



## CHAPTER I.

### APPROACH TO, AND ARRIVAL AT, THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

AT five in the afternoon, (13th November, 1810,) the sailors on deck, who had for some time been anxiously looking out, called to us that land was in sight. At this pleasing intelligence we hastened up from the cabin, and although nothing could be seen but a small cloud, which seemed fixed on the horizon, and was at first not very easily to be distinguished, the captain, who was well acquainted with the singular appearance of the cloud which rests on the *Table Mountain* during a south-east gale, declared that the land which we had now before us was that of the *Cape of Good Hope*.

It appeared gradually and slowly rising out of the ocean, while our sails, well filled with the gentle gale, bore the gliding vessel over the blue waters of the deep, and forced its foamy prow resistless through the yielding waves. Every other thought was banished, and our whole attention was now turned towards the distant cloud. The tedious and protracted length of our voyage was felt no longer; every countenance became enlivened, and each one with new alacrity assisted in the preparations for bringing the ship into port. The land was distant nearly one hundred miles in the direction of north-east; but a pleasant south-easterly breeze was carrying us on rapidly towards it,

and every mile we advanced added some agreeable idea to the animating anticipation of my feelings on first setting foot on the land of Africa. I now perceived that all the pictures which imagination previously forms of a country, make but faint impressions in comparison with those presented by the country itself: we indulge the more freely in all the speculations of curiosity, whenever the prospect of its immediate gratification banishes the fear of disappointment: we feel an increased desire to ascertain whether the notions we had previously acquired, correspond with things themselves; and our fancy redoubles its activity in pourtraying a thousand delightful objects, ready to pour fresh knowledge into our mind.

Anticipated ideas continued to interest and amuse me during the remainder of the day; and the dawn of daylight the next morning found us on deck, ready to catch the appearance of the long-wished-for land. Nothing, however, was to be seen: the haziness of the atmosphere was not dissipated till the sun had risen high; when the land again came in view\*, presenting

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\* See the *Vignette*. — This represents a first view of the land of the Cape of Good Hope, as seen from a distance of about thirty miles in the direction of E.N.E. Cape Point, or the *Cape of Good Hope* proper, was at this time covered with a thick haze, and therefore could not be distinguished; but on comparing the vignette with the map, it will be easily seen how much farther to the right the land should extend. To the left the *Lion's Head*, appearing as a conical mountain, terminates the view; the mountains of Blauwberg, &c. not having yet risen above the horizon. The Lion Mountain is seen foreshortened, and therefore the Rump appears only as a point of less elevation, and close under the Head on the left. The large flat mountain next following is the celebrated *Table Mountain*, presenting its steep rocky western side to the ocean. Cape Town stands on its northern side, and no part of it can be seen till the voyager has sailed round to the other side of the Lion Mountain. Over the low gorge, or *kloof*, between these two mountains, passes the road from the Town to *Camp's Bay*. Through the next kloof or opening there is a horse-road from Camp's Bay to *Hout Bay*, which lies behind the mountain following next to Table Mountain; and the entrance to this bay is round the small conical rocky point (here shaded more darkly) sometimes called the Hanglip, from its resemblance to a mountain similarly situated at the south-eastern point of False Bay. The next large mountain, less shaded than the others, is called the *Steenbergen* (Stony Mountains); behind which, and constituting a part of it, is *Muisenberg* (Mouse Mountain), and the north-western corner of False Bay. The land which next follows is not in reality so low as it here appears to be, but is a continuation of the same range of mountains, receding below the horizon of the sea. The abrupt termination of the range is where the haze concealed the remaining part of it.

from afar a range of faint blue mountains, at the northern end of which *Table Mountain* and *Lion's Head* were very easy to be recognized by the peculiarity of their form. The weather became fine; and the wind, which had continued to blow from the south-east, increased to a gale; so that by noon we were within two leagues of the shore: and soon after getting under the lee of the mountains, the vessel was nearly becalmed, scarcely making any way through the water. This slow progress gave me a favourable opportunity for making several drawings, and for observing the remarkable cloud which covered the top of Table Mountain, resting upon it with all the appearance of a ponderous substance: every other part of the sky was perfectly clear, and the wind, which was evidently blowing there with great violence, seemed unable to dislodge it from its situation. Its thin misty skirts no sooner rolled over the edge of the precipice, than they were rarefied into air and vanished. The western part of Table Mountain, with its rocky precipitous side cleft in deep ravines, rose majestically out of the ocean. Between this and the mountains, which form the western side of *Hout Bay* (Wood Bay), stands the *False Lion's Head*, a mountain of subordinate elevation. The true *Lion's Head* is much higher than the *False*, but considerably lower than *Table Mountain*.

