AMONG BOERS AND BASUTOS

CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY

I LEFT England for Basutoland in the autumn of 1877 to join my husband, who had been appointed a few months before (22nd August, 1877) by Sir Bartle Frere, then Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, to be Resident Magistrate of Thaba-Bosigo, Basutoland—otherwise called 'Advance Post, Cannibal Valley'—not perhaps, a very inviting address for the residency.

Our party consisted of my two little children, Harry, aged three, and Nancy, not quite two years old; my brother, the late Mr Alfred Hatchard, afterwards Civil Com-

missioner of Mafeteng, British Bechuanaland; and two nurses, one of whom, Maria, was a Basuto, trained and educated in Bishop Colenso's school at Maritzburg, Natal. Maria had been brought home by my friend Lady Barker (now Lady Broome), and was glad to return with me to her native land. We had a pleasant but uneventful passage to the Cape, where we landed, and received a most kind and hearty welcome from many old friends at Cape Town, my husband having been for several years there as private secretary to his father, Sir Henry Barkly, who had preceded Sir Bartle Frere as governor of the colony.

We spent a pleasant time in Cape Town waiting for the steamer which was to take us on to Durban, and received much kindness and hospitality from Lady Frere and her daughters, the governor himself being away. They petted and made much of Harry and Nancy, who were delighted to find themselves ashore again, and to be able to pick flowers and eat oranges to their hearts' content.

One of our most delightful excursions was to Bishop's Court to see the bishop and his sister. We passed through many pretty villages, gay with brilliant flowers, and fields, and hedges of pomegranates, the beautiful arum lily growing wild everywhere, past enclosures full of ostriches, pretty streams, where the Malay women were busy washing clothes, which they beat with mealie cobs or staves, until we arrived at Wynberg, the most charming of the many pretty suburbs of Cape Town, which was looking exquisitely beautiful, and the children ran about, got branches of the lovely silver leaves, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We were quite sorry to leave the old familiar places, and our spirits sank as we drove down to the docks with Lady Frere and her daughters, who came to see us safely off. We had a nasty passage to Durban, the sea running mountains high, and a thick blinding fog prevailing, in the midst of which we ran dangerously near land, and positively 'hugged the shore.' At last we arrived at Durban, where the sea was still terribly

rough, and were lowered from the ship (one of Donald Currie's fine vessels) in big baskets, by no means a pleasant sort of conveyance, especially as the authorities insisted on putting two ladies in a basket together when there was only room for one. The said basket was swung on to the deck of our steamer by a sort of windlass, and we were politely requested to get in, I being the first to enter, which I endeavoured to do in as dignified a manner as possible, a difficult task, as the walls of the basket were high and the ship was rolling heavily in a strong gale of wind. When I got in and sat down in the bottom, I found that there was only room for one at a time, but as a young actress was immediately hoisted in after me, she had nothing for it but to sit on my lap, and we were gaily swung into a launch from a great height and deposited on the dock in safety. I was rather glad to emerge from my friendly basket, as I found my fellow-traveller heavy, she being a young woman of ample proportions. Not only did she almost reduce me to a state of pulp, but she also screamed loudly

all the time, although she certainly had much the best of it. The usual mode of landing at Durban then was for passengers to be battened down in a life-boat, air and light being scrupulously excluded, and then 'rush the surf.' This is somewhat dangerous in a high sea. As they have to go through heavy rollers the passengers are often much alarmed, to say nothing of being nearly suffocated; but, fortunately for me, being related to Sir Henry Barkly, I was treated with great consideration always, and in this case the officials sent off the port launch for me—a steamer of considerable strength.

We stayed only a day or two in Durban, and then went on to Maritzburg, a very pretty place, but having a temperature slightly above European ideas of comfort. We were very kindly received by the Governor, Sir H. Bulwer, and Sir Napier Broome, both of whom immediately called upon us on our arrival, as did the other principal officials in Maritzburg. The Governor was very kind, and said he regretted that being quite full he could not

put us up at Government House during our stay in Maritzburg. A good many officers and their wives also came to see us, and gave us many invitations, and we had a very pleasant time altogether. The wife of the officer commanding the engineers was very good to me, and drove me about a great deal. Alfred and I went with her several times to hear the string-band play at the barracks on 'ladies' nights' after the officers' mess, and it was very pleasant to sit in the gardens and hear a very good band after the intense heat of a Natal summer's day. All the ladies in Maritzburg appeared to do most of their own cooking and other work also, being unable to get servants to do it, even if they paid very high wages; and if you go to luncheon with one, she tells you that you 'must excuse her, as she has to see after those cutlets and that fowl, and dish up the luncheon.' Everybody rides in Natal, and you see ladies riding to a dinner-party in full evening dress. Sometimes a tropical storm overtakes them *en route*, causing sad results to a pretty toilette! And on arrival

