

A NARRATIVE

OF

A VISIT

TO

THE MAURITIUS

AND

SOUTH AFRICA,

BY

JAMES BACKHOUSE.

JOHN L. LONDON, ...

MDCCLIV.

CHAPTER XII.

Zondag River.—Tortoises.—Grysbok.—Aloes.—Fiddling at a Public-house succeeded by the howling of Hyenas.—Rhinoceros.—Quagga-flats.—Wagon Journeys.—Traffic.—Bushmans River.—Water Tortoise.—Morino Sheep.—Sidbury.—Amagel-bush River.—Fresh Oxen.—Grahams Town.—Wesleyans.—Deputy Lieutenant-Governor.—Unsettled Meeting.—Temperance Reformation.—Degraded Hottentots.—Silent Devotion.—Jail.—Frost-bitten Patient.—Address of a Bechnana.—Young Christians.—Departure.—Rain.—Large Worms.—Difficulty in making a Fire.—Hyena.

12mo. 25th. We proceeded over an uninteresting country, without fresh water, to the Zondag or Sunday River, which we crossed at the Addo Drift, several miles further down than when on the way to Enon. We noticed the bones of an Elephant on one of the calcareous hills of the Gras Rug, and saw some Tortoises in bushy places. A few Grysboks, which are of the Antelope family, and twice the size of a hare, darted from among the bushes on our approach. The Grysbok, *Tragulus melanotis*, is about twenty-two inches high, and three feet in extreme length: its head is broad and short: its horns three inches and a half long, smooth, round, slender and vertical, or slightly inclining forward. It has on its forehead a black, horse-shoe-shaped mark, but its general colour is chocolate-red, intermixed with numerous, single, white hairs; hence its name which signifies Grey-buck.—A caulescent Aloe, with large, glaucous, red-margined leaves, and another with spotted leaves were growing on the declivities of a saline valley leading to the river, which we crossed near two public-houses; beyond these we outspanned in the bush, which consisted of large shrubs and low trees. Three other wagons were in the same vicinity. At one of the public-houses the fiddle was played till late in the evening, as a lure to the

Hottentots. When it ceased, the howling, laughing and crying of the Hyena commenced, and continued through the night. The Two-horned Rhinoceros as well as the Buffalo, the Elephant, and the Lion, still keeps a possession in the bushy ravines and woods of this part of the Colony. The Common Two-horned Rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros bicornis*, called Rhinoster by the Cape Colonists, was formerly common throughout the country. Within the Colony, it is now rarely found, except in the thickets of the Eastern District, and there it is but seldom seen: it is upwards of 6 feet high at the shoulder, and 13 feet in extreme length. Like other species of the genus, it is a powerful, stiff-built animal. It is still very common in the interior, where some other species are known; two of these *Rhinoceros keitloa* and *R. Simus* are described by Dr. Andrew Smith in his Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa, and a third having a single, long horn, is spoken of as being known to exist.

26th. For several miles the country was increasingly woody; at length it became thick forest. In this part it is called the Addo Bush. Among the trees is the *Theodora speciosa*? called Boerboon, *Farmers-bean*, bearing gay, crimson flowers, succeeded by pods containing bean-like seeds, which were formerly used as food by the Hottentots. After passing through the forest, we emerged upon the Quagga Flats, a grassy country, but at this time nearly destitute of water. On applying for this necessary refreshment at the only inhabited place which we passed, we were told that the master was from home; the servants said they durst not let us water our cattle without his leave, but that we might take water for our own use; we therefore proceeded onward, in hope of finding more, but were disappointed; at length we outspanned where there was no water, but where the grass was fresh.—In the course of the day, we passed several other wagons on the road. All the goods consumed in Grahams Town, or transported further into the interior, are brought from Port Elizabeth by these conveyances, which are also the principal ones for travelling in Southern Africa. From ten to twenty oxen, yoked in pairs, are employed at a time, in drawing them over the roads, which

side of twelve miles, over a grassy, undulating country, of not very fertile aspect, we were kindly greeted by William B. Boyce and his wife, who were the only Wesleyan Missionaries that we saw in Caffraria; they had just returned from their District Meeting at Grahams Town.

31st. We had the privilege of addressing about one hundred Caffers, through the medium of Mary Philmore, a pious young woman, the daughter of an Albany Settler, who interpreted with great facility and propriety. Newton Dale is in the country of the Christian Caffer Chief, Kama; he and eleven others of his nation were members of the mission church here. There were also three catechumens. The school usually held here had from forty to fifty pupils.

4th mo. 1st. Newton Dale is pleasantly situated. In dry weather, the pools in the bed of the river are brackish; this is also the case at D'Urban, and at the Beeka, yet not so much so as to render the water unwholesome. Though the neighbouring rivulets are not sufficiently regular to be used for irrigation, there is a considerable quantity of cultivated land in the valleys. The three stations of Newton Dale, D'Urban, and the Beeka, are in what was formerly the Neutral Territory; they have all been commenced since the war.—We were detained here all day by the straying of our horses. This afforded us opportunity for further conversation with the intelligent missionary, by whom the study of the Caffer language has been greatly facilitated, through his discovery of its euphonic concordance. It is a language of great power, and so constructed as to admit of great accuracy of expression.

2nd. We left Newton Dale, and traversed a few grassy hills, stony in some places, but diversified by copses, gay with flowering shrubs. Flowers were also numerous in the open grounds. In some of the shallow pools, *Crinum aquaticum*, a lily-like flower of purple-red, shaded into white, was very abundant and beautiful. About four miles from Newton Dale, we entered the Fish River Bush, and at the same time began to descend into the deep ravine, in the clay-slate formation, in which the river flows. This bush extends many miles, and is very thick. Spekboom and the arboreal Euphorbia are among the principal plants of which it is formed.

The former is the favourite food of the Elephant, which, a few years ago, abounded here; this huge animal formed the tracks now used as roads; it was so generally destroyed, for the sake of its ivory that it is now rarely seen. The common two-horned Rhinoceros, the Buffalo, Lion, Leopard, Hyena, Wild-dog, and some less formidable animals, are still to be found here. The Wild-dog, *Hyena venatica*, described in the work called The Tower Menagerie under the name of Hyena-dog, *Canis picta* is larger than a fox-hound; its colour is reddish brown, variously mottled in large patches with black and white, intermixed; its ears are black, erect, and very large. These animals partake of the characters of the Dog and the Hyena: they hunt in packs, and are consequently very formidable. A young officer of our acquaintance, was lately crossing the Great Fish River, at the ford called Trumpeters Drift. When in the track, in the bush, a pack of these animals fell upon his dog; while they were devouring it, he escaped, under the conviction, that had not their attention been temporarily occupied with his dog, himself and his horse would have been in great danger. The Hippopotamus, *Hippopotamus amphibius*, is known in Africa by the name of Sea-cow; it is between four and five feet high, and about eleven feet long; its legs are short, and its mouth is capable of opening very wide; its colour is brownish red, and its figure somewhat like that of an overgrown pig; it is still found near the mouth of the Great Fish River, and abounds in the mouths of the rivers of Caffraria; it sometimes walks into the gardens of the Caffers, and commits great depredations among their corn. We saw the prints of its large feet in the mud of the ford at which we crossed the Fish River. This ford is called Caffers Drift; it is wide and stony, and has a broad margin of reeds on each side; these with the flowing of the tide, occasion a great deposit of mud, which renders the river difficult to cross, even by wading and leading the horses.