As we advanced nearer along the shore, the mountains displayed an imposing grandeur, which mocked the littleness of human works: buildings were but white specks; too small to add a feature to the scene; too insignificant either to adorn or to disturb the magnificence of nature. We had left behind us the deep blue waters of the ocean, and, sheltered by the land, were sailing on the calm surface of waters of a greener tinge, from which the seals sometimes raised their dripping heads to view us as we passed. Baffling winds frequently impeded our progress, and put the sailors' patience to trial; but the novelty of the scene, and the interesting objects before me, absorbed the whole of my attention. Eager to become acquainted with the details of what I saw, I long occupied myself in scrutinizing, with a telescope, every rock and ravine; though as yet we were too far off to allow my impatient curiosity to be gratified.

We continued till evening frequently tacking and working our way slowly towards Table Bay, where we hoped to cast anchor in the course of the night. The moon had just risen, glittering on the tops of the waves, and, casting its light on the projecting crags of the mountains, spread a beauty and solemnity over the scene, that heightened the effect of every occurrence. At this time we were abreast of *Green Point* at the entrance of the bay.

The moment we had passed beyond the shelter of the Lion Mountain, a furious wind suddenly and unexpectedly assailed the vessel; pouring out of the clouds, as it seemed, its boisterous fury upon us. A poetic imagination would certainly have fancied that the skins given by Æolus to Ulysses, had been carried to the top of Table Mountain, and there all cut open at once.

The vessel was rapidly driving out to sea again: in the utmost hurry the sailors flew up the rigging, and took in all sail possible. We strove to beat into the bay, but a whole hour's struggling against the storm proved all in vain; and the fore top-sail being split, we were compelled to wear the ship, and retreat to the shelter of the Lion Mountain to bend another sail.

Towards morning we made a second attempt, but were repulsed by a wind more furious than before; so that we considered ourselves fortunate in being able to regain our former shelter. Here we continued the whole of this and the following day, standing off and on within the lee of the Lion Mountain, experiencing alternate calms and gales; at one moment the ship rolling in a dead calm, and at the next, if we happened to exceed the limit of our shelter, running with the gunnel under water, through waves whose tops were blown away in spray by the fury of the south-easter: yet the weather appeared fine and the sky cloudless.

We often approached to within half a mile of the shore, where with a glass we could discern people at work, and dust driven up in clouds. Some spots appeared of a beautiful purple and others of a yellow colour, occasioned most probably by the abundance of flowers. So tantalizing a view, after a protracted and tedious voyage, would have induced me to attempt a landing almost at any rate; but the

surf, which lined the whole coast with a fringe of white, plainly showed the danger and even impracticability of the attempt at such a time; I therefore contented myself with making a drawing of the view; which in this bearing, more than in any other, presents a resemblance to a lion quite sufficient to justify the name the mountain has received; and is probably that in which the likeness was first observed. To a ship keeping the Lion's Head and the middle of the northern side of Table Mountain in a line, and being at the distance of about two miles, the mountain exhibits the form of a *lion couchant*, whose fore-paws are extended forward, and form the southern point of *Camp's Bay*, while the tail is very well represented by the flat land of *Green Point*.

The first discoverers of a land presenting such grand features of bold and mountainous outline, must have felt that the occurrence itself was full of interest; but when at the same time they knew that they had thus passed the barrier which had stopped all former navigators, at least of the later ages, and had now opened a way to the Eastern world, the doubling of this celebrated promontory must have been an event which might justify the highest exultation. As I looked upon the mountains and the shore, my imagination carried me back to that period when its peaceable inhabitants, the simple Hottentots, roamed freely over the country, enjoying the liberty of nature, nor dreaming that a day could ever arrive when they must resign all to some unknown race of men, coming upon them from the ocean, an element which no tradition had ever told them could be travelled on by man. Their arms and their watchings had no object besides their inland enemies; the turbulent surface of the "Great Water" and the noisy shore, seemed the only side whence no danger was to be dreaded. But it is not at the extremity of Africa only, where treachery has surprised men from a quarter where it was least expected. I was wishing, for the honor of Europeans, men enjoying the blessings of civilization, and illumined by the superior light of arts and science, that I could have persuaded myself that these natives had been rendered happier by their communication with them: I longed to be amongst them, that I might ascertain so

important a fact by my own experience ; and my fondest wish was, to be able to bear witness to the truth of it.

