drop again into the Sea often in the very Mouths of their Devourers. They are all of them delicate Food, far exceeding the finest fresh Herrings.

None of the *Cape Europeans* have yet got the right Method of pickling *Herrings*: This is no inconsiderable disadvantage to the Colonies; since 'tis certain they might turn these Fishes to very good account, both for Sea and Land Service.

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The *Cramp-fish* is no Curiosity at the *Cape*: 'Tis of the Cartilaginous kind, and roundish, being blown up, as it were, into that form. Mr. *Kolben* agrees with most Authors upon one particular concerning this sort of Fish. 'Tis Matter of Fact, says he, for he has several times experienc'd it on himself; that whoever touches the *Cramp-fish*, whether with Hand or Foot, or with a Stick only, his Limbs will immediately be cramp'd, and be numb'd to such a degree, that he cannot move them, and that he will feel a very acute pain in them all, particularly the Limb with which he touched the Fish, or which with a Stick he extended towards it; infomuch that he will appear totally and very fiercely convuls'd. But this Cramp or Convulsion lasts not above half an Hour; in which some Authors, who wou'd have its duration longer, are mistaken.

The *Cape Fishermen* are extremely afraid of touching this Creature; whenever (as they are dragging out a Net) they spy this Fish in it, turning the Net partly in and partly out of the Water, are content to lose half their Fish, nay their whole Draught, rather than drag him ashore, and thereby expose any one to the hazard of touching it.

Of the VEGETABLE PRODUCTIONS.

With regard to *Botanicks* our modest Author sincerely declares, that his Knowledge is of no great extent; nevertheless, having view'd and carefully consider'd every sort of Vegetable he met with; and in the mean time having enjoy'd, during all his Residence at the *Cape*, the greatest intimacy with Mr. *Hertog*, the Company's Gardiner, by this Friend's civilities and help he gives

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gives us the best Description in this point of Knowledge his laudable Industry was capable of. For that purpose he ranges all the Vegetables under *Latin Names*, and those in Alphabetical order.

First he gives an Account of the Trees, Plants, Herbs and Flowers, of the Natural Growth of the *Hottentot Countries*.

Next, he enumerates the Exotick Trees, Plants, Herbs, and Flowers, that have been transplanted there.

Some PARTICULARS.

Some Waters at the *Cape*, which are a little brackish, are excellent purifiers of the Blood. They perform the Operation partly by Stool, and partly by Perspiration, causing at the same time a violent itching all over the Body, which ceases when the Blood is well cleansed.

Mr. *Kolben*, among his Observations concerning the Sea about the *Cape*, delivers us an extraordinary *Phænomenon*, that on *September* the 24th, 1707, the *Sea* at the *Cape* ebb'd and flow'd seven times from eight to ten in the Morning; when the Water fell, it was with such velocity, that he saw Stones a considerable way in the Sea. None of the Spectators had seen or heard of the like.

The *Cape Countries* are enrich'd with variety of Mineral Treasures, but the Mines are but little open'd, for two Reasons; one is the want of sufficient Hands to work them; the other is the want of Wood, so necessary for propping up the Ground in Mines, and for melting the Oar. Wood is so scarce at the *Cape*, that the Colonies and the Ships are hardly supplied with sufficient
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for Fuel. Almost all the Timber in the Colonies is imported at a very great Expence from *Europe* and *Asia*.

The Year, at the *Cape*, is divided between two Winds, the *South-East* and the *North-West*, which succeed each other half-yearly : The *Europeans* at the *Cape* consider accordingly the Year as divided only into two Seasons, and these they call *Moonsoons*. The Winter or wet Season, which begins there when the Spring opens in *Europe*, that is, in *March*, when the Sun enters *Aries*, they call the bad *Moonsoon*. The *Cape* Summer, or dry Season, which begins when our Summer ends, that is, in *September*, when the Sun enters *Libra*, they call the good *Moonsoon*.

The Author concludes the Book with an account of several *Diseases*: The first Remark he makes on this Occasion, is upon the *Lying-in-Women* in the *Cape* Colonies. The Women, he says, at the *Cape*, when brought to Bed, are ordinarily neither pain'd, nor hazarded to any thing near the degree, to which, in that case, Women ordinarily are in *Europe*. They suffer but little in Travail, and are very quickly deliver'd. They are subject to no After-pains. Women born in *Europe* and brought to Bed at the *Cape*, have altogether as *happy* a time as the Women born in the Settlements. But then all the *European* Women there, who suckle Children, are grievously afflicted with *sore Breasts*. Some, to get rid of this Torment, wean their Children before they are a Quarter old, and dry up their Milk with certain Plaisters which they lay upon their Breasts. This cruel evil makes in several Womens Breasts frightful Holes; and
many

many times Women lose their Nipples and the use of their Breasts by it.

Another Distemper, Mr. *Kolben* describes, is particular too ; it begins with a giddiness and tormenting Pain in the Head ; it seems to those that are seiz'd with this Evil, that all things turn round with them, and with such swiftness, that they durst not trust themselves upon their Legs, for fear of falling violently upon their Heads, and having their Brains dash'd out. They are seiz'd at the same time with such a burning Thirst, as nothing can quench. Mr. *Kolben* says that he very frequently visited the Hospital, but observ'd that not one of the Sick Persons recover'd in this Disease. That it first seiz'd the Company's Slaves in 1707 ; and it no sooner appear'd among them, than the Colony, to prevent it getting among their own Slaves, commanded them not to go near the Infected, and threaten'd them with severe Punishment in case they did. But neither commands nor threatenings cou'd restrain 'em from visiting the Infected of their own Acquaintance ; by which means they caught the Distemper, and from them the Colony, &c.

The rest of the Distempers related by the Author we pass by, there being nothing extraordinary that we could present our Readers with.