at their destination, they have to be entirely 'rigged out' again by the hostess; but nobody minds these little misadventures, everybody being in the same boat. I had a good deal of trouble about my Basuto maid 'Maria' in Maritzburg. Her mother lived there, and as soon as her daughter arrived, she appeared at our hotel accompanied by a choice selection of coloured ladies and gentlemen(?), and taking up a conspicuous position in the principal street, just in front of our windows, commenced to scream and yell as loudly as she could, throw stones at the windows, and create a disturbance. It appeared that although Sir Napier and Lady Broome had taken Maria home with her entire consent and delivered her over to me, the mother chose to consider herself a great victim, and screamed out and abused Sir Napier Broome, my brother, and myself, saying that we had 'stolen my child away from her home. She shall not go to Basutoland to be servant to the white people. I will keep her here, she is mine. Those wicked people have torn her away

from her mother's arms,' and so on. At last the police appeared on the scene, and soon silenced the good lady. Maria herself was quite willing to go on to Basutoland with me, having a sister and other relations at Leribe, Major Bell's station, and had signed an agreement (which, however, she utterly failed to keep) to stay with us for two years as our servant, on condition that I paid all her expenses out from England to Basutoland, her native country. She was a most useful maid and nurse, and could pack capitally, do needle work, write and speak English very well, and looked after the two little ones perfectly. I brought another very good servant out from home, a Cape girl, who had gone home with me, but when she got back to Cape Town, she refused to go any further and remained there.

We dined twice with the Governor, who was hospitality itself, and even sent a carriage to fetch us, drawn by mules. Servants appeared very scarce in Natal, even at the Governor's; everyone walked in, unannounced, as is the custom in Maritzburg. We

had a charming evening, the first time that my brother and I dined at Government House, the party consisting of Sir Theophilus Shepstone and his daughter, Sir Napier Broome, Mr Rider Haggard, then private secretary, and some others. The Governor made a most genial host, and indeed the greatest kindness was shown us by everyone we met in Natal.

Meanwhile the news was by no means reassuring. Rumours of war were rife, and though hostilities had not actually broken out, we could not get any waggon-driver to 'trek' to such a dangerous region as Basuto-land. Besides which, Sir Henry Bulwer strongly advised us to wait a little while and watch the progress of events. At last, after many delays, we succeeded, however, and then came the interesting but arduous task of packing the waggon for our long journey. We fitted it up as much like a caravan as possible, and laid in large stores of tinned provisions, all of which proved invaluable to us. We took a big camp pot and kettle, gridiron, and some small

saucepans, for open-air cooking, plenty of tea and coffee, and tins of biscuits, and last, but not least, two pocket filters, which we used always, and found most necessary, the water being often very bad. When all was ready, we sent our waggon on before, and ourselves followed forty-eight hours later, in Sir H. Bulwer's mule waggon, which he had kindly lent us for two or three days, sending also a mounted policeman by way of escort, who accompanied us to Basutoland.

We joined the waggon at Estcourt, and our journey began in earnest; unfortunately the delay was against us, as the rainy season had by this time set in; the weather was accordingly abominable, and the roads in a shocking state, with the result that we constantly stuck in the mud, and had to be dug out with much labour.

The journey through Natal was pleasant enough in fine weather, though tedious at times, of course. My brother made great friends with the Natal policeman, who was a gentleman, and was most civil and attentive. When we got tired of the waggon, he used

to lend us his horse, in turns, to ride. After a time, we got used to the jolting of the waggon, and could sleep through it. The nurse Maria and the two children and I slept at night on a bed inside the waggon, while Alfred and the policeman camped underneath. At night they lit large fires to keep off the jackals, which we constantly heard howling round us. We used to get up early, and go and bathe in the river, and make our toilets as best we could. The children were delighted at this *al fresco* way of living, and their appetites were something phenomenal!

Our policeman used to ride on in front to the various farms and buy us fresh milk in bottles, and new-laid eggs and bread. Sometimes we came to a little inn, kept generally by an Englishman. Many of these small hotels in Natal are kept by gentlemen, retired officers, etc., men of good family and connection. My brother Alfred was delighted on our arrival at one little inn, and soon made friends with one man, especially as he found that he knew some of his people.

He told us that he was making a fortune, but that he had to work very hard, and do almost everything himself, servants being so scarce in Natal. He cooked a capital luncheon for us, and before proceeding to lay the table showed us a book full of photographs of his family. He seemed very much amused at our ignorance of the ways of the country, and told us that we were what the Natal people call 'Jemmies.' We soon learnt to work, however, quite as hard as he did; but it was a very rough experience, for me especially. We tried to persuade our host to have luncheon with us, but this he absolutely declined, and insisted on waiting upon us, which we did not like at all. He seemed much pleased to see people fresh from home, and especially when we produced some books, magazines, and papers, and begged him to accept them. It was wonderful how nice and clean the whole place was and well arranged, although he had no wife, and only a black boy to help him. Still it seemed very unnatural to see him sweeping and dusting, and doing all sorts of work about the house.

