

A

NARRATIVE OF FOUR JOURNEYS.

THE FIRST JOURNEY.

Introduction—Set off with Captain Gordon from the Cape, in October 1777—Journey along the shore of Bay False—Natural productions in that part—Hottentot Holland—Hang Lip—Palmita Rivier—Knoslick Kraal Rivier, to the How Hook—Information respecting a lion being killed—Warm bath; some observations on the heat of the water—Departure from the hot bath.—First Hottentot Kraal near the Tyger Hock—Breed Rivier—Arrive at Zwillendam, residence of the Lend Droft—Proceed to Groot Faders Bosch—Land of Egypt; its production—Cross the Plata Kloef to the Channa Land—Observations of the use of Channa with Dacka—Climate and soil—Slang, or Snake River—Saffron River—Elephants River—An accident happens to our waggon—Arrive at a hot bath—The manner of securing our cattle at night from lions, &c.—Beer Valley—The extent of this journey—Captain Gordon proceeds towards the Snow Mountain—Return towards the Cape—Meet with some gentlemen who had been making a survey of the country—Chonacqua Hottentots—Circumstance respecting the killing of a lioness—Meet with some peasants on their way to the Cape—Arrive at Atquas Kloef—Short account of Hottniqua Land—Arrive at the Cape.

THERE is certainly no part of the world so little known to Europeans as those regions of Africa, which lie south of the equinoctial line. Neither the restless ambition of ancient Rome, nor the equally enterprising spirit of commerce, have penetrated beyond a certain limit. Satisfied with the conquest and productions of those provinces which bor-

dered on the Red and Mediterranean seas, the Romans considered the other parts of this continent as a barren and useless waste, the possession of which could not increase their glory; and they, therefore, willingly left it in its original obscurity. Nor did the arms and arts of the victorious Arabians spread conquest and knowledge beyond the limits marked by the former conquerors of this country, which, from north to south, extended very little farther than six degrees, or three hundred and sixty miles. Even so late as the sixteenth century, John Leo appears to have known scarcely more than one half of this section of the globe. Of the remainder, much has been since that time discovered, and much still remains unexplored.

Those objects which ambition has in many instances overlooked, or left unattempted, the no less active spirit of industry has adverted to, and attained. This has been in some measure the case with respect to Africa, but in a very confined degree. The hope of gain, which has led the sons of Europe to traverse vast oceans in search of distant, and sometimes imaginary territories, has, in this part of the world, confined its operations to the coast, and the adjacent country. The gold dust, which rolls from the mountains, the ivory, and above all, the devoted victims of tyranny and avarice, have tempted the enterprising mariner frequently to revisit some part of its shores. But here his curiosity, or his desire of gain, have been satisfied, or at least were not sufficiently powerful to tempt him to explore a country where his profits were uncertain, and his fatigue and dangers unavoidable; and

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the interior regions of Africa still continue unvalued, only, perhaps, because unknown.

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But if ambition did not tempt the conquerors of the world to extend their empire across the dreary deserts of Africa, nor commerce induce mankind to examine a country, the external appearance of which presents few allurements to the mere lovers of gain, to compensate for the dangers of exploring dreary and scorching regions, inhabited by ravenous beasts and noxious reptiles; yet there is one description of men to whom, with all their terrors, they will afford the most ample gratification. The admirer of Nature has, in this country, a wide field for investigation: here he will discover objects amply sufficient to satisfy the most inquisitive taste: here he will find every object, simple and unadorned; and will behold, in the uncivilized Hottentot, those virtues, which he, perhaps, sought for in civilized society in vain.

Impressed with these sentiments, and incited by the prospect of a country, the productions of which were unknown, I left England with a view to gratify a curiosity, which, if not laudable, was at least innocent.

