

The Orange Free State, as becomes a highly pastoral country, is the most thinly populated region in South Africa. It has not above two inhabitants to the square mile, and probably the whites are nearly equal to the blacks in number. Yet in some respects the State is the most thoroughly settled territory in the country. According to the last accounts, there were as many as fourteen thousand houses belonging to European owners, and it was estimated that there were one hundred and fifteen thousand acres under cultivation. The sheep are counted as five millions, and there were about one hundred and forty thousand horses, besides other stock of all kinds. As regards roads, bridges, schools, and churches, this State may well challenge comparison with any of its neighbours.

The Free State, however, has other claims upon recognition. It has for thirty-three years maintained its constitutional independence without a break, and with scarcely a jar. It has been fortunate enough, thanks to imperial intervention in 1869, to keep free from any serious native difficulty, the insurrectionary episode of a few years ago having hardly ruffled the normal serenity of the State, while occasional anxieties in connection with Basuto encroachments have been allayed by the timely co-operation of President Brand and Sir Marshall Clarke in sedative and remedial measures.

The State over which Sir John Brand presides with so much tact and wisdom occupies a geographical position in

South Africa that has no parallel. Its frontiers are continuous with those of all the other European colonies and communities; the Cape, Natal, the Transvaal, Basutoland, and Bechuanaland all touch its border-line. From every port on the sea-board a main-road or railway leads up to it.

I was fairly entitled to a day's rest before returning. So I had a good look round the pretty little Dutch town, noting that it is well sheltered by the low hills by which it is surrounded, and that one could very pleasantly spend a month or two in it if the time could be spared. Bloemfontein is the capital of the Orange Free State, and possesses not only a cathedral, but a standing army. This is said to be the smallest in the world; horse, foot, and artillery numbering only thirty-five.

I find, in regard to Bloemfontein, somewhat opposing medical testimony in the same book. According to Dr. Fuller, "Dr. Stollreither speaks well of its sanitary arrangements;" but, according to Dr. E. Symes Thompson, "the sanitation of Bloemfontein is bad." But, then, sanitation is not particularly advanced in any part of Africa; and, relatively speaking, it is probably as good in Bloemfontein as it is in any of the towns of the Cape Colony.

Need I say that the diamond fields interested me greatly? Before, however, I proceed to describe them, I think my readers would like to know how it came about that diamonds were found in South Africa. It may, therefore, be worth while to give them the following account.



KAFFIR WAGGON AND TEAM.

CHAPTER VIII.

KIMBERLEY DIAMOND FIELDS.

THE authentic version of the story how the diamond fields were discovered I believe to be this:—In 1867, John O'Reilly, a trader, was on his way to Colesberg from the junction of the Vaal and Orange Rivers. "I outspanned," he says, in the account given by Sir Henry Barkly, "at Mr. Nickerk's farm, where I saw a beautiful lot of Orange River stones on his table, and which I examined. I told Nickerk they were very pretty. He showed me another lot, out of which I at once picked the 'first diamond.' I asked

him for it, and he told me I could have it, as it belonged to a Bushman by name of Daniel Jacobs. I took it at once to Hope Town, and made Mr. Chalmers, Civil Commissioner, aware of the discovery." The stone was sent for inspection to Dr. Atherstone, of Graham's Town, who wrote in reply: "I congratulate you on the stone you have sent me. It is a veritable diamond, weighs 21·4 carats, and is worth £500. It has spoiled all the jewellers' files in Graham's Town, and where that came from there must be lots more."

Two years later Van Nickerk secured from a Griqua or Hottentot a large stone, for which he gave the sum of £400, or live stock to about that value. The stone he sold almost immediately for £10,000. This was the famous "Star of South Africa." It weighed in the rough 83·2 carats, and now belongs to the Countess of Dudley. It is stated that £25,000 was given for it.

The news of this great "find" brought a "rush" of diggers to the Orange River; but no mine was then discovered. After careful prospecting on the Vaal River, it was found that the banks were rich in diamonds. A large population, numbering no less than ten thousand, were soon at work, spread along the river; but they do not appear to have been fortunate in their finds, neither the river diggings nor the newly opened mines being rich enough to be remunerative to so large an influx of workers with only primitive appliances at their disposal. Nor was there much improvement even

upon the discovery of diamonds near to where the town of Kimberley now stands. To these and diggings on the farms of Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein there was a rush; but this was soon over. And a more dreary existence can hardly be imagined than that of these early days. Comforts there were absolutely none. Not a single substantial dwelling afforded shelter from the burning sun; men lived under canvas, and the owner of an iron or wooden shanty was envied. If you crossed the street you trod ankle deep in sand, and probably before reaching the other side a small dust storm in embryo had choked and blinded you. The dust and the flies and worse pervaded everywhere; they sat down with you to meals and escorted you to bed. This is the story of one who was on the diamond fields at the time. The want of good food and pure water, he goes on to say, brought on disease, and many a poor fellow who had expected to find an Eldorado succumbed to the fever, which threatened to become endemic. Yet the men who had subjected themselves to this sort of life were mostly fresh from the comforts of civilization.

There was an entire absence of the rowdy, uncouth class such as peopled the "roaring camps" of the Far West. The expense and difficulty of reaching the diamond fields even from the nearest towns of the Cape Colony kept rogues and loafers out of the place. Though distant only six hundred and fifty miles from Cape Town and five hundred from Port Elizabeth, the journey from

the latter port occupied a month, and six weeks from the former. It had to be performed in a springless transport-waggon drawn by ten or sixteen bullocks, over roads that no description could convey the vileness of, and the cost per passenger was not less than £50.

Now all this is changed. The railway, which has placed the diamond fields within thirty hours' journey of the coast, now brings a supply of all the luxuries the Colony can produce; whilst the establishment of the Kimberley waterworks provides a constant store of good and cheap water, which not only removes the greatest hardship of the early days, but gives an impetus to gardening, so that thousands of trees have been planted and vegetation in all directions promoted.