Now and then a friend or two would pass us in one of the light 'spiders,' built especially for Natal, and take us for some miles' drive on in front, a pleasant change from waggon-travelling. The nurse Maria was a great amusement to us. She was the most civilised savage that I ever came across. Perfectly black, with woolly black hair, large brown eyes, beautiful teeth, and a good figure, she was quite a beauty in her way. She boasted that when she was in the service of Lady Broome, she had the honour of being spoken to by Her Majesty the Queen of England, besides having been 'presented' to several duchesses, and had had many presents given to her—amongst others a travelling bag, fitted up, and a great many smart costumes. When arrayed in a large Gainsborough hat, velveteen dress, long suède gloves, and a silver chatelaine, she was indeed a wonderful sight, and caused much excitement along the route. Whenever we stopped she was at once surrounded by native women, who screamed with envy at the gorgeous vision. I am sorry to say that on

one occasion, having indulged rather freely in Kaffir beer *en route*, brought to the waggon by some of her friends in large clay bowls, manufactured by the Basuto women, who use them for everything, the admiration of her fellow-countrywomen, combined perhaps with other causes needless to mention, were too much for Maria, who suddenly jumped out of the waggon and rushed up a mountain, screaming and yelling that 'the moon had gone up hill.' She was speedily brought to her senses, however, by being pursued by a number of baboons who were playing and dancing on the top of the mountain, and promptly made a rush for Maria, who managed, fortunately, to get back to the waggon, or it would certainly have been her last journey.

After a time we became quite professional in the art of cooking out of doors, and never did I taste anything so good as a fowl baked or boiled in a Basuto pot made of iron. To bake it, you put fire on the top and underneath the pot, adding pepper and salt and a little onion for flavouring, and the result is

excellent. Bread is also much nicer made in a round pot, probably because the heat is equally radiated on all sides, than in any other way, and we had to make it with a little sour dough in place of yeast, as there was very often no yeast to be had in those wild parts. Scones we used to get our waggon-driver to make in cakes on the grid-iron, with fire or hot ashes underneath on the ground outside the waggon. Nothing could be more delicious than these when eaten very hot, with butter, and seasoned with the appetite born of the glorious air of those latitudes.

I quote here an extract of a letter from my husband to his father on his arrival at Advance Post, Basutoland, 1st October, 1877.

'My dear Father,—You will see by the heading of this that I have reached Advance Post at last. On Monday Rolland drove me over from Maseru, and the next morning a "pitso" was held in my honour, to which all the chiefs and headsmen in the district

came, and brought a large number of followers. Masupha, the principal chief in my district, was very civil, and expressed himself as highly flattered at having a son of yours as magistrate. We had to sit in the sun for a long time, but a charitable, though very prosy old counsellor of Moshesh', by name Kamatseatianu (they have the most fearful names in these parts) held an umbrella over my head, and thereby probably saved me from sunstroke, as I had no puggery. The chiefs and headsmen came to the front, and made speeches and danced about, very much like Ethiopian serenaders. Most of them had large gamp umbrellas, and of course there was the usual old Kaffir, dressed in the ancient fashion of the tribe, with battle-axe and shield, making a very picturesque figure, who was a sort of butt for the rest, and supplied the comic element to the affair. He made a long speech, which consisted chiefly of anathemas against the rest of the company for having frightened his horse, and was received with "cheers and laughter." I made a very high-flown oration

in reply, but it seemed to suit them, as they shouted loudly at the conclusion. Then next day, I tried an old Hottentot for beating his child, but let him off as his wife appeared to have aggravated him very much. The lady herself then appeared and asked for a divorce, but as it turned out she had never been married, there was a difficulty about that, and I had the whole family turned out of the court with the usual caution, viz., "Don't let me see you here again." The next case was a claim for dowry, not disputed, but unpaid, as the defendant was a slippery customer, and the witnesses declared he had estate though he pleaded poverty. I ordered him to pay up in a month, or I should commit him for contempt of court, a decision which was received with loud shouts of laughter, etc., and terrific groans, which is the Basuto mode of expressing approval! This is the style of thing, varied by cases involving claims for land and boundary disputes, which are the most troublesome. We have one on now, which I have postponed in order that I may first visit the spot.

'The system here of allowing any number of witnesses to talk as much irrelevant nonsense as they like, makes the proceedings very tedious. They declare, however, that the only way with Basutos is to let them talk, and that if prevented from doing so, they will give no information whatever. The fact is, that they have no idea what evidence means, and it is only after any amount of irrelevant statements have been made that one comes to the real matter at all. I of course move very cautiously as yet, and leave much to Bell.

'I am alone in my glory to-day, as I have given Bell leave to go to Maseru. He is a very nice young fellow indeed, a son of Major Bell, the magistrate of Leribe. To-morrow morning I am going to parade my army of fifteen black policemen, and amuse myself with drilling them a little.

