

SOUTHERN AFRICA.

The following is an extract from a letter dated Eikhams, Namagua Land, August 16, 1851:—

“I have returned after a journey not quite so long as I had hoped to have made. Of perfectly new country I have explored about 500 miles out, returning by much the same route. I did not quite reach the Portuguese, or the magnificent intervening river, of which the Cavene is only a branch. Those abominable waggons have been like a dragchain upon upon me, but everything has ended well and we have had no sickness. I have had plenty of occupation in mapping the country. My guns have been quite idle, as there is little or no game of any sort. After leaving the furthest missionary station I found myself between the two principal black chiefs, who were on the eve of fighting; however, I contrived to get my party clear of the massacre and passed on without guides, being also fortunate enough to find sufficient water, from place to place, for the oxen as well as for ourselves—so that in that way we had no hardships. The country was a dense mass of thorns—not simple straight thorns like a quick-set hedge, but curved like fishhooks. The oxen would not face them—it was terrible work to drive them on. I often tried the strength of these thorns by fastening a piece of rag to a spring balance, and pulling until the thorn broke—one thorn stood a pull of 27lb. Our clothes were in rags, and at first our skins were very painful from being so much torn, especially as the scratches generally festered—but we grew hardened in time. I found my way to the reported Lake Omabondi, which was dry as dust—not a drop of water in the reeds. From the natives' description we had reckoned upon seeing a large sheet of water, about 30 miles by 8. It was, however, nothing but a watercourse 300 yards broad, and in the rainy season might be two miles long. Lake N'gami I have not tried for. I travelled on northward; we moved very slowly—the waggons had to crush through everything, and the oxen would not pull through the thorns. After 300 miles I reached the end of the country of the Ovakerers, where was a large village. Thence I endeavoured to get guides on to the Ovampo, but the chief would not give them; so we set off alone, as we were resolved not to be beaten. As we were just starting the oxen were frightened, and set off at a trot. There was in front of them a great stump, apparently rotten, but in reality a hard strong tree. The near fore wheel of my best waggon came against this, and crash went the whole concern. We set to work, brought the oxen alongside, made a hedge of thorns, cleared the ground, and at once despatched a party to cut down trees to mend it. The road had been so stony and execrable in every way that it would have been folly to have ventured on with an axletree of green wood; therefore the waggons necessarily had to remain there while the trees seasoned. I upon this halved my party, and Anderson and myself saddled our oxen and moved on to the north. We found a man who said he could take us in a 15 days' journey on to the Ovampo; but he led us all wrong, and we were hardly put to it for water. All kinds of little disasters occurred. We made three attempts to proceed, and the third time most fortunately met a trading party from Ovampo, who had come down to buy cattle; so we returned with them, waited three long weeks until they were ready to go back to their own country, and then accompanied them thither. After 200 miles' travel the bushes and thorns suddenly ceased, and the charming corn country of Mondongo, with its palms and fruit trees, lay before us. I rode off to the King, and crowned him straightway with that great theatrical crown which I picked up one day in London before starting, thinking that it might come in opportunely among the savages. He was a brute, fat as a tub, but his people were most hospitable. The journey had lasted longer than I expected. My oxen were in a sad state—footsore, and with galled backs. I had to buy and carry back provisions, as we had but little cattle left. The Cavene River was four or five days ahead, but Naugoro (the King) would not allow us to go on to it. Had I been able to remain with him for three or four weeks I might have over persuaded him, as he had a strong dislike to gunpowder; but it was quite impossible to stay, as my waggons and men were left in such a precarious situation. I therefore packed 500lb. of corn, flour, beans, and so forth on my oxen, and returned. I found my waggon well mended, the axietree better than before, and about 60 sheep and a few oxen had been bought by my men, and added to our store during my absence. We returned without accident of any sort, by a slightly different road, and I am now with the Namaqua chief. I told you in my last letter that I made peace all over his country, and it has been admirably kept during my absence. I have, therefore, given Jouker (the chief), a cocked hat and an old ambassador's coat of Mr. ———, with which he is highly delighted. I now intend going to the east for a little elephant shooting, and I shall exchange everything I have for ivory (of which the Namaquas there have an abundance), take it down to Walwich Bay, and start by the missionary ship for the Cape or for St. Helena, either in December or January, unless another opportunity offer for going further into the country. A trading party of blacks, from the Portuguese country, were at Mondongo while I was there, but I was unable to send letters by them, for the people are very superstitious there, and would have nothing to do with written things. I have, of course, found out much about the country of great interest. A posse of missionaries are about to follow my route. The Ovampos are really a charming tribe of Negroes, but every other nation I have either seen or heard of are brutal and barbarous to an incredible degree.

“The Ovations, a very extended nation, attacked a village the other day for fun, and after killing all the men and women, they took the children, tied their legs together by the ancles, and strung them head downwards on a long pole, which they fixed horizontally between two trees; they then collected a quantity of reeds underneath them and set alight to them. While the children, poor wretches, were dying, half burnt and half suffocated, they amused themselves by dancing and singing round them.

“Mondongo is the corn country of Ovampo Land—the capital, where the King, Naugoro, lives, is in latitude $17^{\circ} 57'$, longitude $16^{\circ} 45'$. This was my furthest point. The waggons broke down in latitude $19^{\circ} 30'$, longitude $18^{\circ} 20'$. The furthest point seen by Europeans before is latitude 22° , longitude $15^{\circ} 50'$.

“FRANCIS GALTON.”