To the wealth drawn from the Kimberley diamond mine, in the first instance, the change may fairly be attributed. This, however, is only one of four considerable undertakings. In 1876 a new digging was discovered, two miles distant from Du Toit's Pan in a north-westerly direction, and situated on a farm named Vooruitzist, the property of one De Beer, from whom it was termed "Old De Beers." And on this same farm, in July 1871, the famous "Colesberg Kopjie," or "De Beer's New Rush," as it was variously called, was discovered by a Mr. Rawstorne, of Colesberg, which town had thus the honour of giving its name to the richest mine in the world. By a Government proclamation issued three years later these diggings were converted into "mines,"

with the respective titles of "Du Toit's Pan Mine," "De Beer's Mine," and "Kimberley Mine." The Bultfontein diggings were not proclaimed a mine till 1882.

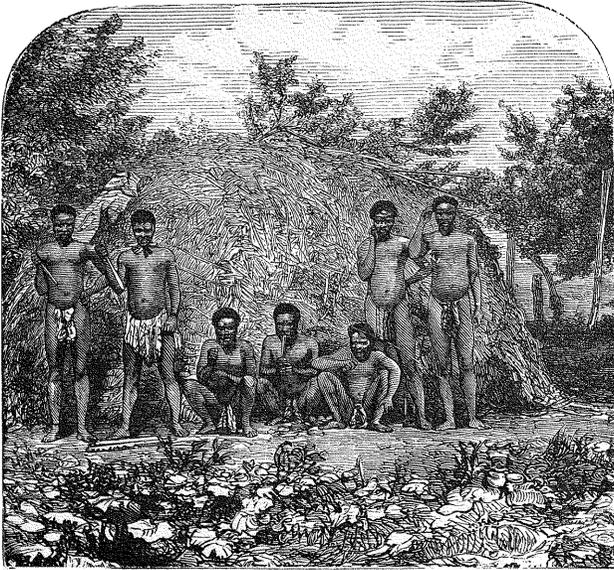
Kimberley mine lies due west of De Beer's; and Bultfontein mine is to the south-west of Du Toit's Pan. The centres of Kimberley and De Beer's mines are exactly one mile apart, the centres of De Beer's and Du Toit's Pan just over two miles, whilst the centres of Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein are less than three-quarters of a mile. A circle three and a half miles in diameter would enclose the whole of the four mines.

It may be as well to state that no one suspected, even after the four great mines had been successfully "rushed," what a vast depth of diamond-bearing rock they contained; they were supposed to be merely another kind of alluvial deposits, and consequently operations were at first conducted without thought of permanency. Nor was this surprising. There had been a good deal of money lost in diggings which had been opened with a flourish of trumpets. There were three to the westward of Kimberley mine so promising at the outset that in the first year the licence money amounted to £4,000. In the following year only half the licences were renewed, and within two years the diggings were practically abandoned. Large sums were lost in erecting costly machinery at a mine to the north-west of Kimberley, and at other spots declared to be rich may be seen evidence of abandoned undertakings.

No doubt the share mania in 1880-81 resulted in great losses to many investors in the diamond industry of South Africa. For the immense demand for mining shares set the prospectors at work searching for new mines, or trying to open up others, which, though previously known, had either never been worked or were already abandoned. Each morning paper announced the formation of some fresh company. Every owner of a bit of land declared that there were diamonds in it; even occupiers with little more than back gardens tried to turn these to account. While the game lasted it was lively enough; but in the end it proved disastrous to thousands. The investing public found that they had lost their money, and then went up the cry that the diamond bubble had burst.

The bad, the worthless, the rotten schemes had burst, but not the sound and prosperous undertakings to which reference has already been made.





KAFFIRS AND NATIVE HUT.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT DIAMOND GROUP.

THE Kimberley mine is one of the wonders of the world. As I saw it, it was an immense hole in the centre of the town, displaying a gap of twenty-five or thirty acres. This had been excavated in the earth to the depth of about three hundred feet. All round the mouth were stages for the working of pumps, and the raising and discharging by means of winches of the diamond-bearing

rock. From these stages were wire ropes to the bottom of the mine, along which buckets of rock and empties passed and repassed; while below and above an army of workers were toiling.

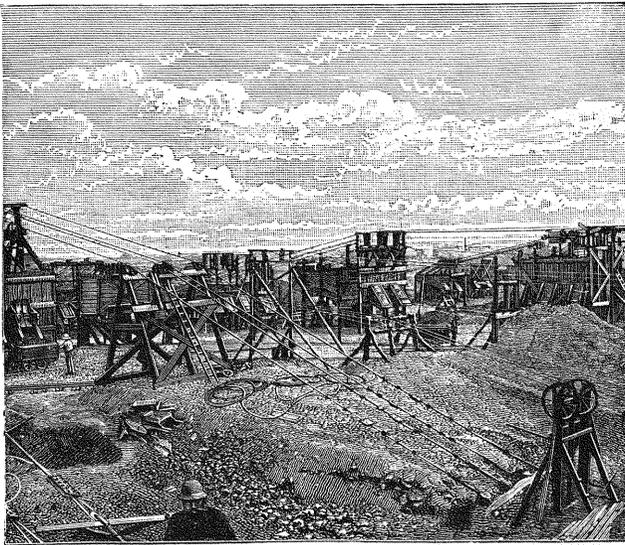
Need I say that an enormous sum of money had been spent in developing Kimberley mine before I saw it? To enable the reader to form some idea of the work of excavation alone, let me endeavour to describe briefly how the diamondiferous ground was reached. To begin with, the surface of the country is covered with red, sandy soil, varying from a few inches to a couple of feet in depth; underneath this is a thin layer of calcareous turfa, never extending beyond a few feet; both these layers are of recent date. Beneath the lime the distinction between the mine proper and the outside rocks or "reef" first becomes apparent. The upper reef in Kimberley mine is a yellow shale, exhibiting many varieties of shade from grey to pink. This extended to a depth of thirty-five to fifty feet, beneath which, as the contents of the mine or diamond-bearing "pipe" were worked out, a layer of black carbonaceous shale was made visible. The strata of both shales are roughly horizontal, though much disturbed in places, and where cut through by the vertical "pipe" they have their edges turned sharply upwards, as by a pressure from below.