The idea, that the land was now before me where I was to become acquainted with my fellow-creatures living in primeval simplicity, caused a pleasing glow in my mind, and I imagined myself already in the midst of their tribes, delighted at the novelty of the scene, and acquiring new views of human nature. Not aware that the ardor of a youthful imagination concealed every difficulty, I could see none which could disappoint my hope of traversing in any direction the unknown regions of Southern Africa ; and believed that once safely landed, every obstacle to my progress would vanish. My impatience, therefore, at remaining on the sea so long after coming in sight of the harbour, began to render my confinement to the ship exceedingly irksome.

The whole crew, being but few in number, were obliged to remain constantly on the watch ; and as the wind was continually changing, they were nearly exhausted by fatigue. Thus passed the day ; and the evening came on without any symptoms of abatement in the storm. At last, about eight o'clock, we suddenly found ourselves within its influence, having unfortunately drifted beyond the shelter of the mountain. The wind roared in the rigging, and drove us before it like a feather on the surface of a lake ; it was impossible to regain our shelter, and in this extremity we bore up for *Robben island*, hoping under the lee of it to find some protection. But this we could not accomplish, and the fury of the storm sweeping us past it with awful rapidity, hurried us once more out of sight of land. With great difficulty the sails were furled, and under a close reefed fore-topsail we scudded before the tempest. The vessel rolled in a dreadful manner ; every minute we expected to hear the crash of masts falling overboard ; the men were thrown from side to side, unable to keep on their feet ; and worn out with labor and fatigue, they looked at each other in a desponding manner, which betrayed their fears, and showed the reality of our danger. The storm raged still more furiously, and the peril of our situation increased every moment. It was no

1810.

STORM AT SEA.

7

longer safe to scud; huge waves pursuing as if bent on our destruction, threatened every instant to break over us, and at once overwhelm our bark in the fathomless deep. The captain, whose judgment was always cool, saw no alternative between certain destruction and what was, in our circumstances, a very perilous experiment; but we happily succeeded in heaving the ship to, under storm-mainsail, fore stay-sail, and close-reefed try-sail. There was still much reason for uneasiness, lest she should not keep her head to the sea; and every one continued watching the danger with the greatest anxiety, dreading that some unforeseen accident would before morning bury us all in the cold grave of the ocean. The vessel became so leaky that it was necessary to keep both pumps going day and night; and it was at one time uncertain whether they gained on the water or not.

The night passed without sleep or rest, and the welcome morning light served in some measure to diminish the gloomy appearance of the scene: the sunshine and cloudless sky exhibited the fallacious semblance of fair weather, but the angry wind still howled in the rigging, and the waves still lifted up their foaming heads around. The hatches carefully closed, and the deadlights bolted in, the cabin dark as a dungeon, and the deck deluged with the waves, were appearances well suited to the solemnity of a storm. Heavy seas frequently rolled on board with overwhelming force, throwing every thing into confusion, breaking the spars and casks from their lashings, and washing away the loose utensils into the sea. The seamen, drenched with water, seemed to go aloft with reluctance, expecting hardly to escape being blown overboard. The captain, whose careful eye was unceasingly surveying every part of his ship, discovered that the try-sail, which was an old one, showed in several parts the first symptoms of splitting, some of the threads having already given way. Knowing that on this sail depended the maintenance of the balance of wind necessary for keeping the vessel's head either from falling off or broaching to, he began, with evident melancholy, to express to me his fears. At such a time as this, and indeed on every occasion, when the safety or right management of the ship is in question, a

passenger (and here I was the only one) will naturally feel as anxious and watchful as those to whom that safety is entrusted. I saw that our fate depended on the sail, and we knew that to replace it by another was impracticable at this time. After devising various plans, I proposed that another sail should be hoisted under the lee of it, so that in the event of its giving way, the pressure of the wind would then be sustained by the lee sail. The suggestion was instantly approved, and no time was lost in carrying it into execution.

After this we felt as if the crisis of our danger were past, and looked with some hope for a favourable termination to the tempest. Drifting at the mercy of the elements, we were unable to estimate our lee-way, or to calculate with any certainty what part of the ocean we were in.

Thus passed the whole of the day. In the night the violence of the wind began to abate a little, and in the course of the forenoon of the following day (18<sup>th</sup>) it became sufficiently moderate to allow of our making sail again. Every one resumed a cheerful countenance, and congratulated each other on having thus happily weathered so tremendous a storm. Our little vessel was in gratitude praised for many good qualities; and the captain, who had been very unfortunate in his ships, several having been wrecked or cast ashore, some foundered at sea, and one consumed by fire, now confessed that at one time his hopes of ever reaching land had deserted him. Every one was busily employed in repairing damages, and in rectifying the confusion into which the deck had been thrown. The unusual and unexpected length of the voyage reduced us to a short allowance of water, and our stock of fresh provisions had been exhausted three days before. We shaped our course once more towards the Cape, and continued sailing, with variable winds and unsettled weather, for four days; but on the 23<sup>d</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> the weather became fair and pleasant, and the wind blew right in our favour.