'I am, of course, anything but well accommodated at present; my waggon has not yet come up, and my house is in the hands of the builders. I found it so leaky and small that I couldn't have got Fanny and the

children into it. Luckily, at that very moment turned up two wandering bricklayers and a carpenter in want of a job, so I put them on at once. We had 20,000 bricks in the place, too, which Bell had had made by the prisoners, so I have set them all to repair the house thoroughly, build me two more rooms, and enlarge the kitchen, etc., and have applied to Rolland for the money, £115 (building is not very expensive here), but doubt if I shall get it; though, as the house belongs to Government, they ought at least to put it in proper repair. If they won't give me the money except as an advance, I shall offer to buy the house, paying £50 per annum until the price (about £200) and the advance are repaid. The salary we get is none too much for the work one has to do here, which is really very hard if done conscientiously. The people are very quarrelsome and litigious among themselves, and come into the court on the slightest pretence. A man has a fight with his grandmother, and instantly the whole family and connection, accompanied by about thirty "witnesses,"

who know nothing whatever about the business, rush off to the magistrate. Luckily, however, the chief constable is a good hand at settling such matters, and we generally make him try his hand outside the court before making a "case" of it, and he is very often successful. One gentleman did come to me about a quarrel with his brother, but I read him such a lecture on the impropriety of brothers quarrelling, that he has not appeared again, though I told him to bring his brother before me if they couldn't manage to agree.

'We want rain very much now. Several Basutos at the pitso asked me *to make some!* We had a couple of thunderstorms yesterday, but not enough to do much good. The general opinion is, that Langalibalele has made so much rain for himself down in Cape Town, that he has left none for us up in the East!

'This place, alas! is not so cheap as it was. Wherever the Englishman comes, up go the prices, and the native who would once sell a sheep for a pinch of snuff, now wants a fair

market price for his produce. I find that "pound sales" are the best way of buying a sheep; one went yesterday for sixpence! He was a very thin one certainly. I bought two "hukus," otherwise fowls, for a shilling yesterday, but they were so thin that I couldn't kill them, so I have ordered them to be shut up and stuffed with as much as can be got down their throats.

'There will be a famine in the land, I am afraid, if we don't get rain soon. I have just had a visit from the chiefs, Yonathan, Molappo, and Leshubero, and now all the chiefs in this district have been to call upon me. I shall not write to Fanny this time, as I expect that she and the children have already started to join me up here. I hope to get the house finished before they arrive here.'

CHAPTER II

BASUTOLAND

At first I was much, and I think naturally, alarmed at the process of crossing the rivers (there are no bridges so far up country), but I found myself getting used to it in time. Harry and Nancy thought it was a great joke when the waggon and long team of oxen started dashing down a hill, almost perpendicular, through a river so deep that often the oxen had to swim, and were hardly able to get through the rushing torrent of water. Then out the other side, and up another precipice, apparently, with a tremendous rush, men screaming and shouting and urging on the oxen, cracking their enormously long whips; you felt as if

nothing short of a miracle could ever bring you through it in safety.

At last, after a month's travelling, we arrived at Leribe, where lived Major Bell, the resident magistrate, and here we met with a most hospitable reception from himself and Mrs Bell and all their family, who took us all in, and entertained us for some days in their comfortable house, Schlotse Heights, Leribe, which is also a large mission station.

Harry and Nancy were by this time tired of travelling, and were well content to find themselves in a house again, making themselves quite at home in the shortest possible time. My husband and his clerk, Mr Charles Bell, came down two days after to meet us, and we had a pleasant stay at Schlotse Heights, where there was a pretty little church and quite a nice society, amongst whom were an English clergyman, and a remarkably clever doctor, Dr Taylor, who, on the principle of 'physician heal thyself,' had come there for his health. Then, our pleasant visit at Leribe over, we started off

again for our own magistracy, Advance Post. The residence looked very pretty as we approached it, well planted with eucalyptus trees, with a nice garden, watered by streams running down from the mountains. The house was rambling, all in one storey, but far from uncomfortable, though it took me some time to get used to the mud floors. These have to be renewed about once a week, upon which interesting occasion we generally took the opportunity of going out for the day if possible, as the process was, to say the least of it, an unpleasant one. The usual way is to turn a flock of sheep in, and let them stamp about the floor when freshly done over, which makes it harden well.

Advance Post stood in an extremely isolated position, approached through a river as usual, and the road, very rough and narrow, ran by the side of deep precipices, the descent of which, in a cart with four horses, was at first more than a little alarming.

