



### 3 AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Dutch settlers and the increasing flow of visitors were finally starting to take note of the various rocks at the Cape. However, their focus was limited to practical aspects of obtaining earth materials needed for the building up of the settlement and wishful hopes of finding gold, silver or copper. The extent and nature of the observations do not appear to relate to the level of training or education of the observer, with ship surgeons, whose training typically included a broad introduction to the general sciences, no more likely than merchants or soldiers to comment on what they encountered when climbing Table Mountain. Although visitors were starting to see the rocks, they didn't venture very far in terms of thinking about what the rocks might reveal. For example, they found it hard to imagine how the overhanging rocks could project so far out without falling, not seeing that they are the ends of laterally competent sandstone beds that extend into the mountain. Visitors clearly recognised that the scattered blocks of sandstone had fallen from above, attributing cliff erosion largely to the force of the wind and rain, but perhaps because they believed Earth to be of the order of thousands of years old, they feared the fall of overhanging rock was imminent, not appreciating how very slowly cliffs on Table Mountain erode.