The period when we arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, being the middle of May, it was too late in the season to go into Table Bay with safety, owing to the variable state of the weather at this time, which is that of the setting in of the Quaod Monsoon, or winter; we anchored, therefore, in the Bay False. Immediately on our arrival, a very heavy fall of

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^{May.} rain prevented my seeing any part of the country; and towards the end of the month, the hills, near the Cape, were covered with snow for several days. During the winter, therefore, I was only able to indulge myself in short excursions from the Cape town; while I made more ample preparations for a journey into the country when the season might be more favourable.

I was particularly fortunate in meeting with a gentleman, Captain Gordon, (now Colonel) who had travelled in this country some years before, (about 1774) and was lately returned from Holland, as second in command, and appointed to succeed Colonel Du Phren, who was then commander in chief. Colonel Gordon is a gentleman of extensive information in most branches of natural history; and, I believe, is the only person who has any considerable knowledge of that country, being acquainted with the interior parts for near one thousand five hundred miles from the Cape. He had acquired the language of the Hottentots, which, together with his perfect acquaintance with the Dutch language, gave him an advantage over most other travellers.

As Mr. Macon, in his letter to the Royal Society, has described the country about the Cape, it is unnecessary for me to enter into a geographical description, or to say any thing of this tract of territory, except what came immediately under my own observation.

The period which I had proposed for my long journey was the beginning of October, when a settled state of the atmosphere

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is generally expected, and when most of the plants are in flower; and, for this undertaking, I had prepared myself by almost daily excursions, which afforded me some general knowledge of the future theatre of my speculations. ^{1777.}
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On the fifth of October 1777, the day before our departure, we were entertained with observing a very uncommon phenomenon, which the people ascribed to a severe north-west wind at sea. Such a prodigious number of fish were driven into Table Bay, particularly Porpoises and Sword-fish, that the whole bay was entirely covered with them, and apparently it might have been crossed on their backs. Near the edge of the bay the water was red with their blood; and several hundreds of the fish were driven on shore, which the people cut up for oil.

On the sixth, having sent our waggon on before us, Captain Gordon and myself left the Cape Town, and proceeded along the bottom of the Table Mountain, leading towards Constantia. We dined at the house of Mr. Becker, which is only about two miles distant from Constantia, being well situated and sheltered from the north-west and south-east winds. This place produces excellent Wine, though the situation is rather low. Constantia is, however, preferable to all other parts of this district, not only because it is rather more elevated, but on account of the nature of the soil, which is a light sandy loam. The whole country abounds with the *Protea Argentea*, and many sorts of *Leucadendrons*, and also *Ericas* and *Gnaphaliums*; many specimens of which have been sent to Europe. This night we rested at a place called Sand Fleet, the pro-

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perty of a rich farmer of the name of Extim. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the hospitality of these people, since that circumstance has been remarked by all who have travelled through the country. The following day we were detained by the inclemency of the weather.

On the eighth, we continued our journey along the bottom of Bay False, from the point of Moesen Berg, to very near Hottentot Holland, which is a continuation of what is called the Sand Down, a large tract of country lying between the Table Bay and Bay False. Most of it is uninhabitable, on account of a white sand blown up by the south-east winds in very large ridges. Yet there are many shrubs dispersed in different parts. It is the principal place whence they procure their fire-wood at the Cape. It also produces the *Myrica Cerifera*; the berries of which make excellent candles, nearly equal to those of bees wax. Near the middle of the bay is a small hut, where we found some fishermen. It being in the heat of the day, and we much fatigued by travelling through the heavy sand, we rested there about an hour. At first we expected to regale ourselves with oysters; but the surf was so strong that we were unable to approach the banks. From this place we proceeded on our journey, and about sunset arrived at the Erst Rivier, or First River, which has its source from the Stillen Bosch Mountains, and empties itself, at this place, into Bay False. From the late rains we found it almost impassable; but we crossed it with much more safety than we had expected. As soon as it became dark, we were accosted with the howling of the Hyenas, which accompanied us all the way to Hottentot Holland, where

