



1889

## Boers and Beasts of the Cape

H. (Henry) A. (Anderson) Bryden

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### Recommended Citation

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**BOERS AND BEASTS AT THE  
CAPE.**

**KLOOF AND KARROO.** Sport, Legend, and Natural History in Cape Colony. By H. A. BRYDEN. London and New-York: LONGMANS, GREEN & CO. 1889.

Ever since the victory of the Boers over British troops books have been appearing in England which take sides for or against the Afrikanders. These are works apart from the staple article, in which some destroyer of big game publishes the number, size, and weight of the creatures he has banged over with magazine guns, from the works by explorers of Africa, and from the romances founded on African scenes and events. The fight at Majuba Hill led to the discovery of the Boers. Some are admirers of the Boers, and their volumes are devoted to showing what overbearing, truthless, and impudent persons British officials and magnates in the army and of it can be. A larger number are of Mr. Rider Haggard's mind, and heap insult and contumely on the rude colonists from Holland, being of the opinion expressed without a trace of shame by the *Saturday Review* and other Jingo organs that the Boers, being for the most part a republic of small size, are impertinent to assert themselves against a power like that of England, and should be promptly surrounded by British colonies and absorbed. In Mr. Bryden we have an observer who takes a middle course between these two extremes.

Mr. Bryden reproves the Boers for many things, particularly for the indiscriminate slaughter of wild beasts, large and small, for the price of their hides. Yet he is not so ready to tell the truth about the men who travel at great expense from London and slaughter them without the excuse of poverty, not for hides, but in order to boast in their clubs, or, what seems still less excusable to a reviewer, to brag in print. But then he acknowledges that the Boers have many fine qualities, living patriarchal lives on the *velaat*, or at their great pastoral stations, in which the good side of the patriarchs is not lacking. With commendable breadth of mind he recurs to the fact that these men have been cut off from the world for many generations, and must not be judged as harshly as (let us say) the English in Africa must be judged, who violate treaties and seize lands belonging to others with a full knowledge of their offense. Mr. Bryden writes with an easy pen, and describes well scenery and person, birds, and animals. He is a bit of an ornithologist and knows something of botany. He is a sportsman and looks forward with a queer yearning to the day when game birds in Africa shall be so well protected by law that shooting will be done quite after the rules of a party at an English country place.

The reader does not need to begin his book at the beginning, for it is made up of articles contributed to *Field*, the *St. James's Gazette*, *Home Work*, and *Chambers's Journal*. Chapter XIV. is a good beginning—an account of a "Karoo Farm," partly because it has an excellent picture of a large ranch in Cape Colony, partly because it explains one of the words in his title. A *karroo* is a large plateau more or less dry, on which the pastoral Afrikander feeds his cattle or sees them die of thirst during the years when no rain falls. To Americans *kloof* is not a strange word, because the Dutchmen have left the word *Clove* in many parts of our older States, meaning a valley or ravine. "Kloof and Karroo," therefore, means valley and plain. Another good chapter is "Life on a Mountain Farm," giving the guest's somewhat rosy account of processions of Angora goats, early trips into the ravine to kill *Klipspringers*, the chamois of Cape Colony, and sumptuous meals on the products of the wilds and the ranch. Mr. Bryden having put his book together from several articles, is caught often enough in repeating himself; he has not rigidly digested his materials into a consecutive book, and now and then he slips into slovenly English, such as to "take a bathe." His knowledge of Dutch is superficial.

To the zebra and the klipspringer Mr. Bryden gives some of the most interesting pages. It is news to most people that the true zebra is a mountaineer; the quagga and Burchell's zebra are the real plain dwellers. The early Dutch colonists captured foals of the true zebra and sent them to the island of Mauritius, where it was at one time the fashion to employ them in light carriages. Yet the half-grown or grown beast is not only untamable, but very ferocious. In that part of the colony where Mr. Bryden was a guest a band of six or seven zebras survived. But soon after all of these but one stallion were killed. The latter began running with the mares of the ranchmen, and was at last lassoed and tied up. Great efforts were made to keep it alive. Forage from the mountain tops was brought, but it would touch nothing, only drink water. At the end of three weeks it died. In his chapter on game birds attention is called to the bustards and pheasants, so-called, as birds for sportsmen, Mr. Bryden declaring that in their case, as in that of smaller antelopes like the klipspringer, the literature of South Africa is deficient in a proper attention to them. Another chapter reviews the present distribution of larger game in Cape Colony, and along with these practical details we have a chapter devoted to a ghost story called "The Legend of Jan Prinsloo's Kloof." Prinsloo was a very cruel Boer of the last century, who beat and murdered his slaves, and was finally hunted down by the Hottentots, who cut him to pieces and smeared themselves with his blood. Once every year his ghost rides up the *Kloof*, followed by the avengers, and just before the door of the ruined house he lies, laid low and hacked "in pieces sma'" by his ghostly pursuivants.

Some of the photographic prints of uncommon beasts, like the mountain zebras, the oryx or gemsbok, (in which Mr. Bryden finds the heraldic unicorn, overlooking the guu and the rhinoceros,) and the bushbuck give an excellent idea of the creatures. Other pictures show herds of domesticated ostriches, or as many as 1800, merino kids in one flock, *meerkat* or penciled ichneumon, and various views of karroo and kloof.