

Cap. Good Hope - History

AN
ACCOUNT
OF
THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE;

CONTAINING

An Historical View of its original Settlement by the Dutch, its Capture by the British in 1795, and the different Policy pursued there by the Dutch and British Governments. Also a Sketch of its Geography, Productions, the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, &c. &c.

WITH

A VIEW OF THE POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES WHICH MIGHT BE DERIVED FROM ITS POSSESSION BY GREAT BRITAIN.

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CHAPTER X.

Different Species of wild Quadrupeds—Opinion concerning the Unicorn—Various Species of Antelope and Deer—Domestic Animals—Oxen and horned Cattle—Sheep—Birds—Wild Fowl—Ostriches—Wild Peacocks and many other Species found here—Venomous Animals and Reptiles—Obnoxious Insects and Creatures of the Fly Species.

Quadrupeds. **T**HE various animals, which inhabit this part of the world, are extremely numerous; some are accounted peculiar to the Cape. Amongst the wild quadrupeds are the lion, the elephant, tiger, leopard, hyena, wolf, tiger-cat, jackal, rhinoceros, buffaloe, wild-hog, camelopard, and the hypopotamus. The elephant, the rhinoceros, and the camelopard, live far in the interior; excepting those last I have seen all the rest in the neighbourhood of the Cape. It is positively asserted by many that the unicorn is found in the deserts of Caffraria. I often endeavoured to ascertain the much-disputed existence of this animal; my repeated inquiries however ended only in increasing my doubts of the fact, for I could never find out any person who had seen it with his own eyes, or heard it described by a person who had. The horn which is often shewn as belonging to the unicorn, is that of a large and peculiar species of antelope, which I have frequently seen in India, and which in this particular much resembles what the unicorn is de-

Unicorn said to be an inhabitant.

scribed to be, having one large horn growing in the middle of his forehead. One of those horns nearly three feet long, in the possession of a gentleman at the Cape, is shewn as belonging to the unicorn.

The lion is now become a very rare visitor of the Cape; he usually keeps far in the interior, though he has lately been met with on the borders of the colony.

Hyenas and wolves are numerous in every part, and do a great deal of mischief. Of the deer, antelope, and goat, several species are found at the Cape, and are known there by the following names: the spring-bock, the stein-bock, bosch-bock, riet-bock, duiker-bock, gries-bock, bonte-bock, haart-beast, common deer, large antelope, small antelope, and the little spotted deer, which is not larger than a hare, and seems to partake of the nature of both animals. Many of those animals are met with in abundance near Cape Town, and are often produced at the tables of the inhabitants.

The duiker-bock, or diving-goat, derives its name from its plunging and springing amongst the bushes when closely pursued. It is about the size of the common deer, of a dirty brown colour with two long straight horns of a blacker hue, tapering gradually from the forehead to the point. These animals spring so suddenly, and with such violence forward, when you come upon them in the marshy and sedgy grounds, that a stranger is apt to imagine himself attacked by a more dangerous foe. The gries-bock is also of the size of a common deer, but bears a considerable re-

semblance to a goat: its colour is greyish, and the hair loose and frizzled. This species is very plentiful, and does a great deal of mischief to the gardens and vineyards in the night time; it is exceedingly swift, and none of the wild beasts of prey can overtake it. The bonte-bock and haart-beast are uncommonly large, and are chiefly found in the interior parts: I never saw them at the Cape. Buffaloes are numerous in the Caffree country, and are much the same as those of India, being equally wild, fierce, and untractable. Hares and rabbits are numerous, particularly on Robin Island and at Saldahna. Various kinds of small quadrupeds abound, such as armadilloes, ant-bears, mongooses, racoons, squirrels, ichnuemons.