At a depth varying from two hundred and sixty to two hundred and eighty-five feet from the surface of the red sand the lower shale ceases, giving place to an

unstratified basaltic rock—the “hard rock” of the miners. The extent of this hard rock is as yet unknown, but it has been ascertained that it encircles the entire mine, and the quantity of agate it contains renders it most expensive to sink through. It is believed that this diamond-bearing rock has been heaved up from a vast depth, the diamonds themselves being of earlier date than the upheaval. The toughness of this rock—or, as it is usually spoken of, “the blue”—necessitates the use of dynamite, and the heavy blasting is startling. On the diamond fields the hours of blasting are at mid-day and after sunset. The firing continues for ten or fifteen minutes. It is thus described by a correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*: “The warning bell has rung; Kaffirs and whites have streamed up into the searching-room here and there at the bottom of the great hole a puff of smoke, a spark of light, pick out the fuses dotted here and there over the floor. Every fuse has its appointed lifetime. Here and there a few men in charge take a last look, and then flee to shelter. Presently, with a deafening roar after roar, begins the fusillade. Masses of ground heave with a burst of smoke, tremble, and crumble into gaps. Stones are thrown up almost to our feet. For ten minutes the great noise flaps and buffets round the chasm. Then another bell rings; the smoke clears away; and for twenty-four hours there is peace. Enough ‘blue’ has been loosened for the next day’s work.”

In consequence of careless storage there was a terrific

explosion in January 1884, causing at the time the greatest consternation. In the immediate vicinity of Kimberley mine, through the accidental ignition of petroleum, twelve powder magazines, containing thirty tons



KIMBERLEY MINE.

of dynamite, ten tons of powder and blasting gelatine, and several hundred thousand detonators and rifle cartridges, were blown to atoms. Those who heard the report of the explosion, and saw the smoke column, which seemed as if it would bear down the town, say they will never forget either the one or the other. The smoke column,

over a thousand feet high, was clearly visible thirty-five miles away. Fortunately there was little injury to life or property; in explosives, however, £17,000 worth were blown away.

Kaffir labour is mainly employed in all the less responsible operations of mining: in drilling holes for the dynamite cartridges, in picking and breaking up the ground in the claims, and *trucking* it to the tub lowered to receive it; then in trucking it away from the depositing boxes and the margin of the mine, and tipping it on the depositing floors, where it undergoes a variety of processes before it is ready for washing. For every three truck-loads of ground daily hauled out of the mine there is, on an average, one Kaffir labourer employed, and to every five Kaffirs there is one white overseer or artisan.

The De Beer's is similar in formation to the Kimberley mine. Presenting my letter of introduction, I was very cordially received, and shown the surface workings of this famous mine. I say the surface, because I felt no great temptation to go down the shaft in a heat that seemed to me would be stifling in the case in which you descend. The descent was made by the correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, from whose letter I extract the following:—

“When my turn comes to be confined, it happens that I have to descend alone; and a queer sensation it proves. I lean back in the slanting shaft, taking care to protrude

no hand or foot; a caution, a signal, then gentle motion, and the brilliant sunshine fades away. Once or twice on the way down my eyes are startled by a glimpse of dim-lit chambers with darkling figures mysteriously toiling, or my ears deafened by the rattle of the ponderous skip as it plunges up and down past the slower lift at headlong speed. At length (it was not many minutes really) I stood seven hundred feet beneath the ground, at the place where the skip is loaded for the ascent. There I saw a rememberable scene.

“The passages of the mine converge upon a sort of oblong bell mouth, tapering funnel-wise to discharge into the skip below. The jaws of this are four trucks wide, four trucks going to a load. Here stand four Herculean shapes, and as the stream of full trucks from the various tramways reaches them, these four seize each a truck, force it against the top of the hole, and all together with a shout upset the weighty convoy. Instantly they drag back the empty trucks, to be pushed away each by its own Kaffir for refilling in the dark and sloppy labyrinths. A sign, meanwhile, has throbbed to the engine-room above, and almost before it has touched the bottom the skip with its six tons on board is on its upward race again. The dusky giants—strong, cheery, docile, sweltering naked or half naked at their pauseless task—the cries, the shifting flare and gloom, the whole strange scene of struggle in the bowels of the solid earth, made for me a *tableau vivant* of Virgil’s famous picture of Vulcan, and his

monstrous ministers singing and swinging hammers in the mountain's heart.

“At the surface the precious ‘blue’ is run in trucks by an endless rope to the drying grounds, which are some miles away, and some square miles in extent. Each truck-load—sixteen cubic feet, or about a ton of ‘blue’—conceals on an average a carat and a quarter of diamond, ranging in value from 3*s.* 6*d.* to £20 a carat. On the ‘grounds’ the ‘blue’ is softened by the sun and air, broken with picks, and then conveyed back to begin the process of reduction, which magically transmutes each ton or two of dull, heavy earth into a tiny brilliant.

“First the ground goes into the washing machine—the primitive cradle on a large and perfected scale—the working of which depends on the fact that the high specific gravity of the diamond makes it behave differently from other stones under the joint action of centrifugal force and gravitation. Spun round in perforated cylinders and pans under a whirlpool of water, the bulk of the ground flows off in ‘tailings’ of grey mud. The residue of divers stones, of divers sorts and sizes, is then jogged about in more water in the ‘pulsator’—an evolution, I think, from the primitive ‘baby.’ The machine is a huge framework of graduated sieves and runlets, which sorts the divers stones into several sizes, and after much percolation delivers each uniform lot at a separate receptacle. After the ‘pulsator,’ there remain a number of dry sortings and resortings on various tables by hands both black and

white, all under lynx-eyed surveillance, the pretty red garnets and other valueless pebbles being swept off by dozens with a bit of tin, the diamonds dropped into a sort of locked poor-box; until finally the coveted hoard, all scrutinized, classified, and valued, lies on the office table of the company on its way to their impregnable safes."

