

Literature, &c.

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A GUANO LOCALITY.

BY A VISITOR.

The southern coast of Africa is almost entirely destitute of harbours or shelter for shipping—the only safe and commodious one is situated on the south-west coast, in latitude 33 degrees 8 minutes south, and about seventy miles northwards from Cape Town. It is known as Saldanha Bay, and is within Cape Colony; but, until the last two years, it had been scarcely visited at all, except by voyagers who had occasion to make such repairs as require a vessel to be hove down, and for this purpose it affords much greater facilities than the comparatively troubled water of Table Bay. Last year some attention was called to this bay by the visit of a large number of vessels, for the purpose of obtaining the guano which abounded upon some of its islets; and since that period, about 40,000 tons have been removed from these barren and desert shores to fertilise our own land. From north to south, the bay has an extent of about twenty-five miles, and its breadth may be about seven. There are three small islands near its entrance bearing the names of Jutten, Malagas, and Marcus islands. Between Jutten island and the main shore is a wide passage, deep enough for vessels of almost any burden. Malagas island was covered with guano several feet in depth, and the captains of numerous vessels that were sent out to search the coast for the supposed nitre of soda were glad to come here and take home cargoes of guano. The anchorage under this island is not very good, and the surf is heavy, so that most of the vessels lay in Hoetjes Bay, where they were completely sheltered. Nearly a hundred vessels were there at one time taking in guano. The colonial government, which levied a duty of £1 per ton upon all guano removed, erected a temporary stage, to the end of which, the guano having been previously dried in the sun, was wheeled in barrows, and discharged into the boats.

Many boatmen and labourers from Cape Town, as well as those brought by the ships, and parties of the crews, lived in tents upon this island for a considerable time, digging, drying, and carrying the guano, so that quite a little town was formed. The butchers of Cape Town sent men to slaughter the cattle and sheep which the farmers of the interior drove down in large quantities as supplies for the ships. Saldanha Bay then presented a scene of life and animation, contrasted to its state before and since. No one can walk among its barren sand-hills, where no sound is audible but that of the ocean, without feeling the most oppressive loneliness. Shooting parties were often formed to chase the antelopes and baboons, which at that time abounded in the neighbourhood, but soon retired before the guns of the sportsmen. The baboons are about four feet in height, and of a fierce disposition, and, from their agility in scrambling among the rocks, are not easily shot. The writer was the spectator upon one occasion of a young baboon, which had been slightly wounded by a musket-ball, seizing a good-sized dog, and ripping it open with his powerful teeth. Having thus rid himself of one of his pursuers, he retired among some rocks, and could not afterwards be found. There are also some hares and rabbits, and other varieties of small game.

Ostriches, too, inhabit this sandy district, but, owing to their extraordinary fleetness, seldom fall a prey to man, who is obliged to content himself with their eggs, which are laid upon the sand to hatch. One egg makes a very respectable meal for two persons, the contents being reckoned about equal to twenty-five hens' eggs. There are plenty of sea-fowl penguins, ducks, shags, gannets, &c.—whose presence has rendered the soil of the islets so valuable. There are also many varieties of noxious snakes, of which the cobra di capella and the puff adder are the worst. Now that the vessels have left the place, it has reassumed its former solitariness, and the game is returning as before. A friend of the writer, when on a visit to the spot one day, killed an ox for the consumption of crew, and hung it upon a triangle in front of the tent in which he slept ashore. He was awakened in the middle of the night by an unusual noise, and on looking cautiously out underneath the tent, he perceived a large leopard (called by the colonists a tiger) fixed on the carcass, and tearing away the flesh with his teeth and claws. Being without arms of any description he naturally felt some alarm at first, but as he was not inclined to put up with a total loss of the meat, he threw a large stone at the beast, which immediately had the effect of making it decamp.

