

654.2.d.90.3
SOUTH AFRICA

A PLANNED TOUR OF
THE COUNTRY TO-DAY
describing its towns, its scenic
beauties, its wild and its historic
places, and telling of the men
who made or discovered them

By
A. W. WELLS

With
32 pages of Coloured Maps
30 Photogravure Illustrations
and Reference Sections



X11, 437

LONDON
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

(15153)

1211 21-1947



Photo: The Cape Peninsula Publicity Association

STELLENBOSCH: FROM THE SUMMIT OF PAPEGAAISBERG
WITH JONKERSHOEK TWIN-PEAKS IN THE DISTANCE
(CAMBRIDGE)

fright and awe, and caused their tongues to utter: 'Mosi oa tunya' ('Smoke does sound there').

One day Livingstone determined to solve the mystery and made a diversion during one of his journeys. He saw 'columns of vapour, appropriately called "smoke," arising at a distance of five or six miles, exactly as when large tracts of grass are burned in Africa.' Getting nearer, there came into view 'scenes so lovely as must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.'

Creeping with awe to the verge, I peered down into a large rent that has been made from bank to bank of the broad Zambesi and saw that a stream of a thousand yards broad leaped down a hundred feet and then became suddenly compressed into a space of fifteen or twenty yards. The entire falls are simply a crack made in a hard basaltic rock from the right to the left bank of the Zambesi and then prolonged from the left bank away through thirty or forty miles of hills. In looking down into the fissure on the right of the island, one sees nothing but a dense white cloud which, at the time we visited the spot, had two bright rainbows on it. From this cloud rushed up a great jet of vapour, exactly like steam, and it mounted two hundred or three hundred feet high; there condensing, it changed its hue to that of dark smoke and came back in a constant shower which soon wetted us to the skin. . . . On the left side of the island we had a good view of the mass of water which causes one of the columns of vapour to ascend, as it leaps quite clear of the rock and forms a thick unbroken fleece all the way to the bottom. Its whiteness gave the idea of snow—a sight I had not seen for many a day.

Stern and devout Christian as he was, rigid hater and condemner of all barbaric practice, even Livingstone does not seem to wonder greatly that he should find at three spots near the falls certain Batoka chiefs offering prayers and sacrifices to the Barimo (God), as though 'the play of colours of the double iris on the cloud, seen by them elsewhere only as a rainbow, may have led them to the idea that this was the abode of Deity.'

II

Perhaps one of the best descriptions of the falls ever written was that of the third known white man who saw them (a hunter named William Charles Baldwin, from Natal, was the

second), named James Chapman. Chapman might very well have seen the falls before Livingstone but for what was more or less a whim of circumstance. He had actually bartered with natives to show him the place when they returned him his brass and wire and called off the journey because of their fear of meeting a hostile tribe known to be frequenting the vicinity of the falls.

Chapman's account is not very well known because his *Travels*, in which it occurs, is a very rare book, but his account of how 'we approached the brink with trembling, and, carefully parting the bushes with our hands, looked at once on the first grand view' is a fine example of descriptive writing of the period.

We stood for some time lost in thought, contemplating the wonderful works of that Providence which could bring into combination at one view such a variety of the most stupendous effects, inspiring at once terror, devotion, and delight, and bowing the feeble and oft unwilling mind to acknowledge and believe in the superior power of Him who rules the heaven and earth and created all their wonders.

What impressed Chapman, as it seems to have impressed none other of these early visitors to the falls, was the numerous 'spoors of elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, and hippopotami, besides other animals, all over the very brink of the precipice.'

It makes one's hair stand on end to see the numerous indications of their midnight rambles at the very verge of eternity. Here they come at the dead, dark midnight hours to drink the spray and wallow in the mire; and on asking a native how it was they were not afraid, he asked me in return: 'Didn't they grow up together?'

Writers of later years, in accordance with the literary and social usage of the era, have ceased to use such words as 'eternity,' 'hell,' 'terror,' and 'paradise' (even Selous, perhaps the best known of all the great African hunters, described the falls as 'one of, if not the, most transcendently beautiful natural phenomena on this side of paradise'), and concentrated more on the amazing ease and facility with which the falls may be seen from nearly every point. The late Lord Curzon (as revealed in his *Tales of Travel*, published by Hodder & Stoughton) was particularly struck by this aspect of the falls

impervious to pain which would be felt by European children; that because so few restrictions are placed on them, they rarely cry because they are being thwarted.

III

Between May and December is the best time to visit Zululand, and a car is not essential, for by leaving the train at Vryheid it is possible to pass through the most lovely part of the country—through Babanango, the Valley of Kings, Katoza, Melmoth, to the railhead at Eshowe—by motor bus.

But those people who live in Zululand all the year round will tell you that summer is the time to see it at its best. They say that to stand upon a Zululand hill-top and look down on the huge clusters of lilies, carpeting the streams and rivers so thickly that it is sometimes difficult to believe that streams or rivers exist there, is one of the never-to-be-forgotten sights of South Africa.

And not far away is another experience almost equally memorable: to visit the St. Lucia Game Reserve, sail up the lake to the main bird island, and see there flight after flight of geese, duck, pelican, and flamingo, rise and disappear in the blazing glory of a rising sun. It is no exaggeration to say that very few bird sanctuaries in the world can surpass, in wonder and variety, the water-bird sanctuary of St. Lucia.

There are five public game reserves in Zululand, and it is easy for you to extend your journey from Eshowe to see them.

At the time of writing there are rest huts only at the Hluhluwe Reserve, but two excellent hotels have been established at St. Lucia, which may well be used as depots to at least four of the reserves.

In the Hluhluwe and the Umfolozi Reserves, it is possible to see the white rhinoceros, one of the world's rarest animals; in fact, the only existing specimens of this typical southern race are to be found here.

Here in the Umfolozi Reserve the white rhino took his last refuge from his natural enemies, and here he has multiplied

from a little over thirty to the present herd of well over two hundred.

Here, too, are the rare nyala, impala, buffalo, an occasional lion, hippopotamus, and crocodile; the vulture, the bustard, the eagle, the hawk, the vivid little bee-cater, love-bird, and sun-bird.

It is strange how, outside Natal, these reserves are so little known. Sooner or later, the day must come when at least one of them, St. Lucia, will be regarded as probably the most remarkable and memorable holiday resort to be found in all Africa.