There are two other mines in the Kimberley district—namely, the Bultfontein, and the Du Toit's Pan—but to describe these would only be repeating what has been said about the better-known mines. All four are controlled by a powerful syndicate, in whose hands they have become most profitable undertakings. It is calculated that seven tons of diamonds, realizing forty millions sterling, have been extracted from the mines since they were opened. The largest diamond yet found in South Africa is the "Porter Rhodes," belonging to the De Beer's Company. Before cutting it weighed 428 carats; after cutting, 150. It is a pure white octahedron, worth £60,000. A large diamond, weighing 404 carats—an irregular octahedron stone, slightly spotted, of yellow colour—was found in 1885 in the Du Toit's Pan mine. A stone of some 500 carats was found in Jagersfontein, but it was very imperfect. In Bultfontein a diamond weighing a little over 150 carats was discovered; and from this mine, though the stones average a size smaller than those from the other mines, they are said to excel in colour.

The amount of labour and machinery employed at the diamond fields is, of course, considerable. Something

like ten thousand native labourers and twelve hundred European overseers and artisans are daily at work in and about the four mines, the average wage earned by a Kaffir being about £1 per week, and by a white man £5 a week.

One of the pleasantest hours of the day was that spent after dinner on the verandah of the hotel. There were always some amusing stories going the round, and one got a good notion of how things were in the early days of diamond digging at Kimberley. Water was so scarce then that a bucket of it cost five shillings, and a cauliflower sold for a guinea. There could have been few thieves or members of the I. D. B. fraternity (illicit diamond buyers) prowling about in those days. Every man lived in a tent, and left all he had lying about loose; and yet there were few robberies. That there were some instances of sharp practice may be inferred from the following story.

A digger used to get his kitchen stuff from Boers coming in from the country. He dealt with one particular Boer, and kept a running account with him, which he paid every few months. One day the Boer presented his bill. The digger looked over it, and remarked that it was large. The Boer said it must be right, as he had made out the items by a ready-reckoner. "Have you the book by you?" asked the digger. The Boer produced it, and the items were carefully examined; nothing, however, was found wrong. The digger closed the book, and

was handing it back to its owner when the date on the cover caught his eye. Said he, "Why—bless me!—eh!—why, this is a last year's ready-reckoner." "You don't say so?" said the Boer. "Give me my bill, and I'll alter it at once." And according to the story he did.

The old yarns of the abundance of money and the wasteful use of it in the Californian gold fields were almost excelled on the diamond fields. I was told of a man who, after money got scarce on the fields, and necessaries cheaper, bought a billiard-room and canteen. For some reason he had to take up the flooring; underneath the boards he found £100 in coin, which had been dropped on the floor, and had rolled through the cracks. As much as 7s. 6d. was paid for two brandies-and-sodas. I saw, however, very little of the senseless extravagance I used to hear so much about. I was told that successful men thought nothing of giving a guinea where they had formerly given a shilling; but this must have been before my visit a long time.

Before companies were formed a great trade used to be carried on in the buying, by small traders, of diamonds from the diggers. It was not, of course, every one who could tell a diamond in those days, and sometimes both traders and diggers were taken in. One of the diggers, who was a particularly knowing hand, thought he would "do a shot" on one of the traders. So he got a bit of spar, and cut it into the shape of a small rough diamond. Round came the trader. "Well, what luck to-day?" said

he cheerily. "No," replied the digger, "can't say I have—at any rate not much to speak of. You can see for yourself." The bit of spar was produced and examined. "What do you want for it?" said the trader. "Well, to tell you the truth," said the other, "I don't want to part with it. It is a pretty stone, and I'd like my girl at home to have it." Finally, a bargain was struck, and the digger got the money. What the trader said on discovering the "take in" need not be repeated.





WASHING THE SAND FOR DIAMONDS ON THE RIVER VAAL.

CHAPTER X.

DIAMOND FINDING ON THE VAAL.

ROUGHLY speaking, the diggings on the Vaal extend along the river-banks for seventy miles. Not that as worked the diggings stretch out this distance; for between Hebron and Barkly there appear to be few workings. But it is thought that the diamondiferous deposit, to a greater or lesser extent, may be found on almost any spot within the limit stated.

The diggers shift about from spot to spot, sometimes opening up a digging only to abandon it as unremunerative. Then after several years they may perhaps return and work it with profit. The diamondiferous deposit is found embedded between boulders, and mixed with a quantity of fine red sand, and in many places with a good deal of lime. At some of the diggings this lime forms a hard crust on the surface, varying in thickness from two to twenty feet, and shafts are sunk through it before the payable ground is reached. At other diggings the workings are exceedingly shallow, consisting of only a few inches of red sand before the bed rock is reached. The hardest work consists in excavating and lifting the heavy boulders, under which the richest gravel is generally found.

There is little doubt that the river-bed itself is rich in diamonds; but the Vaal is too well supplied with water all the year round to render prospecting of its bed an easy matter. In a time of drought eight years ago, a narrow arm of the river was diverted, and diamonds to the value of £30,000 were taken out of the bed. The Vaal has continually changed its course; and occasionally a digger is lucky enough to strike a portion of an old river-bed, silted up with lime and gravel, when his finds are pretty sure to be good.

After the excavation has been made with pick and shovel, the boulders and large stones are thrown aside, and the gravel secured is taken to a sifting machine,

called a "baby." This consists of an oblong sieve, swinging by four thongs or chains from four upright poles, and inclined slightly, so that the pebbles may roll over it. At the higher or feeding end a small square sieve, about two feet square, and coarse enough for stones three-eighths of an inch thick to pass through it, is fixed over the oblong sieve, which is about five feet long, and of very fine mesh.

