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William John Burchell

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### **Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa**

William John Burchell (1781–1863) is remembered for this outstanding geography of South Africa, published in two volumes in 1822–4 and later taken on Darwin's Beagle voyage. It covers the first year of Burchell's 4,500-mile expedition into southern Africa from 1811 to 1815, while 'botanist to the Cape Colony'. The author returned to England with 500 scientific and ethnographical drawings, many of them used as illustrations in the book, and about 63,000 natural history specimens including 120 animal skins and 265 species of bird. His preface emphasises that his journal is accurate, independent and free from prejudice; he also claims that unlike many travelogues, his contains no 'indelicacies ... offensive to decency'. Volume 1 focuses mainly on landscapes, flora and fauna, often giving their indigenous names. It covers Burchell's trek to Klaarwater, which became his base for over a year, and a major side trip to the south-east.

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# Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa

VOLUME 1

WILLIAM JOHN BURCHELL



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TRAVELS  
IN THE  
INTERIOR  
OF  
SOUTHERN AFRICA,  
BY  
WILLIAM J. BURCHELL, Esq.

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VOLUME I.

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*WITH AN ENTIRELY NEW MAP, AND NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS.*

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LONDON :  
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## ERRATA.

- Page 4. line 12. *for* "Æolus" *read* "Æolus."  
 15. ... *for* "diphthong," in the note, *read* "diphthong."  
 75. ... 8. from the bottom, *for* "Taska" *read* "Tarka."  
 87. ... 2. from the bottom, *for* "Duth" *read* "Dutch."  
 151. ... 1. *for* "Riebek's" *read* "Riebeck's."  
 150. ... 16. *for* "izer" *read* "yzer."  
 151. ... 17. *for* "fits" *read* "fit."  
 152. ... 11. *for* "brick-plank" *read* "buikplank."  
 179. ... *for* "viminalis," in the note, *read* "viminale."  
 190. ... 7. from the bottom, *for* "desart" *read* "desert."  
 243. ... 7. from the bottom, *for* "barks" *read* "bark."  
 257. ... 2. *for* "Ancistrum," in the note, *read* "Acæna."  
 260. ... 6. *for* "Lappago," in the note, *read* "Selago."  
 400. ... 13. of the note, the word "Capsula" should be placed in the  
 next line, before the word "linearis."  
 414. ... 5. *for* "was" *read* "were."  
 516. ... 1. *for* "idea" *read* "ideas."
- And perhaps a few others of this description, which may have escaped notice at the  
 time of correcting the press.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE travels, of which the following pages contain the narrative, were undertaken solely for the purpose of acquiring knowledge: and it having been thought possible that the communication of facts observed during these researches might contribute some small portion towards the general stock of information, they are here laid before the Public. As they were commenced with a mind free from prejudice, and in the purest spirit of independence, so they have been conducted, and so they are now concluded. It is not asserted that they are exempt from the natural chance of error to which all human observations are liable; but that their claim to be, even to the minutest particular, regarded as a faithful picture of occurrences and observations, stands on a basis never to be shaken; the confirmation of which is readily left to every honest and unprejudiced traveller who may hereafter traverse the same ground. The motive, the expense, and the accomplishment of these travels having been entirely and individually the author's, he has therefore thought proper to adhere to the same principle in the present work, both in the scientific and in the literary parts of it. As none but those who have personally beheld the scenes, and witnessed the facts, can be competent to communicate to others the impressions they make on the mind, or to describe them with fidelity, the author has judged it more consistent, and more conducive to correctness, to reject all assistance whatever; and, although the language of this narrative might have been arranged in smoother periods, and expressed with more fashionable elegance, the reader who looks for information more than amusement, will doubt-

lessly be better satisfied by a feeling of confidence that he is receiving his information in the traveller's own words. Neither have the drawings been touched by any other hand : from these the plates have been immediately coloured, and may be considered as expressing with fidelity the tints, as well as the outlines, of African scenery. In order to ensure greater correctness in the vignettes, the author has made all these drawings upon the blocks themselves ; so that the impressions are the fac-similes of every line of the pencil, a style of outline having been adopted, as being best suited to engravings on wood. Those who can appreciate the art, will not fail to admire the care and abilities of the engraver. Of the map, little need be said in this place, as a sufficient explanation will be found at the end of the Itinerary. The General Index, together with a Zoological and Botanical Index, will be given with the second volume.