Monkeys, as I have already observed, are common at the Cape, but are not of so many different species as in India. The baboons seem to be the predominant race here. Those are extremely numerous, and exceedingly ugly and disgusting; as well as mischievous and brutal to a great degree. All the hills are infested with them, and it is dangerous for an individual to fall in the way of a number of them. Instances have occurred of their attacking the Hottentots; and particularly the female Hottentot, if she comes in their way, they will attempt to force her person, and even kill her on resisting their designs. The Cape baboon is as large as a middling sized dog, but much thicker in the body, which is covered with long hair of a greyish or bluish colour. When he stands up he is upwards of four feet high. These animals are vicious, subtle, and brutal; their tricks

and cunning are different from those of the small monkey. Instead of the gaiety and activity of the latter, they seem unsocial, dull, awkward, and malignant. They are frequently kept by the soldiers chained to posts before the tents, and led about the streets by the slaves and blacks. The Dutch however never allow them to be introduced into their houses; for if a child comes within their reach by accident, or if they by any means get loose, they will not fail to commit the most barbarous cruelty.

The domestic animals are few; chiefly consisting of horses, sheep, goats, and oxen. The horses at the Cape were originally brought from Batavia, Java, and South America, although these are intermixed with breeds from different other parts of the world. They are generally a small hardy race, and bear a great deal of fatigue. I have already remarked the little attention paid to the training and breeding of them by the Dutch. Their entire neglect of the outward appearance of their horses tended to impress strangers with a still worse idea of the breed; for they never suffered their tails to be cut on account of the number of flies which attack and fret them; nor indeed scarcely ever dressed their manes and coats; so that the stud of even a respectable Dutch burgher seemed rough and ill-conditioned, and had the appearance of those sorry animals used for draught and such purposes by our common peasantry in Wales and Ireland. The improvement made by the English in the appearance of the horses at the Cape, by their care and attention in the management and breeding of them, was very

Domestic
animals.
Horses.

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considerable. I observed a kind of bluish spotted and strawberry colour to be a prevailing cast. When the 28th dragoons were first mounted here, they had great trouble in breaking in the Cape horses, they being very vicious and addicted to kicking and plunging. In the interior are still to be found some wild horses originating from the race which was turned loose to breed shortly after the Dutch arrived.

Zebra.

The zebra, which has something of the horse species, is very common in the remote parts of the colony, and is a native of Africa. It is a beautiful creature, and resembles the horse, the mule, and the ass, in its make and proportions. Its colour is a beautiful brown and regularly striped, resembling very much some parts of a tiger's skin. For a full description of this animal I shall refer my readers to Buffon; but must observe that in his account he says it is wild, untractable, and incapable of being tamed; though I have seen the zebra as mild and gentle as our common ass, quietly grazing near Cape Town, and allowing people to approach and handle it.

Goats.

Goats are much esteemed at the Cape on account of their milk, and the number of kids they bring forth; there are various species of them, several differing from ours in Europe. The cows and oxen are also of various kinds; the large draft oxen are peculiar to the Cape and this part of Africa. They are distinguished by a large head, long horns and legs, with very broad hoofs; they are lank before and broad behind. A race of beautiful small oxen, like those of Alderney, are fattened for table; and the cows of

Cows and
oxen.

this breed afford a great quantity of milk. The beef however at the Cape is in general coarse and indifferent; for the Dutch scarcely ever keep up cattle as we do in particular meadows and places where they meet with sweet and nourishing grass. The butchers generally buy from the farmers in the country, and kill the beasts immediately after coming off a long journey, tired, jaded, and their fat all spent; consequently their flesh is dry and tough, and its flavour is besides much depraved by the sour acrid grass and shrubs they are accustomed to feed upon. A bullock will sell for ten, twelve, or fifteen rix-dollars, or from thirty shillings to two pounds ten shillings British. The head and inside parts of the beast were formerly never used by the Dutch but given to the slaves and Hottentots or thrown away; as were also the same parts of the sheep; but since the British have resided amongst them, they have learnt to sell those parts as well as the carcase, and likewise to dress them for their tables. The Dutch observing our soldiers, who were generally Scotsmen, carrying away the sheep and bullocks' heads to make soup, inquired if they made use of that part of the beast; and finding this to be the case, they immediately set a price upon them, at first about a penny a piece; but this was soon increased to a schillen or two, when they understood how much soup made with these parts was esteemed by our countrymen. Veal is very rare at the tables of the Cape.