The gravel from the claim is emptied by hand buckets on to the coarse sieve; the worker, standing behind it, swings it alternately towards and away from him, whereby the finer stuff passes through on to the lower sieve, which again allows only the fine sand to pass through, whilst the pebbles roll off the lower end into a tub put to receive them. The coarse stones from the top sieve, as well as the fine sand which passes through the lower one, are refuse to be thrown away; but the medium-sized pebbles which have tumbled into the tub will contain the diamonds, if there are any in the ground. Any diamond, too large to have passed the first sieve, would have been noticed at once by the worker, who has it immediately under his eye, and who continually throws out the rough stones to make room for fresh ground; whilst any diamond so small as to have passed away with the fine sand is not worth the trouble of further search.

The process that follows consists in "gravitating" the contents of the tub, so as to separate all the heavier pebbles, including the diamonds, from the light soil and

stones. This may be done by hand if the operator is skilful. A small round sieve of medium mesh is used for this purpose, and into it is emptied a bucketful of the pebbles from the "baby." The workman, bending over a tub of water and holding the sieve in both hands, immerses it just below the surface, and gives it a succession of sharp twists, pulsating it gently in the water, so as to let the light stuff come to the top; then, when he is satisfied that the heavier contents have been separated from the lighter stones, he deftly turns over the sieve on to a flat board termed a "sorting-table," when, if he has managed successfully, all the heavy pebbles will appear on the surface of the mould, and any diamonds there will at once be visible.

To guard against the risk of losing any, he dissects the mould with a little sorting-knife of thin wedge-shaped iron, scraping off the top layer of pebbles first, till the bottom of the mould is reached, and the whole of it brushed off on to the ground to make room for the next sieveful. An experienced digger can tell at a glance, from the appearance of the deposit, what chance there is of finding well in it. He knows by sight the heaviest stones that occur in diamond-bearing ground, and their presence is a sure sign of diamonds being there too. This is particularly so of a curiously marked pebble that is streaked with a succession of parallel rings, from which it has received the descriptive name of "banddoom," or band round.

The specific gravity of this pebble is almost identical with that of the diamond. Beautiful agates are also found in the deposit, as well as quartz-crystals, jaspers, calcedony, but few garnets. No estimate can be formed of the average yield of diamonds, their occurrence being too uncertain. Sometimes hundreds of loads are manipulated without finding a single precious stone; then, perhaps, a rich pocket is hit upon, and a handful of diamonds are turned out. Still, with all this uncertainty, to an individual digger the gross yield of diamonds from the river remains pretty uniform throughout the year, being at the rate of about £4,000 a month. This represents the finds of not more than three hundred and fifty diggers, of which number three hundred are European and fifty Kaffir.

Obviously diamond digging on the Vaal is not a very lucrative occupation, bringing in on an average an income of about £120 a year. The expenses that have to be paid out of this are not very heavy, and living is cheap; the life itself healthy, and certainly preferable to that of artisans in the Kimberley mines. At some spots—such as Pniel, Gong-Gong, and Hebron—there is a pleasant profusion of foliage, and the mud huts and tents of the diggers are picturesquely pitched among the trees on the hillsides overlooking the river; whilst here and there a rustic arbour with dining-table and wooden benches may be seen hidden in the leafy shade. But the majority of the diggings are break-stone kopjies, where there is

nothing but the fresh air, wide view, and free life to compensate for an arduous existence. Then there is something in the fascination of the pursuit that still draws men from all quarters of the globe, so that on a single small digging there may be nearly as many nationalities as workers.

There is no diamond market at the river diggings; and, as the expense of frequent visits to Kimberley would absorb a large part of the digger's earnings, one or more of the Kimberley diamond buyers takes a weekly trip to the Vaal, making the tour of the several camps where work at the time happens to be chiefly carried on.

The smaller diggers find in *débris* washing more profit than in mining in maiden ground. There is no excavation to be done, and the very imperfect washing and sorting of the early days has left plenty of diamonds still amongst the pebbles. Besides this advantage to the small digger, the *débris* is mostly close to the margin of the river; whilst the unworked maiden ground is, perhaps, half a mile away, and necessitates carrying water that distance, or else bringing the ground down to the banks. At Waldek's Plant a deep gully has been excavated over a mile long, varying in width and depth from twenty to seventy feet. The ground from this gully is hauled to the surface by windlass and bucket, running on an inclined wire rope similar to that originally adopted in Kimberley mine.

Whether the diamonds found in the river diggings

have been formed *in situ*, or whether they were brought from a distance, is still a vexed question. The balance of evidence is in favour of the former hypothesis. A large number of the river diamonds when unearthed are found coated with oxide of iron, which, in the case of cracked stones, has penetrated inside the cracks of the diamond. Some French geologists have argued that the Drakensberg is the home of the diamonds; but in that case it is hard to conceive why none of the other rivers taking their rise in those mountains should have brought down diamonds, and why, even if the Vaal could be supposed to have got the monopoly of them, few diamonds should be found nearer its source than Christiana, or much below its junction with the Harts at Delports.

These and other questions are likely to remain unanswered, unless Mr. Theodore Reunert, to whose interesting paper on diamonds at the Cape I acknowledge myself indebted, answers them himself.





ON THE WAY TO THE DIGGINGS.

CHAPTER XI.

ILLCIT DIAMOND BUYERS.

THE illicit traffic in diamonds, though not perhaps carried on to the same extent that it was some years ago, still continues; and this notwithstanding the stringent penal laws enacted and the elaborate searching system adopted with a view to its suppression. A special court was constituted at Kimberley, with power to inflict heavy penalties (up to fifteen years' imprisonment with hard labour) on those convicted of unlawful possession, illicit

dealing, and theft. The receiver was held to be worse than the thief, and when he was caught he was punished severely. So rarely, however, was the real receiver—that is to say, the capitalist—found buying stolen diamonds, or committing any of the offences against which the Act was passed, that the mine-owners and diggers thought that it would serve their purpose better if, by searching the natives as they left the mine, they prevented sales of diamonds to the illicit buyers. Accordingly, a searching system was introduced which could not have had other than a deterrent effect.