On Marcus island eggs are laid in great quantities by ducks and other sea-birds. An old man who obtained a livelihood by collecting them, and sending them by the boatmen to Cape Town, is the sole inhabitant. The northern part of the bay is separated from the southern, which is called the lagoon or river, by the two islands Schapen and Meerwen, which are also great egg-depositories. Schapen, which is the largest of the two, is nearly a mile in diameter. It has a small spring of fresh water upon it close to the sea, and it abounds with rabbits. The lagoon extends about eight miles to the south-east, and at its extremity are some flats, where good salt may

be obtained. In many places it is shallow, and full of sand banks; but there is a narrow channel, varying from two to four fathoms in depth, coming in on the east side of Schapen island, and running a considerable distance inland, where the stream, from the tide, is contracted and runs with a velocity of three or four miles an hour. In the dry summer season the south-east winds frequently blow with much violence, and drift the sand of the sea-shore into dunes, which cover and destroy the bushes, sometimes for more than a mile inland; but if there were any inhabitants, this might be remedied without great difficulty by planting trees along the shore to windward. In many places on the east part of the water may be found within a few feet of the surface. That from a well about fifteen feet deep was good, and was used to supply the shipping by the government resident, who has the superintendence of the bay, and the care of government land. The supposed deficiency of water is without foundation, at least as compared with the colony generally; and there is no doubt that a sufficient supply may be had at any time, for any part of the shore, by boring to a moderate depth. To the east the rocks are chiefly granitic; and Hoetjes Bay there is a large quantity of limestone, and masses of ironstone are frequently found. The bay contains a plentiful supply of good fish, very few, however, resembling the European species; and thousands of divers and other sea-birds may be seen pursuing and diving for them. A few years ago a fishery was set on foot, but it was ultimately given up for want of a sufficient market. A single store, at which most common articles may be obtained, a cottage or two close to the shore, and two or three farm-houses a few miles inland, are all the inhabitants within many miles of this capacious bay. One of these farms, about seven miles from the sea, is called Witte Kluis, from a large white stone on the hill above it, which, owing to its elevated position, is a conspicuous object from most parts of the offing. Here is a powerful spring of water, very slightly brackish. The proprietor is a Dutch boor, and owner of the land for some miles along the north side of the bay. He cultivates scarcely anything, leaving it in its natural state, and allowing his cattle to feed on it. Most of the land around is a light sandy soil covered with brush, with very little grass in summer, as there is not sufficient moisture in this dry climate.

With respect to what has been the chief product of this place—the guano—it has generally been supposed to be the droppings of sea-birds accumulated in large quantities. This opinion may be correct as to that which comes from the coast of Peru but it is not strictly so of African guano. Both that which was procured at Saldanha Bay, and that at Ichaboe, some way farther along the same coast, was largely mixed with other substances. Some captain not inaptly compared it to 'a mixture of bad snuff and rotten kittens.' A few years since, the seals and other marine animals along this coast were seized with a fatal epidemic; which caused them to crawl upon the rocks, and die in myriads. In this part rain seldom or ever falls; and the dead bodies, after undergoing partial decomposition, become dried in the sun, and were overlaid by the deposits of the birds. This was the manner in which the guano was formed into beds of such depth. In digging into it, the remains of fur seals were found in abundance. The preservation and accumulation of these animal deposits is caused by the climate, rain—as in Egypt in a similar latitude north—seldom falling to wash them away. There is also a great similarity between the climate of the African and Peruvian coasts in the want of rain; and it has been conjectured, not without probability, that there may be a field for guano enterprise under the same parallel of latitude on the little explored coasts of New Holland. Many of the guano speculations were extremely lucrative. The guano cost nothing but £1 a ton to the colonial government for license to remove it, and the labour of loading, and it sold in England for prices averaging from £6 to £8 per ton. The ships sent out were generally old, and hardly fit for any other service.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.
WAR SCENES.

This paper is from the pen of a veteran soldier who has spent his life amid such scenes and incidents as he attempted to depict. We give it not so much for literary reasons, as for the interest which attaches to it as the views of a soldier on the subject of war.

Those who have seen the most of war—those even who have won their honours on the most brilliant battle fields—are generally foremost in making efforts for the preservation of peace. They have witnessed so many of the dire effects of war, so much misery, affliction, and demoralization, that, unless in the defence of life or their country against the attacks of a foreign foe, they would neither willingly draw the sword themselves, nor sanction it being unsheathed by others.