Mutton is the principal part of the food of the Dutch ^{Sheep.} and black inhabitants at the Cape. Sheep are abundant in

every part of the colony. They are entirely different from those of Europe. The Cape sheep are tolerably large, but by no means look so well as ours; nor is the mutton of so good a flavour, being much coarser and stronger. The wool is more like frizzled hair than the fleece of European sheep, and of no other use than to stuff common mattresses or beds for the slaves. Their colour is a dirty brown, but they are of various shades. Some are spotted, black and white, others resemble our brown goats and strawberry coloured horses. They are uncommonly long legged. Their bodies appear thin, particularly across the fore-quarters, and across the ribs which proceeds from their having no fat about their loins or intestines, and having no bushy fleece to make them appear larger and broader. In their rumps and tails is concentrated the whole of their fat. Their tails are excessively broad, flat, and short; the under part being quite bald. One of them will weigh from nine to eighteen pounds. The fat is of a hard consistence, and when melted has the appearance of oil. They save all the tails with great care, and after melting them, preserve them in a tub, like lard; this they use in many cases where butter is required, basting and stewing their meat with it for their own tables; and they commonly feed their slaves with goat's flesh, offals of sheep, beef and vegetables stewed in the fat of those tails. The price of a sheep, before our arrival at the Cape, was from a rix-dollar to one and a half; now it is double, as the Dutch were careful to make the English pay handsomely for every thing.

Dogs are numerous; and there are many species all different from ours. Some are found in the interior parts of the colony in a wild state, and resemble the wolf species. In every Dutch house are a great number of dogs, either the property of the master, the slave, or the Hottentot. No person of any rank wishes to go out without one or two of these animals. The larger species has much of the wolf dog in its shape and countenance; the smaller are nearly similar to our cabin curs, and have something of the fox in their breed. They are all miserable, half-starved looking animals, full of blotches and sores, with scarcely any hair, and are very disgusting, especially crawling about as they are in swarms every where. They are however occasionally very useful in hunting game, scenting wild beasts, and driving off the jackalls at night. As soon as the jackalls find their prey at the back and skirts of the town, they begin their howling directly, which is a signal to a vast number of the town dogs, who, as if by previous agreement, rush out in a body and attack them.

Pigs are very scarce, not being much esteemed, and few are reared. I hardly recollect seeing one whilst at the Cape. They have in the interior different species of wild hog.

The feathered race are very numerous, and many of a beautiful plumage. The hills have eagles, vultures, and kites, hovering over them, and those with other ravenous birds come to the skirts of the town, and assist in clearing it of dead animals and filth. The crows are seen very busy in

all the streets, and are thus of the greatest use; on which account they are not allowed to be shot or molested.

Penguins, cormorants, divers, and many species of the crane kind, as also Cape snipes, ducks, teals, and widgeons, are in abundance. Those may be easily procured by giving a little powder and shot to a slave or Hottentot, who thinks himself well recompensed by the sport for his labour. There are some of those people constantly employed to procure game for the tables of their masters. The Dutch gentlemen at Cape Town seldom exert themselves, or take any pleasure in this amusement. Ostriches are often met with near Cape Town and Stellenbosch; they are inhabitants of every part of the interior. I have seen several at the Cape Town quietly grazing or feeding about the streets and fields adjoining. When erect and walking, the ostrich is taller than a man; their long neck and gait give them an appearance not unlike that of the camel. Their feet are long, and as thick as those of an ass, with three strong and thick toes. Some are blackish, others of a dirty greyish or ash colour, with a little white under the belly and wings. They are prevented from flying by the contracted form and smallness of the wing, in proportion to the rest of the body, and their great weight; but they run exceedingly fast, and by flapping their wings accelerate their motion, and keep themselves cool. Their bill is something like the goose, and the jaw and gullet are very wide and distended. The ostrich egg is as large as a 12lb. shot, and is eaten by

Ostriches.

the black people. These eggs are sold in the market place of Cape Town for threepence each. The Hottentots are very ingenious in carving figures of elephants, antelopes, ostriches, and other animals on the shells, which is done with a sharp instrument like an awl or bodkin; it is then rubbed over with a black greasy substance, which never wears out of the punctures and lines drawn in the engraving.