All the hands employed in the diamond mines were liable to be searched at any time. The natives were compelled to strip in the searching house before they entered the mine; they had then to put on pocketless working suits, and in these the day's work was done. While in the mine, before they ascended, they were searched by the overseers; and at the top they were searched by officers skilful in the detection of concealed stones. This searching system appears to have been ineffectual. For what is called the "Compound System" was adopted in preference to the other by the great mining companies. Each of the companies have a large yard, enclosed partly by buildings, and the other by sheets of iron ten feet high. This is called the "compound;" and within it the native workers sleep, eat, bathe, and receive medical attendance should they be sick. They go into the compound from the mine, and during the

time they contract to serve—sometimes two and sometimes three months—they are not allowed to go outside.

When not at work, the Kaffir spends all his time eating, sleeping, or playing games in the compound. "On his way to and from the mine he is strictly watched. So, too, while at work underground. Fresh from the mine he has to pass the ordeal of the searching room, where, naked as he was born, he undergoes a scrutiny of mouth, ears, nose, hair, or rather scrub, armpits—every conceivable or inconceivable lodgment for a diamond—goes through certain gymnastic exercises, and makes way for the next." So rigorously is the search made, that it is almost impossible to conceal diamonds.

The introduction of this system was a serious blow to the illicit diamond trade; and fortunate, indeed, it is that it has been adopted. For it is believed that from one-fourth to one-fifth of the diamonds found in the mines were sold to the illicit diamond buyers who infested the diggings. In Dr. Matthews' interesting book, "Incwadi Yami," there are some curious stories of the "I. D. B.;" and from these—some of which I include in this narrative—it may be inferred that not the least of the hardships of mining was the fraud practised by the receivers of stolen diamonds.

A few years ago, in spite of the activity of the detective department, diamonds were got out of the country in large quantities. The "I. D. B.," says Dr. Matthews,

were not lacking in devices. The book post conveyed many a parcel. A large hole was cut in the pages of some novel or ready-reckoner, and the space filled with diamonds, carefully packed. The parcel, being properly wrapped and posted, attracted no attention from the postal authorities.

Kaffirs were employed as runners at night; in the day white horsemen were paid to face the risks. The diamonds they carried were wrapped in lead, so they could be dropped on the grass if danger appeared in the distance, and recovered at leisure. Other smugglers, by swallowing the precious stones, passed the detectives safely. Astonishing, indeed, was the ingenuity displayed at that time. One man, named Phillips, had the heels of his boots made hollow, and filled up with rough diamonds, sealing them down with wax. The handles of his travelling trunk were also made to come out, empty spaces behind being constructed, within which diamonds were concealed. In fact, Phillips thought himself safe enough. The detective department, however, suspecting him, and failing in all their efforts to get convicting evidence, engaged a man to play the part of a Judas. To keep up the deception and disarm suspicion this secret agent was "rushed" and searched by a well-known detective, thus creating an apparent reason for a fellow-feeling between the two. The result was Phillips' conviction.

Here is another story worth repeating. A man resided

with his wife and child in a certain quarter of the camp. He was, not without reason, suspected of being one of the "I. D. B." So the detectives came to his house again and yet again, without, however, being able to put their hands on a diamond. On one occasion, when they put in an appearance, a diamond of a large size was lying in Mrs. ——— reticule upon the table. When about to rise and remove it, she was ordered by the officers to remain seated, whereupon she asked permission to send for a bottle of stout, a request acceded to without demur. Hastily scribbling the words, "Send bottle stout; keep bag till I come," she rose, and nonchalantly handed the message and reticule containing the diamond to her child, who toddled off to a neighbouring canteen, where, as the mother knew, her husband was almost certain to be found. He, realizing the danger, concealed the stone, and the detectives soon after left his quarters baffled in their search.

Some time in 1884 a person over whose head was hanging a charge—not, however, connected with the diamond ordinances—determined to reduce his household expenses by sending his wife to Europe in charge of the proceeds of certain private speculations about which he had been singularly reticent. After selling off, he took apartments for his wife and another lady at a somewhat pretentious-looking hotel at Kimberley. All had gone on as pleasantly as could be wished. The voyage home was looked forward to with pleasure, and a visit to an old

friend in Hatton Garden was among the things to be done on arriving in London.

The detective department, suspecting that all was not straight, determined to make the ladies a domiciliary visit. So one afternoon, just as a nice little tiffin had been washed down with champagne, and during which a number of diamonds had been inspected on the table, a sharp rap was heard at the door, and two detectives and a female searcher entered. The landlady, who had seen the diamonds, instantly whisked up the cloth and left the room with it, so that the officers might be able to say privately what they wanted to their startled guests. These gentlemen, having explained the object of their visit, politely introduced the female searcher, and returned to smoke a cigar on the verandah.

The lady searcher then set to work. "Now, my dears," she said, "let down your hair. I have had finer ladies than you through my fingers." After admiring the elegance of their coiffure, she then proceeded to handle their entire wardrobe; even their dainty shoes and silk stockings did not escape attention. To shorten the story, it may be said that no illicit diamonds were found, and the detectives with their expert took their departure. Forthwith the ladies rang the bell for the landlady, who promptly answered it; but, singular to say, denied the most remote knowledge of the contents of the table-cloth, declaring that when she shook it there was nothing but bread-crumbs to be seen. What could be done? The ladies

dare not appeal to the police; time pressed, and their passages were taken. There was nothing for it but to leave without the diamonds.