The scenery of Basutoland is very grand and beautiful, composed chiefly of great

mountains and fertile valleys. So lovely is the country generally, that it is often called 'the Switzerland of South Africa.' It consists of three great districts, was then under the government of the Cape Colony, but is now administered by the Imperial Government through the Governor and High Commissioner, and is divided into various magistracies or districts. Maseru is the principal station. Here is the residence of the Administrator, who is also the Chief Magistrate, and who holds a responsible, and, at times, a very dangerous and anxious post. Maseru is situated seventy-two miles from Bloemfontein, in the Free States, which is considered quite *near* in those parts! and constant communication is kept up between the two towns. Maseru has a population of about six hundred. About twenty-four miles south of it is Morija, the oldest mission-station in Basutoland, founded in 1833. Here the French missionaries have carried on a great work among the Basutos, and have a very beautiful station. They devote themselves entirely to the well-being of the

natives, with, in most cases, the most satisfactory results, and all the arrangements of the mission are carried out on a most excellent system throughout. Maseru lies between the Maluti and the Molappo ranges of mountains. The streets are planted with the fragrant eucalyptus trees, which flourish well in this country, where trees are very scarce, and consequently wood costs a fabulous price. The Administrator's house is quite a comfortable one, with wooden floors, a great luxury here, where mud floors are almost universal.

Mafeteng is about fifty miles from Maseru, in the southern part of Basutoland. Here is the residence of Lerothodi, eldest son of Letsea. There are several other seats of magistracies here. Mohale's Hoek, a lovely spot in the midst of high mountains, and very retired, lies between the Molappo mountains and Orange Free State. Quithing (pronounced with a click on the *q*) is a very wild district, full of Baphuti.

Leribe is situated in the northern part of Basutoland, about fifty miles from Maseru.

This is the most agricultural district; a great deal of wheat is grown here, and the Basutos keep much stock, as the pasture is excellent for cattle. Advance Post, our first station, is in this district; a very wild place. My husband held three appointments as magistrate in Basutoland. The climate here is wonderfully healthy and bracing. The air is so clear and pure that the mere fact of living seems happiness, and we were both young; and though we had many hardships to undergo and privations, we did not mind them very much, but made a joke of our various adventures. I found out how to do everything by degrees, and it was comparatively easy to work in such splendid mountain air. At first it seemed very hard to have no society, and for six months I never saw another white woman; but when we invested in a cape-cart and pair of horses, life did not seem so trying and monotonous, and we used to go about a good deal, and felt ourselves to be less isolated from the world. We suffered a good deal from the cold in winter. When the sun was shining

it was very pleasant, and we could sit outside and enjoy the warmth in the middle of the day, but in wet weather or towards evening the cold became intense, and we had great difficulty in keeping the children warm enough. Fires made of peat did not make up for coals and logs of wood, but they were all that we could get there. The natives brought us great round baskets made by themselves of coarse straw, filled with round cakes of peat, peculiar to this country, which they carried on their heads. These we were glad enough to get, and exchanged beads or sugar for them. Sometimes if the weather was very wet, we could not get even this to burn; and then we were cold indeed. The summers are very hot in Basutoland, and every afternoon there is a violent thunderstorm. The thunder roars and crashes among the mountains, and the forked lightning is most vivid. The effects of this and the setting sun are grand and magnificent in the extreme in this grand scenery, but a daily thunderstorm is not very agreeable, and one longed for one's five-o'clock tea in

peace, without the accompaniment of thunder roaring and lightning flashing round one, just for a little change! but we never had a day without a storm, especially in the mountainous districts of Mohale's Hoek and Advance Post.

I found my husband quite settled, and tolerably comfortable, but Maria would not stay there, as she said, 'It is not a place that *I* should like to settle down in!' so she left us at once, though she had agreed to stay with us for two years, and went back to savage life entirely, dropped all her civilised ways (and clothes), attired herself in skins again, embroidered with blue beads, and smeared herself with oil and red clay as before. Finally she married a 'headman,' and then 'settled down' in a Basuto village.

I experienced great difficulty in getting any servants at first, as the Basutos were all too well off to go to service, and considered it a fearful degradation to wait upon a 'white man.' At last we got one old woman, and a constable from Arthur's band of police, who were attached to this, as to other magis-

tracies. This man used to wait at table, and help in the house generally. The old woman, in spite of a somewhat witch-like appearance, was very good to the children, and used to carry Nancy on her back while she did the housework.

I found many great difficulties, as I had no idea how to cook, iron, or mangle, or make bread, all of which I had to learn. Luckily, I had brought a paraffin stove and patent irons, which proved invaluable to me, as were also a set of toughened glasses which we took out with us. Mr Bell did all he could to help us, and the splendid climate served as compensation for many disagreeables. We were much isolated at Advance Post, and had no society but the natives, and one or two traders who kept little shops near the residency. The neighbouring chiefs came to call upon us, and afterwards sent their wives to see me; each brought me some little present, such as a fowl, or a few eggs, or some melons.