When the English first got possession of the Cape, ostrich feathers were remarkably cheap, and easy to be obtained; but the Dutch seeing the eagerness of the English to procure them, raised the price immediately. When I first touched at the Cape I could get a very good one for half a rix-dollar, but on my second arrival I paid from one and a half to two rix-dollars, and they were then very scarce. In consequence of the ready sale and high price the Dutch obtained from us, the farmers and country people killed a great number of ostriches, and sent them to the town. Sir George Young fearing they might all be destroyed, except in the very remote parts of the colony, issued strict orders to prevent their being killed, and enacting a very severe penalty against those who disobeyed. Besides the ostrich there were several other birds of rare and beautiful plumage prohibited from being shot.

Peacocks of the same species as ours are numerous. The wild peacock is more beautiful, and generally found near the farmers' houses about Stellenbosch. It is an excellent bird for the table. It was called a bustard by our countrymen from its resemblance in size and shape to that bird.

Wild peacocks.

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A penalty of twenty rix-dollars was laid on those who shot one of them by Sir George Young, who introduced the game laws at the Cape, and obliged every one to take out a license before he could use a fowling piece. Partridges, pheasants, and bustards of various kinds, are in great plenty all over the settlement. The Cape grouse is a species of pheasant. The jungle bird of Asia, with the double spur, is found here. The pelican is also a native. The flamingo is a common inhabitant of the pools and marshes; this bird is larger than a crane, but of the same shape, having a long thin neck and legs; the wings, back, and part of the belly a beautiful vermillion, the rest of the plumage a clear white. The grenadier bird is so called from the tuft on his head resembling the cap formerly worn by grenadiers. Its plumage is beautiful. The long-tailed bullfinch with two long feathers in his tail has a black plumage, mixed with yellow and crimson. Parrots and paroquets of different kinds, are got towards the eastward parts of the colony among the woods. Besides the common lowries, there is also a species peculiar to the Cape. Turtle-doves, wild pigeons, and wood-peckers, are in great abundance. The mountain and Egyptian goose, species much smaller than ours, are inhabitants of the swamps near the corn fields, and do a great deal of mischief to the farmers.

The honey bird, or indicator, is common here in the woods: it has two long feathers in its tail, which on being shot it instantly drops. The secretary bird is a great enemy to serpents and all kinds of reptiles, and often discovers to man where

they are by his watching at the spot. This bird has two long black feathers in his crest or top-knot, which he drops when fired at; but he is seldom shot, except by a stranger who does not know his use, and extraordinary antipathy to the reptile class. Besides those birds here recounted, I have already mentioned several others in the course of my narrative, and there are many more whose names and qualities have necessarily escaped my observation.

Of the reptile class I met with few myself from the little intercourse I had with the interior, where they are much more numerous and dangerous, and where many species of them are to be found, which are almost unknown nearer the Cape. Few of those noxious creatures are to be met with about Cape Town, and the southern extremity of the peninsula. The inhabitants of the Cape Town may enjoy themselves without anxiety or fear of being stung to death in their houses, which is not the case in India, where one is never in complete safety from snakes, serpents, and the different species of poisonous insects, such as centipeds, scorpions, &c. I have more than once had snakes found in my bed room. The hooded snake, or covre capelle, so much the terror of the Asiatic world, is an inhabitant of the Cape. Its bite is mortal, and its attack and motions very brisk. By the interposition of Providence, however, this terrible and fatal creature, by its preparation for attack, warns persons to be on their defence or avoid it; for, when angry and vexed, or meditating an attack on any object, it raises itself up from about half the body to the

Reptiles and
venomous
creatures.

height of three or four feet, the remaining part of the body and tail being coiled up to accelerate its spring. When in that position it distends the hood, which is a sort of membrane such as that we find in the wing of a bat, and lying close along the side of the head and neck and over the forehead, enables him to dart at the object of his attack with great force and velocity. When the hood is expanded the creature has a different appearance, being distended like a fan three or four inches on each side in breadth, shewing a curved whitish streak like two horse shoes, and not unlike a pair of spectacles on a man's face. The preparation of expanding it gives time to those within its reach to get away.