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, in the morning, at a little before eight o'clock, having a light westerly wind, we again made the Cape land; and rejoiced to find that the cloud had left the mountain. Having paid so



dearly for our experience and knowledge of the nature of that cloud, it was with no small satisfaction that we beheld Table Mountain in its true outline, presenting its broad, flat, and horizontal summit, unobscured by mist or haze. Although we approached the land but slowly, we were confident in not meeting at present, on entering Table Bay, so ungracious a reception as we had experienced the first time.

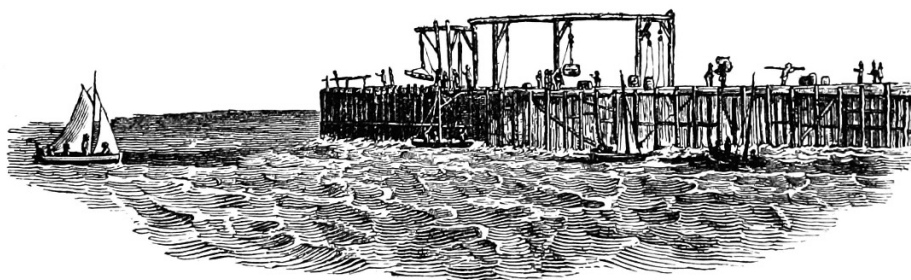
The next day, (26th,) by three in the afternoon, we were close in with the *Lion's Head*; but being nearly becalmed, we made but slow progress round *Green Point*, which, as we sailed along, was very close on our right hand. Various buildings began to make their appearance; the Jutty and Castle came in sight; and, as soon as we had passed the Chavonne and Amsterdam batteries, *Cape Town* itself, backed by the immense precipice of Table Mountain, rising like an enormous wall, opened full to view.

At first no object attracted my notice till I had sufficiently admired the majestic amphitheatre of mountains in which the town reposes. Every thing wore, to *my* eye at least, a pleasing aspect: it was the charm of novelty which cast an agreeable hue over the whole scene; even the smallest object interested me, and whatever I beheld seemed to present itself as a subject for my future investigation. On the first arriving at a foreign country, there is a sensation so delightful and so peculiar to an inquisitive mind, that language can convey but little of it to a reader. To many these sentiments must remain unintelligible; to those, at least, who see no other difference in the countries they may have had the opportunities of visiting, than that which arises from the language or dress of the inhabitants, or from the heat or cold of the climate. The strange features which an attentive observer instantly discovers, in animated as well as in inanimated nature; the various shades of human character and manners; the complexion of the mountains and valleys; the ground we tread upon; all open to us gratuitously an inexhaustible source of knowledge and of ideas, and an infinite variety of amusement of the most rational kind. To that cold mind which can look at Nature with insensibility, nearly the whole of the creation exists in vain,

and that heart can be but faintly warmed with love for the Creator, which is ignorant of the stupendous wisdom and countless multitude of his works; works which seem formed expressly to conduce in every way to our happiness, and which fill the world we inhabit with beauty, inviting the mind to study their importance and admire their perfection.

At length the anchor was cast; and the voyage ended.

It was six o'clock before the boat was ready to leave the ship; when Captain Waldo, whose attentions had contributed to render my situation during the passage, as comfortable as circumstances would permit, accompanied me for the purpose of being my guide, as he was well acquainted with the place. In ten minutes we reached the shore, and my foot stepped, for the first time, on the land of Africa.



*The Vignette* represents a part of the Jutty, the usual and only safe landing-place at Cape Town. It is also the only wharf, and, therefore, at all times a very busy spot. Some interest may be felt in this little representation, when the reader recals to mind the many celebrated or well-known characters who have passed along this same platform, and here first set their foot on the African shore. Eminent navigators and men of science of all nations; crowds of European passengers to or from India and the eastern colonies; all, not less than the weather-beaten sailor or the invalid, have leaped from their boat on to this wooden structure with a pleasure which a long and irksome voyage, and the view of a fine town, have equally contributed to heighten: some looking forward to the refreshments and to the amusements which the place is to afford, and others to the acquirement of knowledge, and the investigation of Nature under new forms.