It has fallen to my lot to witness many scenes of warfare; and I intrust those who have visions of glory, conquest, and so forth, to bear with me whilst I endeavour to convince them, by a brief retrospect, and by the reflections naturally arising therefrom, that nothing can counterbalance the unspeakable advantages of peace. What sounds are those which fill the air? The drums and trumpets of a division of an army approaching a town, in a country which is the theatre of war. They are national and friendly troops; but their arrival does not produce any pleasurable feeling in the

breasts of the inhabitants. They are worn out. Yesterday the town was occupied by a brigade of the enemy's forces, which had only marched out in the morning; and although it was a disciplined force, it had left disastrous traces behind it. In every house numbers of officers and privates had been billeted; the authorities had been peremptorily called upon to supply rations and forage for the brigade; not a corner nor a nook in the greater part of the houses had been left unexplored; and the sacredness of domestic quietude had been infringed upon. The townspeople had scarcely made a perceptible progress in the restoration of their dwellings to something approaching to their usual state, and were just preparing to seek some repose, and were congratulating one another on the prospect of a quiet night, when their ears were assailed by martial sounds. And now their homes are again crowded with military; fresh demands are made for supplies; fresh anxieties, alarms, and toils fall upon them. This sad state of things lasts throughout the war. There are neither homes, nor domestic peace, nor security. The spirit of the people at length becomes broken, and family ties are rent asunder by strong temptations to which the youthful members are exposed by a continual succession of authorized intruders—many of whom are intriguing and immoral, as may easily be supposed when the heterogeneous materials of which even the best-regulated armies are composed are taken into consideration. If open towns or villages are thus exposed, how dreadful is the condition of a fortified place when besieged by a powerful army, and defended by a competent and determined garrison! For weeks and weeks the showers of shot and shell from the enemy's batteries pour into, and burst over the devoted town without intermission. Alarm and dismay are stamped upon every countenance; women and children are huddled together under ground, or in places where there may be a chance of shelter; many are crushed to death by the ruins of their falling dwellings; heaps of slain inumber the streets; great numbers of houses are on fire; the starving people crawl about the perilous streets in search of alimont of the most revolting description; they are parched with thirst, and there is no water; a horrible contagious fever breaks out; the livid corpses are piled up in the streets, for the surveyors are to weak to bury them; and the soldiers, decimated by the enemy's fire or by disease, can render no assistance, for they are at their posts in the batteries. At length a breach is made in the walls, the assault commences, and the forlorn-hope is led by gallant officers. Down, down are many brave fellows hurled into the ditch; those who follow them share the same fate in great numbers, but others scramble over the dead bodies of their comrades; the defenders are slaughtered or driven back, and the place is taken by storm. Alas for human nature. Cruelty and the most revolting scenes of depravity are perpetrated, perhaps during two or three awful days and nights, by an unbridled soldiery, amidst flames and explosions! The shrieks of the victims are unheeded, and the officers in vain exert themselves to stay the frightful torrent of human infamy. At last the savage turmoil ceases, and an awful silence ensues—the silence of exhausted vice, intemperance, and death! And wherefore this letting loose of all the bad passions, this agony, these frightful deaths? Perhaps for a matter in dispute between two potentates, who are awaiting the result in their luxurious palaces afar off—a dispute for which the harmless people care not one straw. Peradventure a crown is claimed by one branch of a royal house, and is possessed by another; or the case may be that a portion of territory belonging to the neighbouring state (a territory snatched ages ago from the aborigines) is coveted in order to round a district, or with the view of creating popularity for the head of a republic, so as to insure his reelection. But is it not monstrous and humiliating that the people should be thus tortured, and stricken to the earth, and exposed to these demoniac assaults, on account of such personal cavils and ambition?

Come with me to the battle-field. What fury! what carnage! The cries and groans of dead and dying are unheeded; and those whose hearts have been at all times, in their private capacities, open to appeals, however feeble, from their suffering fellow-creatures, now, in the excitement of the moment, rush upon, or gallop over, enemies or comrades indiscriminately. Many, in the very height of their fell onslaught, are in their turn laid low by bullet, lance, or sword, and lift up their imploring hands on the approach of other hosts who are overthrowing every obstacle to their advance or retreat.

The battle is won. The hostile forces are vanquished, and their artillery captured, a dynasty has been changed; a so-called 'balance of power' established; or a political principle vindicated. Grandiloquent proclamations and manifestoes are now published; rejoicings take place in cities, towns, and villages; and promises are made which, it is almost certain, will never be realised. It is more than probable that the remedy will be worse than the disease; that, whether from hollow professions, or the frustration of honest intentions by after-intrigues, the ostensible object for which so much suffering and slaughter were incurred will be cast entirely into the back-ground.