The covre manille is not known at the Cape, fortunately for the Hottentots, who, from their lazy habits of always lying in the sands, or basking on the rocks and among the grass, might easily fall the unsuspecting victims of this animal, whose bite is instant death. The puff-adder is often met with: it is so called from its swelling itself out to a great size when enraged; its length is about three feet, and the colour dark brown or blackish, streaked with bluish lines; it is nearly as thick at the tail as the head.

The spring-adder derives its name from springing backwards at its object. Its spring not a little resembles those of a tumbler when exhibiting his feats of activity. In size it is small, from two to three feet in length, but very dangerous, in particular to a stranger who would unavoidably be taken unawares from the manner of its attack. If

you pursue the spring-adder, and he finds he cannot make his escape, when you least expect it, he darts himself backwards at you, and in all probability will bite if he hits you; the bite proves fatal if immediate remedies are not applied to destroy the effects of the poison.

The boem snake, or tree snake, from five to ten feet long, and very thick, is of a dark bluish colour, mixed with white and grey spots; it suspends itself from the branches of trees, and waits for its prey passing under, and from hence it has acquired its name. This reptile often attacks the natives, and darts particularly at the face. A similar species is found in the woods on the Malabar coast.

Grass snakes, and water snakes, are found at the Cape, as also toads and frogs of an immense size. At night the croaking of the frogs annoys one extremely; a great number of them seem to unite in a kind of cadence, and regularly commence each peal of croaking, quite different from any thing known in Europe; when one leaves off all the rest cease immediately.

Scorpions and centipedes are very common. The black Insects. scorpion is large and dangerous. The large black spider is also reckoned amongst the venomous creatures.

Land turtles are every where to be met with crawling about in the sand; the blacks broil them, separate the shell, and eat them; they make excellent soup. The guana is found here, and though so disgusting a creature in appearance, is delicious food, as white and tender as a chicken,

but more rich and luscious; it strongly resembles a young crocodile in shape.

Red and green locusts at certain seasons fly about in great numbers, and do much mischief to the vegetable productions. In the interior the damage they commit is very great to the farmers; whole fields are destroyed, and eaten up in a few hours. The south-east wind is a great enemy to them, dispersing and driving them in vast numbers out to sea. I have, whilst at anchor, seen many come on board tired and exhausted. They are of a very beautiful colour. The Caffrees and Hottentots, like the natives of Egypt, eat them for food at the season when they lose their wings, and are found in heaps on the ground.

Muskittoes though they are found in this climate, and may in the interior parts be troublesome, are not at all so in Cape Town. The small sand fly, which is scarcely visible, annoys one very much in the hot season in passing over the sands. Flies are in swarms all over the houses, and about the yards and offices. The meat and articles on the table, are covered instantly with them, and you can scarcely eat your victuals, or drink out of a vessel, without swallowing a number of them. The ladies at the Cape have small black slave boys, with whisks and bunches of ostrich or peacocks' feathers, standing behind their chairs to keep them off. The horses are much tormented by the flies, particularly one species like our wasp, called the horse fly,

which perseveres in sticking fast till he fills himself with the blood, rendering the animal quite furious and ungovernable with pain; and though you gallop off to get rid of them for a mile or two, yet they persist in following till they have accomplished their object.

Beetles are found of various kinds. The large black beetles are seen busily at work in collecting the dung of horses and oxen, forming it into round balls and rolling it to their habitations. The ingenuity and industry with which they carry on this employment is very surprising. When one of them finds a ball too heavy to be rolled up an ascent, he calls for the assistance of another; and if their united efforts cannot drive this ball before them, they turn their backs and push with their hind parts till they overcome the difficulty. These balls are much larger than marbles, rounded and smoothed with great art and dexterity. There are few things I have taken more pleasure in observing than the laborious and persevering exertions of these ingenious insects.

Cock-roaches are not numerous; and those found here, I believe, are rather brought accidentally in ships from India than natives of the country. Ants of every description abound here, but are not so troublesome, particularly in the houses, as in India. The white ant, commonly called termite, infests the fields and open country, builds nests in the ground, casting up pyramids of earth from three to six feet high of so solid a consistence that it is impenetrable except to a pick-axe. These ants destroy all kinds of

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wood which comes in their way. Caterpillars, and those insects which live on fruit, leaves, and vegetables, do much mischief to the cultivated parts, particularly the vine plants.