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we arrived about nine, at the residence of a Mr. De Wall. This was formerly a place belonging to Governor Adrian Vander Stell, who had introduced many foreign plants into this country, as particularly the Camphor tree. Many of these are from forty to fifty feet in height, and from twelve to thirteen feet in circumference. Hottentot Holland is situated on the north-east side of the Bay False, and surrounded on three sides by lofty mountains; but open to the south-west, where we have a view of the bay. The soil here is not so good for vines as most other places on this side the mountains, being wet and marshy; but it produces excellent corn. The mountains afforded me many beautiful plants, particularly Xeranthimums, Geraniums, Gladioluses, and many others quite new to me. Here may be said to be one of the most difficult passes into the country, called Hottentot Holland's Kloaf.* It is a narrow road cut through the hill, the summit of which appears to be nearly of a height with the Table Land. This is part of the chain of mountains which have their beginning at Cape False, or the Hang Lip, and continue to the north-west for near three hundred miles; and from twenty to forty miles from the sea, several other branches from this chain extend to the interior parts of the country, which I shall afterwards have occasion to describe in the course of my narrative.

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After sending our baggage through the pass, we pursued our journey, on the twelfth, round the Hang Lip, and proceeded to examine the small bays and rocks in the mouth of the Bay False; which at that time were but little known; in particular

* Kloaf, signifies a narrow pass through the mountains.

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that on which the Colebrooke struck some time after. As there is no road along the bay, we took each a small portion of provisions and our cloaks; satisfied that it would be impossible to perform the journey in one day. Notwithstanding the rugged rocks and mountains we were obliged to cross, we took horse as far as it was possible; and much farther than it was safe; for the horse I had, fell with me upon the side of a very high precipice; and it was by mere accident that I saved myself, by laying hold of a shrub which grew out of a rock. About noon we came to the mouth of Stienbrassam River, which takes its name from a species of fish, call Stienbrassam. In the morning we came to a deep bay, not laid down in any of our sea-charts. It opens to the north-west, and is well sheltered from the south-east winds by very lofty mountains. At this time Captain Gordon called it Van Pletenbey's Bay; but since that he has given it another name; and some time after, he discovered a bay to the eastward, which is laid down in all the new charts, and is said to be very safe for shipping. Finding a small stream of excellent water at this place, we agreed to stay all night; and next morning we continued our journey round the Hang Lip, or Cape False. From Hottentot Holland, to this place, the country is quite uninhabited; the whole tract consisting of precipices and rugged mountains. We passed a second bay, which was smaller than the first; though the entrance is clear of rocks, and a fine white sand; this was called Gordon's Bay. About a mile and a half from this we came to a third, which, in Captain Gordon's map, is called Paterson's Bay; this is much larger than the second, but smaller than the first. The latter is directly under the Hang Lip; and between it and

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Gordon's Bay are lakes of fresh water, and plenty of wood. All these bays open to the north-west, and strike south inland. About two, in the afternoon, we passed Cape False; to the south-east of which is a large plain, covered with many different species of grass; but all of them bad for cattle. Here I found a species of Erica, which was quite new, with a spike of long tubular yellow flowers, the most beautiful I had ever seen. There are some wild buffaloes* about this place, of which