In the Dutch names, and in words belonging to the languages of the Hottentots and other native tribes, the accented syllable has been generally marked by an acute accent, and the English translation of them added in parentheses. In the body of the work, words have frequently been printed in *Italic* characters, with the view of pointing out the subject of the paragraph, and of supplying the place of marginal notes. The General Index will answer the purpose of a glossary for all the foreign words found in this volume, by referring to the given page for the interpretation. The orthography of these words has not been neglected ; and where it has been found uncertain or ill-established, the different modes in use in the colony, have been occasionally employed. With respect to those languages which have hitherto been merely oral, a system of orthography, suited to the genius or natural sounds of them, has been adopted, and will be explained hereafter. Where any of these have already been received into the Dutch or English languages, the spelling proper to these has frequently been employed ; and precepts for their pronunciation given in various parts of this volume.



## PREFACE.

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In the narrative, the strict form of a journal has been adhered to, as being that which best enables the reader and the author to travel, as it were, the journey over again, and view, in their proper light, the facts in connection, and the impressions made by each event in succession. The object of this journal being to give a natural and faithful picture of passing scenes and transactions, many circumstances of less importance have been allowed their place in it; just as, in a landscape or historical painting, even of the sublimest conception, the weeds of the foreground, or the stones of the pavement, however trifling in themselves, must be represented, in order to complete the whole, and convey the just resemblance of nature.

In these pages modesty may read without fearing to meet with descriptions and allusions which might raise a blush upon her cheek. This is the more necessary to be stated in a preface, as books of travels, though professedly lying open to every class of readers, sometimes contain matter offensive to decency, and which renders them unfit for general perusal. Such indelicacies will never be found in these volumes.

The author, during this expedition, which lasted four years, had no companion or assistant, nor other attendants than a few Hottentots, the number of whom never exceeded ten. Of the party which set out from Cape Town, he was the only one who returned to that place; the rest having quitted him, and been several times replaced by others during the journey. In a course of four thousand five hundred miles, exclusive of numerous smaller excursions, regions never before trodden by European foot, were explored and examined. Besides that general information respecting these countries and their inhabitants which it was his principal object to obtain, and which are communicated by the following narrative, considerable collections in Natural History were made, and a multitude of objects hitherto unknown to science brought to England. Of these a few are occasionally mentioned, and distinguished, either by a reference to the 'Geographical Catalogue,' or by the letter B; and, not

to interrupt the text, short descriptions of them are added in the notes. These descriptions, however, are not intended as specific characters, but are given merely as the more obvious or striking features, in order to convey to the zoologist or botanist some idea of the more remarkable objects. Neither was it thought requisite, in the present work at least, to adopt every innovation in nomenclature which, since the travels were commenced, these sciences have from time to time undergone. These collections consist of above sixty three thousand objects, inclusive of the duplicates, in every department of the science. Out of two hundred and eighty nine quadrupeds shot on the journey, a hundred and twenty skins, comprising eighty species, were preserved. The collection of birds contains two hundred and sixty-five different kinds. In addition to these results of the expedition, are about five hundred drawings, the subjects of which are landscapes, portraits, costume, zoology, botany, and a variety of other objects.

The author's views in travelling, were not confined to any particular class of observation. As it was general knowledge which he sought, so he has endeavoured to extend his researches to whatever appeared likely to afford interesting information ; but in a country still in a state of nature, and where art has done so little, the works of the creation, ever delightful to all but those of a corrupt and depraved mind, necessarily present themselves the most frequently to notice. In the second volume, however, the investigation of man in an uncivilized state of society, will be found to offer to the contemplation of the philosopher, a picture not altogether undeserving of attention, if the writer should be able by words to communicate to others those feelings which he himself experienced, and those impressions which his abode among the natives of the interior of Africa, has made upon his own mind.

LONDON,  
February, 1822.