The sequel to the story is as follows:—The husband of the landlady whose eyesight had been so defective suddenly expressed a wish to see the Transvaal—possibly to investigate the gold-bearing qualities of that state, perhaps merely for an agreeable change. So he set out, and, extending his journey, proceeded to make an amateur survey of the proposed railway route between Pretoria and Delagoa Bay over the Lebombo Mountains. From Delagoa Bay he set sail for Rotterdam, which he reached in a much more satisfied frame of mind than his whilom lady boarders possessed on their arrival in London. Curiously enough, he called on a diamond cutter at Rotterdam, and left for cutting a valuable parcel of gems resembling that which had so mysteriously disappeared on the day the detectives visited his hotel.

The landlord, being a gay dog, thought that he might enjoy himself before returning to Africa, and visited the sights on the Continent. At Vienna he received a telegram to the effect that his diamonds had been duly cut and were awaiting his disposal. So he at once returned to Holland, received his gems, and secured the services of a well-known goldsmith for their setting, which proved, in accordance with his orders, both elaborate and costly. When all was completed, he started once more for his South African home. He was not, however, without

anxiety. He knew that the Cape Government would exact from him a certain duty of 30 per cent. *ad valorem*. The thought of this haunted him continually, until one night his cabin companion heard him chuckling and talking to himself. He had evidently hit upon a plan to evade the duty.

Arrived at Cape Town, he induced a female passenger with whom he was acquainted to conceal about her person the diamonds which already had had so strange a story, and thus endeavour to evade the eyes of the revenue officials stationed at the dock entrance. The attempt was unsuccessful; the diamonds were discovered and confiscated; and the fair contrabandista having of course in self-defence revealed the owner, he was tried for the misdemeanour, when, in addition to the loss of his jewellery, he was sentenced to pay a heavy fine, or in default of payment to suffer a term of imprisonment.

Here is another brief anecdote about a young man who may be called Silberfeldt. Under the old diamond ordinance he was trapped in the usual way; he was caught red-handed by the detectives, and sentenced to three years' hard labour, of which time nearly two years were remitted in consequence of good conduct while in gaol. The further knowledge of the inner working of the "I. D. B." craft which he had acquired in prison so increased his self-confidence, that he boasted that there was not a man clever enough in all Griqualand West to catch him a second time. Wary, however, though he was, he fell into

the meshes of the law, and along with another was arrested under the section dealing with the offence of "illegal possession." Diamonds had been found on him when he and his companion were one morning pounced upon.

The two were friends who had long been on terms of the greatest intimacy, and naturally they might have been expected to stick to each other through thick and through thin. When, however, they were placed in the dock and asked to plead, Silberfeldt at once, arrant coward as he was, exclaimed,—

"Oh! your vorship, I don't vant to plead. I'm going to turn Queen's evidence."

This attempt to save himself at the expense of his pal was too much for the magistrate. The Crown, he said, was not in want of Queen's evidence. They were both committed for trial. At this, strange to say, Silberfeldt got seven years; and his pal, who so narrowly escaped betrayal, was discharged.

One more story, and I have done with the "I. D. B." One fine spring morning a certain diamond buyer, who may as well be called Gonivavitski as anything else, might have been seen marching up and down the Bultfontein road reading the daily paper, yet keeping a narrow watch on the canvas frame-house in which he conducted his business. Active, robust, cheery, though a rogue in spirit and grain, manliness appeared to beam from every line of his seemingly honest face. Just as he had

finished the leading article he caught sight of one of his clients approaching in an opposite direction. Gonivavitski started nervously, as he did not desire the visit of this particular gentleman in the daylight; in other words, he only bought of "niggers" after dark. But his dusky acquaintance gave him a sly glance, as much as to say, "I fancy I've seen you before"—a quite sufficient hint that "something" was in the immediate neighbourhood; so Gonivavitski could not resist the temptation.

Taking a bird's-eye view of the situation, Gonivavitski hastily came up to the native, who, with a knowing leer, opened his hand, revealing a magnificent pure white diamond nearly the size of a plover's egg.

"Mooi kleppe, baas!" (Fine stone, master) said the nigger.

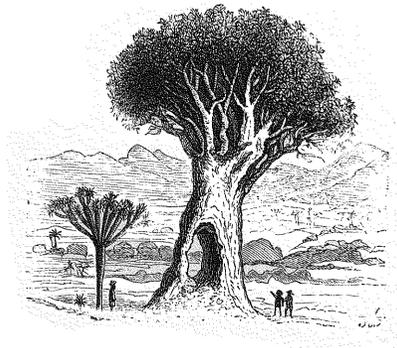
"Ya! Kom hier sa, booi" (Yes; come this way, boy) said Gonivavitski hurriedly, fearing observation.

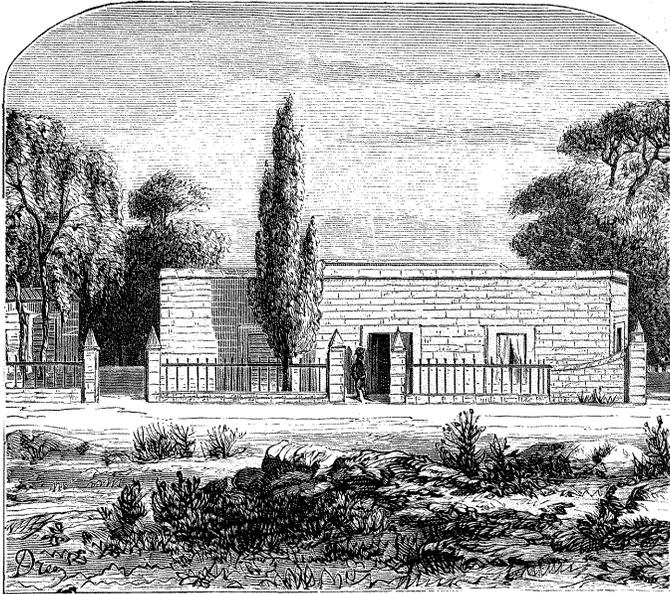
The boy did as he was told, following the white man into his office, which was close by. The door was soon shut, the stone weighed, and the bargain struck, the native starting off with the money at a round trot to join his "brothers" who were waiting in the vicinity. Then it occurred to the diamond buyer that perhaps he had been watched. Starting in pursuit of his client, he caught him, and gave him into the custody of a policeman.

