

**THE SEARCH FOR NITRE, AND THE TRUE  
NATURE OF GUANO, BEING AN ACCOUNT OF  
A VOYAGE TO THE SOUTH-WEST COAST OF  
AFRICA; ALSO A DESCRIPTION OF THE  
MINERALS FOUND  
THERE, AND OF THE GUANO ISLANDS IN THAT  
PART OF THE WORLD**

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The Search for Nitre, and the True Nature of Guano, Being an Account of a Voyage to the South-West Coast of Africa; Also a Description of the Minerals Found There, and of the Guano Islands in That Part of the World by T. E. Eden

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BY  
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847.

## PREFACE.

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THE portion of the African coast referred to in this book is situated between the 28th and 22d parallels of south latitude, and has not hitherto been described, except in 'A Narrative,' published by Morrell, an American ship-master, which is not to be depended upon.

Morrell's voyage was made in 1828, and in 1836 Captain Sir J. E. Alexander undertook 'an expedition of discovery into the interior of Africa,' but his route, as laid down in the map, is seldom nearer than 120 geographical miles from the coast, and he did not reach the sea except at Walwich Bay.

The object of the voyage was to obtain, first, nitre; secondly, minerals of value; thirdly, guano. The information respecting the first was false, the examination for the second was insufficient, and very little guano was left on the coast; so that this speculation, which has created considerable sensation in the commercial world, may be said to have failed in all respects.

The remarks herein contained might easily have been extended into a thick octavo volume; but as my intention has not been so much to write a book as to communicate facts, and as this work was composed more expressly for the perusal of merchants, whose time is commonly too much occupied to read long chapters and detailed accounts, I have endeavoured to make my observations as concise as possible; and am consequently aware that many of my sentences will be found short and abrupt. In the description of a voyage a great attention to style can scarcely be expected; and in this respect,



on the present occasion at least, I believe I may say  
with Pope ;

*" Nor Fame I slight, nor for her favours call ;  
She comes unlook'd for, if she comes at all."*

I much regret, that in consequence of the necessity of procuring without delay some cargo for the ship, I was unable to pay that attention to natural objects which I desired: such as came in my way, while searching for minerals, I have picked up. Of the plants, very few were in flower, it being the winter season, and I had no convenience to bring home living specimens. Neither have I had an opportunity of observing a single section of the country, so that the geological remarks are such only as could be made from a cursory observation of the surface.

The scientific reader will perhaps be entertained with the new views taken in this work respecting the nature of guano ; but should my general readers

be disappointed, I hope they will take into consideration that I am here describing a coast *almost* without water, vegetation, or inhabitants.

P. 16, l. 28, for *crasicauli*, read *crasicaule*.  
l. 29, omit *cactus*.  
P. 24, l. 10, for *now*, read *never*.

# A VOYAGE, &c.

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## CHAPTER I.

Introductory remarks—Contagious nature of speculation—Schooners best adapted for exploring voyages—Coast not yet properly examined—Nitre may still exist in Africa—Our errand no secret—Instances of falsehood, ignorance, and misrepresentation—Departure from Liverpool—Whales—Porpoises—Stormy petrel—Flying-fish—Portuguese men-of-war—instructions opened—Extreme westing and southing—Greatest distance run—Land of Africa—Dews and fogs—Albatross rock—Arrival at Possession Island.

THE spirit of adventure is the soul of commerce, and merchants who embark their property with a view to its extension, are highly deserving of commendation. It is not to be wondered at if they are sometimes deceived by the unprincipled, this is one of the evils inseparable from commercial affairs; for speculation, like hope, "has often told a flattering tale." We are generally inclined to believe what we wish to be true; and when once the impression is made upon our minds, it becomes increased and strengthened by every circumstance which favours the view we take.

The actions of a mercantile firm of acknowledged