DEVENISH AND THE M'PEFU WAR

Senator G. G. Munnik was in 1898 Landdrost of Zoutpansberg and in his Memoirs he gives a lively account of the goings on of M'Pefu which were in the September of that year to lead to war. Very interesting from the Society Old Pretoria's point of view is the linking of Mr. A. L. Devenish, the surveyor and a member of the family which gave its name to Devenish Street, with this war.

Senator Munnik writes that the Government instructed him to deliver the following message to M'pefu: "'M'pefu, you are hereby directed by the Government to take a census of your people within a month from this date and report . . . how many able-bodied men there are in your tribe, when the Government will at once nominate a Commission consisting of a sworn Government land surveyor and a Field-Cornet to beacon off your location'." M'pefu treated Munnik with calculated insolence and retorted, "Tell the Government I know the boundaries of my location, and if anyone comes here to mark off those boundaries I will put him outside of them'."

The Government duly waited the prescribed month "and then sent a land surveyor, Devenish, and Field-Cornet Jan du Preez . . . to beacon off M'pefu's location . . . When they arrived there he took them and their wagons across the Doorn River, which he claimed as the Southern boundary of his location and told them that if they came back there would be trouble. On this the executive council met and directed Commandant General Piet Joubert to assemble a commando, and to take the State Artillery with him and bring M'pefu and his tribe to their bearings."

Senator Munnik thus gives the expulsion of Devenish and Du Preez as the immediate cause of the war; but Commandant General Joubert in his annual report for 1898 states that the last straw which broke the Republican camel's back was M'pefu's action in sending a commando of "paarderuiters en voetgangers" to Kranspoort, the mission station of the Rev. Hofmeyr, to prevent the people there, and particularly the Buyses, from paying their taxes. General Joubert states clearly that this provocative act was the last of many, but does not go into any details on the grounds that not only were M'pefu's misdoings too well known to need recapitulation but that to do so would entail writing a partial history of the Republic, and, more particularly, of the district of Zoutpansberg.

Dr. J. A. Mouton, in his thesis "Genl. Piet Joubert in die Transvaalse Geskiedenis," confirms General Joubert's assertion that the Kranspoort expedition, which he states took place in August, 1898, was the immediate cause of the war; so Munnik was undoubtedly wrong in ascribing it to the expulsion of Devenish and Du Preez. However, Dr. Mouton in a brief account of M'pefu's misdemeanours, says that he drove back all

Europeans who crossed the Doorn River. This statement fits in with the Devenish story.

There is most probably something in the story for Senator Munnik seems to have had a reliable memory. His account of M'pefu's accession, for example, tallies with that of Dr. Mouton, viz.:— Mahemo, a younger son of Magato, was regarded by the latter as his heir and on his father's death succeeded him as chief, but Mogato's eldest son, M'pefu, who owing to offences (vergrype) against his father had ben banished, returned hastily from Kimberley and drove Mahemo out. Senator Munnik's version is:— "His lawful successor was a truculent scapegrace named M'pefu, who for the last nine years had lived in banishment from his tribe in Kimberley . . . Hè was banished because he was sentenced to death by Magato for a discovered intrigue with one of the chief's youngest and prettiest wives, whereupon he fled on horseback to Kimberley and was never allowed to return. Now that Magato was dead, some of the younger indunas went to Kimberley on horseback and brought him back to assume the chieftainship."

In an admittedly cursory search of Archives documents no mention of Devenish's abortive attempt at survey was traced. It would be interesting to learn whether any members of the Society either know anything about this incident or have come across references to it in the course of research.

Anon.

PRES. KRUGER EN DIE STAANPLEK VAN SY STANDBEELD

(Verklaring afgeneem deur Dr. W. Punt)

Mevr. W. de Zwaan, gebore Meintjies, weduwee van argitek W. de Zwaan van Pretoria, het die volgende interessante gegewens in verband met die plek waar die Krugerstandbeeld op Kerkplein sou kom, verskaf:–

Mnr. Sammy Marks die welbekende sakeman het ongeveer 1895 die gedagte opgevat om vir eie rekening 'n standbeeld van Pres. Kruger te laat vervaardig. Deur bemiddeling van argitek De Zwaan het beeldhouer Anton van Wouw die Marks-voorstel onder die aandag van Piet Grobler, destyds in Z.A.R. diens, gebring. Die aanbod is later deur die President aanvaar en Anton van Wouw het die tans beroemde standbeeld vervaardig.

By 'n geleentheid het die plek waar die beeld op die Kerkplein sou moes staan ter sprake gekom. Pres. Kruger is toe deur De Zwaan of Van Wouw oor hierdie saak geraadpleeg. Pres. Kruger het op grappige wyse geantwoord dat sy beeld voor die Goewernementsgebou moet staan en na die gebou kyk sodat hy 'n ogie op sy amptenare kan hou.

(Get.) Helina de Zwaan.