Several of these ladies, wives of Moirosi, afterwards well known as a rebel chief, all

came together, and sat down outside the door in a circle, on the ground, each with her present, and had a good stare at the 'chieftainess,' as they called me. My husband was always called 'Mebekabek,' 'Son of the glittering breast,' or 'Great chief,' referring to the decorations worn by his father Sir Henry Barkly, for whom the Basutos had the greatest respect and veneration always, and whose son they were proportionately proud of having as their magistrate.

I gave the Basuto ladies various little things, chiefly large blue beads, which they liked very much, and one said through the interpreter, 'No doubt these are what the Queen of England always wears; we are very proud to have the same!' They were much delighted with Harry and Nancy, and played with them a great deal.

There was no English priest at Advance Post, and no doctor nearer than Doctor Taylor, three days off at Leribe, so I found that I was expected to doctor everybody, and had plenty to do, while Arthur had to act as clergyman, and officiate at all

marriages, and read the Morning Service at the Court-House on Sundays. He also had to divorce people, as well as hear all the ordinary cases in court. Fortunately, as it turned out, we had brought with us medical books and a good medicine chest, so that my fame as a lady doctor soon spread round the district, and at last such crowds came for English medicines, that I had far more than I could do, and when I came out in the morning I always found rows of natives sitting on the ground, dressed in skins, and each holding a fowl to offer me in exchange for my doctoring as my fee. At one time I had about two hundred fowls. By great good luck, nobody died under my amateur treatment! My husband rather encouraged these doctoring performances, and we got acquainted with the Basutos in that way, contriving thus to pick up a fair sprinkling of Dutch and Sesuto, of which we were both, at first, profoundly ignorant. Of course, I only ventured to give mild doses, and one of the doctors up-country told me that it was always safe to give a native a

good dose of jalap to begin with, it never hurt him! The Basutos were much delighted with pills, and also liked a large bottle of medicine, but were not particular as to the contents at all.

CHAPTER III

OUR SOCIAL LIFE

When I first arrived at Advance Post, I was quite aghast at the amount of hard work expected of me. For instance, I was complaining to one of the traders that our meat was not well cut, etc.

'Well, Mrs Barkly,' he replied, 'the fact is, you must learn to superintend the cutting up of a cow or sheep yourself, and see them skinned before you; the late magistrate's wife always did so before the front door!'

After which performance, the skins were dried and made into karosses, or mats.

We also had to make our own mattresses, which we did by drying quantities of long soft grass in the blazing sun; and when (as

often happened) unexpected guests arrived, we at once proceeded to fill a large case or bag with this dry grass, and it made a most comfortable bed.

Had our visitors been of a poetical turn of mind they might have quoted the words of the poet, 'Strew for me a bed of rushes.' To our English ideas it would seem rather hard work for the lady of the house, if, when an unexpected guest arrived to dine and sleep, she had to take the upper and under housemaid, proceed to the loft, bring down a quantity of dry grass, and stuff a mattress, or more, if several guests arrived, see that sheets were well aired, and make the bed herself, as one never could trust a Basuto to do so alone. They always omitted the sheets altogether, as they considered them a perfect waste, and a piece of extravagance, greatly increasing the family washing, and I know that I was well abused for my love of clean linen and baths, I overheard some native women saying in Sesuto, 'How *very* dirty those white folks must be, to need a bath every day and so much washing; and

the idea of washing in the kraal, too, instead of bathing in the river, and using clean sheets and everything fresh for *each* visitor, instead of making them last a *month*, as they ought to do!'

Everyone is given to hospitality in Basutoland. When guests arrive, they stay and dine, spend the night and breakfast with you, as a matter of course, and without any sort of invitation. When I first went up, I astonished a young Government official by politely asking him 'to stay and dine, and sleep at the Residence.' He looked at me in astonishment, as much as to say, 'What else did you suppose I was going to do?' So we soon learnt to take it as a matter of course also, and were very glad to welcome any guests, and they in return were very good to us when we required hospitality on our travels.

One day the chief, Masupha, and his brother, Sekalo, came to luncheon with us. Masupha was very smartly dressed in European dress, and wore a tall hat, suit of brown corduroys, and an orange plush waistcoat. His manners at the table left much

to be desired, as he insisted on helping himself first to everything, and coolly asked us to give him one of the silver saltspoons, made in the shape of a shovel, as he said he thought it would look so well just in front of his hat!

The Basutos always buy their wives, and give cattle in exchange for them; the better looking the woman is, the more cattle she is worth. Masupha was very curious to know how many cattle my husband had given for me when he married me! My husband in joke said, 'I gave eighteen pence for my wife and a goat, Masupha.'

'Eighteen pence, perhaps,' replied the Chief, 'but not a goat' (a goat ranks with the Basutos as the lowest of animals, and this speech was the nearest approach to a compliment that I ever succeeded in extracting from Masupha).