Let us now visit one of the field hospitals, whither the wounded are conveyed during and after a battle. Here, in a hamlet half in ruins, from having been the scene of various conflicts in the course of the military operations, are some of the victims of war. The military surgeons are doing all that skill and hu-

manity can accomplish to alleviate this accumulation of human suffering. One amputates a shattered limb, another probes a wound with scientific and gentle hand; whilst many a poor, prostrate creature, severely wounded, casts his imploring eyes the over-occupied sargeons, hoping that his case may be the next to be attended to. On a sack filled with straw lies a fine young man; there is blood upon his clothing; a musket bullet has lodged in his shoulder. He speaks not, but his lips are distended, and display a fine set of teeth clenched together: this gives a grinning yet anguished expression to his countenance. Poor fellow! his eyeballs seem starting from their sockets with almost speaking anxiety. Poor fellow! he has been stricken with lock-jaw; he will in all probability die a lingering death from starvation. No food, no liquid can pass his lips; the portals of aliment are closed; and it is to be feared that no human skill can reopen them.

From the hospital it is but a few steps to the dead-house, where the bodies of those whose wounds have produced fatal effects are deposited for a few hours previously to receiving sepulture. In a corner of the hovel lie the mutilated remains of several gallant men. What a fine head crowns that trunk!—for it is but a trunk. This man must have been a soldier of some years' standing; his head is rather bald and the hair on his temples is thin and grizzled. The expression of his countenance even in death, is noble and placid; his head is pillowed on the shoulder of a pale youth, whose strength had not been sufficient to resist the wasting effects of his wounds. What can compensate the widow of the stalwart veteran, or the mother of the young man who had not yet attained his full strength, for their bereavements?

Hard by lies the body of a man whose face had been frightfully gashed by a sabre-cut, and one of whose arms had been amputated; mortification ensued, and he died without pain, after much previous suffering. Bandaged limbs and head—awful disfigurements from gunshot wounds or from gashes in the face—these are the marks of the suffering of those whose corpses add to the horrible heap.

I will not pursue this sad theme any farther. I have sketched a very faint outline only of what I have witnessed on the dread theatre of war. Its evils, however, do not cease with the enormous amount of physical suffering which it occasions: the demoralisation consequent upon war is beyond description. By degrees, and from repeated temptations, backed by bad examples, many a virtuously-disposed individual becomes habitually immoral in conversation and practice. A wandering and unsettled course of life begets a reckless state of mind; there is no home feeling, no magnet attracts, as is the case on occasional absences from the domestic circle on business or for recreation. The soldier becomes, by degrees, indifferent to aught but contrivances for securing his own personal conveniences on the march or in quarters: where good principles have begun to take root on a soil perhaps naturally prone to moral weakness, they almost inevitably perish under the influence of the contaminated atmosphere of the camp in time of war: and crimes which would never have suggested themselves to the mind, or been possible in the ordinary course of life, are committed without reflection and without remorse.

Cupidity, too, is fostered to a great extent in war time. The supplies for large armies in the field must be obtained at any cost: it is necessary to have recourse to intermediary persons in order to procure them; and the door is opened to speculations and malversations of all kinds, which are practised and connived at, and ramified indefinitely. At the termination of a war, some parties may have accumulated large fortunes, whilst others, who have been living in reckless luxury far beyond their original sphere or legitimate means, are suddenly reduced to a mere pittance, and the artificial wants they have acquired lead them, perhaps, to the committal of dishonourable deeds in order to supply them. The country is exhausted and burdened with liabilities which it takes years and years of heavy taxation of the people to liquidate; and it is very likely that just as the nation is beginning to recover itself—when new paths for prosperity are being discovered, and fresh sources for the employment of the industrious and scientific classes are becoming developed—at this fair and auspicious moment, when the fruits of a long peace are just within the people's reach, another political convulsion casts them again on the brink of the dreadful gulf of war.

I say that, inasmuch as that great power—steam—has brought into rapid and continued intercourse far-distant nations which, in our grandfathers' days, were almost unknown to each other—that intercourse being calculated to humanise the people, and to foster the elements of peace—so, amidst the wondrous changes in every division of the world and of society which have been accomplished in our day it would be well if a high court of arbitration were established for the settlement of conflicting political points, and thus prevent bloodshed and the perpetration of crime for the attainment of objects which are not of the slightest importance to the masses who are the main supports of the social fabric.

From Hogg's Instructor.

A SEA-FOWLING ADVENTURE.

One pleasant afternoon in summer, Frank Costello jumped into his boat, and pulling her out of the narrow creek where she lay moored, crept along the iron-bound shore until he reach-