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* Mr. Pennant's description of this animal is as follows: "The face is covered with long harsh black hair. Chin, under side of the neck, and dewlap, covered with long, pendulous, and coarse hairs of the same colour. From the horns, along the top of the neck, to the middle of the back, is a very thin black mane. Body covered with short, dark, cinerous hair: base of the tail almost naked and cinerous, the rest full of long black hair. Skin thick and tough. Length from nose to tail, of one not of the largest size, is eight feet: the height five and a half. Depth of the body three feet: length of the head one foot nine: of the trunk of the tail one foot nine: to the end of the hairs, two feet nine. Body and limbs thick and strong. They inhabit the interior parts of Africa, north of the Cape of Good Hope; but, I believe, do not extend to the north of the Tropic. They are said to be greatly superior in size to the largest English ox: hang their heads down, and have a most fierce and malevolent appearance. Are excessively fierce and dangerous to travellers. Will lie quietly in wait in the woods, and rush suddenly on passengers, and trample them, their horses, and oxen of draught, under their feet: so that they are to be shunned as the most cruel beasts of this country. They will even return to the attack, and delight to lick the slaughtered bodies. They are prodigiously swift, and so strong, that a young one of three years of age, being placed with six tame oxen in a waggon, could not by their united force be moved from the spot. They are also found in the interior parts of Guinea; but are so fierce and dangerous, that the negroes who are in chase of other animals are fearful of shooting at them. The lion, which can break the back of the strongest domestic oxen at one blow, cannot kill this species, except by leaping on its back, and suffocating it, by fixing its talons about its nose and mouth. The lion often perishes in the attempt; but leaves the marks of its fury about the mouth and nose of the beast. It loves much to roll in the mud, and is fond of the water. The flesh is coarse, but juicy, and has the flavour of venison. They live in great herds, especially in Krake-Kamma, and other deserts of the Cape; and retire during day into the thick forests. Are reckoned good meat. They are called by the Dutch of the Cape, Aurochs.

Another species of Aurochs is briefly described by the Dutch travellers; who say it is like the common ox, but larger, and of a grey color; that its head is small, and horns short; that

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we saw several; but they were so very shy that we could not approach them. There is also a species of antelope, which the Dutch call Eland*. Towards the evening we came to the mouth of the Palmita† Rivier. The rains to the northward had

the hairs on the breast are curled; that it has a beard like a goat; and that it is so swift, that the Namacques call it Baas, or the Master-courier. They distinguish this from the Gnou, or I should think it the same animal."

* "This animal has thick straight horns, marked with two prominent spiral ribs near two-thirds of their length; smooth towards their end: some are above two feet long: those at the British Museum, with part of their skin adhering, are black. Head of a reddish color, bounded on the cheeks by a dusky line. Ears of a middling size. Forehead broad: nose pointed. On the forehead, a stripe of long loose hairs, and on the lower part of the dewlap, a large tuft of black hair. Along the neck and back, from head to tail, is a black short mane: the rest of the body of a blueish grey, tinged with red. Space between the hoofs and false hoofs black. The tail does not reach to the first joint of the leg; is covered with short cinerous hair; the end tufted with long black hairs. The hoofs are short, surrounded at their junction with the legs with a circle of black hairs. The height to the shoulders is five feet: is thick bodied, and strongly made: but the legs are slender. The females are horned like the males. This species wants the sinus lacrymalis. The Caffres call this species Empophos. If this is the Pacasse, as there is reason to suppose it to be, they vary in color; the Pacasse being white, spotted with red and grey. The Dutch of the Cape call it the Eland or Elk. M. de Buffon, by mistake, calls this the Coudous, which he ought to have bestowed on his Condoma. It inhabits India, Congo, and the southern parts of Africa. Frequents mountainous parts of the country. They live in herds; but the old males are often solitary. They grow very fat, especially about the breast and heart: so that they are easily caught: and when pursued, will sometimes fall dead in the chase. Are slow runners: when roused, always go against the wind, nor can the hunters (even if they front the herd) divert them from their course. The flesh is fine-grained, very delicious, and juicy. The hide is tough: the Hottentots make tobacco-pipes of the horns.

There is another species with straight horns nine inches long, pointing backwards, with two spiral ribs: ears broad: color a deep tawny: beneath each eye a white spot: sides most singularly marked with two transverse bands of white, crossed by two others from the back to the belly: the rump with three white lines pointing downwards on each side: the thighs spotted with white: tail ten inches long, covered with long rough hairs. Inhabits the plains and woods of Senegal, living in large herds. This is called at the Cape, the Bonte Bock, or spotted goat." Pennant, vol. I. page 71.

† A plant common in that river.