Our little children were much admired and petted by the Basutos. I went out one day into the garden, and there I saw one of them, seated under a tree (he was then about a year old) with no clothes on, his

Basuto nurse holding an umbrella over him, and a crowd of natives sitting in a circle, gazing at this wonderful white baby. The contrast between the little fair boy with his golden curls, and solemn little face, and the bronze-coloured admiring countenances of the natives made a picture which I have not forgotten.

Going into the nursery one day, to fetch the children for a drive in the cape-cart, I found the Kaffir nurse smearing Gilbert all over with salad oil; in reply to my astonished inquiry, it appeared that they thought he would catch cold in driving, and this was supposed to be a safeguard. The said Bertie went by the name among the Basutos, of 'Father of Guns,' because he was born during the attempted disarmament of the natives, just before the second rebellion of the whole Basuto nation commenced.

My husband had a great deal of magisterial business, and among others he had one day to try a 'cannibal case,' at the hearing of which I happened to be present. A baby had disappeared in a very mysterious manner,

and the affair had been traced to two well-known cannibals, but unfortunately the evidence was not strong enough against them, and they had to be let off. The two 'defendants' looked more like wild animals than human beings, with long shaggy hair and fierce gleaming eyes. They had a hungry look about them, and I trembled for my little children, as these appalling baby-fanciers lived unpleasantly near us, in holes in the rocks, called 'the Cannibal Caves.'

The missionaries are doing all in their power to suppress cannibalism, and have succeeded to a great extent, but now and then cases are still heard of, or were at the time of which I write. I saw many Basutos who were pointed out to us as having formerly practised cannibalism, but who had left it off, on becoming more civilised, though they were in no wise ashamed of their previous doings. The horrible practice was, no doubt, attributable to the scarcity of food in 'The Lesutho,' a scarcity from which we ourselves suffered on more than one occasion. If the rivers round us were 'up' there was no

chance of getting anything at all, and we soon learnt the necessity of laying in a store of food for the winter season. I particularly remember one time when we could buy nothing to eat, for love or money, but sardines in tins, and porridge, made of ground mealies. By way of salad we had some earth roots, which we dug up. It was in the rainy season, and the little local stores had all run out of everything, and could not get any fresh supplies. We could only procure meat from the Orange Free State, the Basutos declining to sell their sheep and oxen for food, and giving as their reason that they prized them far too highly. At this season too, when the rivers were swollen by the rains, it was impossible to get sheep or oxen across.

CHAPTER IV

BASUTO CUSTOMS

The Basutos have many curious customs, which never alter, but are handed down from one generation to another. If a chief wishes to pay a compliment to another one and to please him, he salutes him by sending his principal servant, who is also one of his courtiers, with a large pot of native beer. The servant is brought into the presence of the chief, when he makes a very low obeisance, and salutes him with the words, 'Eh! Morena,' 'Hail chief.' He then tastes the beer himself, to show that there is no poison in it. If one chief wishes to send a present of cattle to another one (which they prize more than anything else), he is careful to

choose a white ox or cow, 'to show that his heart is white.' To send a black beast of any kind would be considered a great insult. The custom in handing anything to a superior, is to extend the right hand, to hold the arm up, and support it at the elbow with the left hand; to hold out the left hand would give great offence. When a council is being held, if a man wishes to pass he always does so in front of another, never behind, unless he wishes to provoke a quarrel, as it is a principle among them that a man must stand face to face with another both in a battle of words and in a contest with arms; and if one stabs another in the back, he is despised by the rest of the tribe and considered a great coward.

If a man is sent anywhere as an ambassador, and appears to be in a great hurry, trying to get away early, the saying is, 'A man who is patient eats fatted beasts, but an impatient man has to content himself with the flesh of a lean goat.'

The breast of a bullock is only eaten by the principal men of the tribe, and as they

despise all women, especially unmarried ones, the girls have to eat the thin flank, which is their only portion. A Basuto woman is not allowed to eat a kidney; if she does so, it is considered a curse. The Basutos seldom kill and eat their cattle at all, excepting for a great feast on some grand occasion, as they consider them far too precious, and never will sell them to the white people for food.

The Basutos speak much in metaphors, many of which are very poetical. One of their sayings is, 'Men may meet, but mountains never.' If a man goes to warn another, or a tribe, of coming or threatened danger, he is called in Sesuto, 'Mongane o'pile totone lroawbe,' or 'a light in the darkness.' Another saying is, 'Do not prick an enemy with a two-pointed needle, as that hurts yourself quite as much as it does him,' meaning, 'Do not insult or annoy an enemy before witnesses, as it will do you as much harm in the end and reflect upon you quite as much as it does upon him.'

After killing an enemy, the Basutos have a barbarous custom, showing, it would seem,

that they have by no means lost all traces of cannibalism, even in those enlightened days, as they actually cut out the hearts of their enemies and eat them. After a battle they do this, and eat all the hearts of their fallen foes.

The constant showers of locusts are a god-send to the natives, in a country where food is very scarce. The Basutos collect and store them in tons and tons and dry them, then pull off the heads and wings, and either eat them dry, or make porridge of them in their large pots. When cooked, they all sit round the pot on the ground, with long wooden spoons, and thoroughly enjoy their feast of locusts! They taste rather like shrimps, but are not so nice.

The Basutos are very clever in taking advantage and making use of any natural feature—for instance, there are great mounds, formed by the white ants, on the veldt; these the natives use a great deal as ovens, they scoop out the inside, and put fire inside, and the meat or bread also on a gridiron—this forms a capital oven. They make

very long wooden spoons to stir their porridge, which is made either of mealies, viz., Indian corn, dried, soaked in water, and then slowly boiled for hours, or Kaffir corn, a smaller grain, in the same way; they eat this constantly, or locust porridge, and either put fat in, or eat it with salt. Straw spoons they manufacture in a pretty open pattern, all in straw, to skim off the flies from the Kaffir beer.

The women make pretty ornaments, mixed with beads, which they get from the traders who import them in great quantities, from the Colony. The women use little earth-nuts, which they dig up out of the ground, and string them together with small beads in pretty patterns. I have one or two of these, and also a necklace, made of black beads and jackals' teeth, a great treasure, for which I had to pay a good deal. Many jackals must have been laid under contribution for it, the teeth are long and pointed, and very polished, and look extremely ferocious. I managed to persuade a Basuto to sell me her brooch, which was made of

brass in a very ingenious fashion. The pin slips in without any fastening, and if it were made in gold or silver, would be very popular and convenient to wear. Among my treasures, picked up during my travels, I have also a curious necklace, called 'witch-craft' by the Basutos. During the Basuto campaigns, at the storming of Moirosi's Mountain the rebel chief Moirosi's own particular wizard-doctor was taken prisoner and brought to the Residency at Mohale's Hoek, he was almost starving and very ill from exposure and other hardships. I took him in hand and doctored him as well as I could, gave him dry warm clothes and good food, and let him rest until he was well enough to be taken away, he was so grateful to me that he begged me to accept a collection of charms, which his chief Moirosi always wore round his neck, and I gladly consented to do so, as it was so curious, and looked so uncanny. I had it well washed, but the natives were afraid to touch it, as the necklace was supposed to be endowed with all kinds of power; among other things, it is

composed of men's fingers, bits of bones and joints in the hands, baboons' fingers, small horns of goats, etc., etc. The Basuto doctor told me that it would bring me good luck, and also cure all diseases, if I only scraped a little off a bone and ate it!

The betrothal and marriage customs are very curious. If a man sees a girl that he likes and whom he wishes to marry, he must on no account say a word to her, but is only permitted to look at her. He then goes to his mother or some old woman whom he selects, and confides to her his wishes to settle down and marry! and begs her to arrange everything for him as soon as possible. Accordingly, his mother or friend arranges an appointment with the mother or guardian of the wished-for bride, and goes to see her, and the two Basuto ladies talk it over, and discuss the ways and means and position in Basuto society, in the particular 'set' in which the young people both move, and if they agree that the marriage will be a suitable one, they arrange everything between them.

Infant betrothal is very common among the Basutos, especially in the upper classes of the race. The first step consists in sending an ox, as a present from the father of the prospective bridegroom to the father of the bride-elect, and they make a feast and eat the flesh of it. The skin is given to the child as her 'vata,' or marriage portion, and this skin is often carefully kept for months and years. The uncle of the girl has to provide the wedding blanket, or kaross. Many of these are extremely handsome. This is also religiously put on one side, and often for a long time.

When the friends of the girl think that the right time has come to celebrate the marriage, and that she is old enough and everything is prepared, they send a message to the man to say that he may come to the house to see the girl. This he does at once, generally accompanied by several friends. He is kindly received by the family, and all sit down on the ground excepting the younger members, who stand round in a circle. The man is not allowed to talk to the girl at all,

but this courtship consists of exchanging looks only. This goes on for some time, and the man then stands up and says to the girl, 'Eh! dumela.' This is the Basuto form of respectful salutation, and means 'All hail.' If the girl responds with 'Eh! dumela' it is all the conversation that he can possibly expect to have with her. They are always strictly chaperoned at this interview. The bridegroom-elect then takes his departure, but returns in a week or two. When he enters the 'kraal' (hut) of his *fiancée*, he looks to see if the skin of the ox, presented by his father to the girl, is displayed as a kaross, or wedding-blanket, or not. If it is spread out, he remains as the husband of the girl without further rites or ceremonies, but has to leave his bride when the bird 'florissa,' begins to sing at four o'clock in the morning. This is considered part of the marriage ceremony. A great feast is given before the wedding in honour of the occasion. The bride and bridegroom each have a part of their own, separately. The first ox that is sent is eaten by the girl and her friends.