"What's up now?" said the guardian of law and order.

“Why, look here, this d——d thief of a nigger wants to sell me this 'ere,” was Gonivavitski's answer, given in tones of simulated indignation. “This 'ere,” however, was not the forty-carat white diamond of a few minutes before (Gonivavitski was too clever for that); it was merely a piece of board, not worth a sovereign, that he now produced.

A crowd soon gathered to watch the thief marched off to gaol, the diamond buyer following in his wake to lay the charge. Next day at the trial a little perjury more or less was immaterial. The native was sentenced to imprisonment and lashes, whilst Mr. Gonivavitski in a few days found it necessary, for the sake of his health, to proceed to Europe, where he disposed of the diamond for a good round sum. With this addition to his former capital, he returned to the fields, and according to accounts is now a rich man.





HOUSE OF A RICH BOER.

CHAPTER XII.

COACH TO JOHANNESBURG.*

ON Tuesday morning, December 10th, 1889, I was up betimes, and after a hurried toilet and cup of coffee set out to see something of the Transvaal. The coach to Johannesburg in which I booked a seat might, for all I knew, have been built from a model of Buffalo Bill's famous conveyance. It was made more with a view to

* The traveller is Mr. John Finch, who describes the journey.

holding together over rough country than to afford the passengers a comfortable journey. Still, relatively considered, it was a coach for a seat in which one ought to have been duly thankful. Indeed, it was luxurious compared with the springless bullock-waggon in which it would have been necessary to make the journey if I had visited the country a little earlier. There were ten mules in harness and two horses leading. The whip was five yards long, enabling the driver to remind even the leaders that they were within reach of the lash.

The coach was preparing to start close by the "Queen's," and the guard was hurrying up passengers by performing furiously on the bugle. At the office there was much grumbling and growling about the charge for luggage in excess of the quantity allowed. I was among the victims to the tune of £2 15s. You are allowed thirty pounds for the costly fare of £12, which hardly allows of a change of clothes. However, there was nothing for it but to pay and take our seats. Eleven of us were squeezed inside, some friends of mine gave me a parting shake of the hand, and with the whip cracking and bugle sounding we entered upon the three days' journey.

As we drove into the open veldt the morning air was most exhilarating, and had there been a little more zoom in the coach we should have all enjoyed the drive. Fortunately, I had the middle of the back seat, with a good rest behind. But in front the passenger's back was like a wall, and for a time my knees were wedged in it.

Gradually, however, we shook ourselves down, and became more comfortable. After outspanning once the coach drew up at the first station for breakfast. "Fairview" was the name of the hotel, and an inviting-looking establishment it was, built in the open. Keen though we were for the morning meal, the myriads of flies in the breakfast-room almost appalled us. They literally swarmed, forming large black moving patches on the tablecloth, and even on the food. And while legions were busy on the table, as many again tried to settle on our hands and faces. Some old hands suggested that we should breakfast with our heads in pocket-handkerchiefs; and so we did, being then able to enjoy our porridge and so on, with the indifferent fare of chops and bacon which followed.

We start forward again after our breakfast "with the flies," and as a soother apply ourselves to that sweet solace "tobacco" in its varied forms, according to the individual taste. Cigarettes, cigars, and pipes were quickly alight; and for an hour or so—indeed, till next outspanning—felt fairly comfortable. Then commenced that feeling of restraint combined with tediousness, which had to be overcome and succeeded by a sort of resigned hopelessness and resignation to your fate of jolt, bump, or shake, according to the special piece of track over which we were travelling. At the outspanning stations out for a few minutes to loaf around, as the sun was now gaining such power that we felt a little shelter was most grateful. The day wore on, and by two o'clock we were at the

Vaal River, up to which the best part of our journey has been through the Orange Free State, but afterwards in the Transvaal, the Vaal River being the boundary line between the two republics. At the inn close by lunch or tiffin was announced, and anything for a change (even for the horses) was most welcome. I forget the name of the inn, but not the lunch, which was, I am sorry to say, unsatisfactory. The chief part was the payment—half-a-crown, with an extra eighteenpence for a whisky-and-soda, the total being rather stiff for a meal not worth a quarter of the money.

“All aboard!” in stentorian tones shouts our conductor, and again we mount the well-known steps, and tortuously wind our persons into our respective seats. The crossing of the Vaal River is by means of a floating bridge, the same being of sufficient length to take our coach and its twelve gallant steeds. On again we travel, never slackening speed, as the horses (or occasionally mules) are made to do their utmost during their span, which is from one and a half to two hours.

The intense heat of the afternoon causes a general sleepy feeling to pervade the coach, and nodding, nay napping, becomes prevalent, some regular old stagers even going the length of “a thorough sleep.” As my position was that of being sandwiched between two, I had perforce to recline on my neighbour if I wished to obtain the slightest rest; it was not a success, for at the next outspan I felt literally “all to pieces,” and my backbone

broken. "Fine for the liver," my friends have remarked since I returned. Doubtless it was; but I should much like these well-wishers to try for one day only this sovereign remedy.

About six o'clock we arrived at the town of Christiana; a very straggling village we should call it, with an outwardly good-looking hotel; but, as this was where we were to dine, its apparently fair outside was quite a deception. Shown into an extremely dirty bedroom to wash our hands, we found neither water, towel, nor soap. Not in the gentlest tones we called for that "boy" (the native servant being always addressed in this way) whose duty it was to look after these details. "Follow him, or he won't come back," shouted an old traveller. Consequently "this boy" was shadowed in his search for all we required. Seated at the table, the rest was a shout and scramble, and eat what you could get.

It was, I intended saying, the worst dinner I ever had; but, to put it mildly, amongst the most unsatisfactory repasts of which I ever partook. And, on rising therefrom, instead of feeling calm, comfortable, and at peace with all mankind, one felt tetchy and irritable. The only remedy was to light a cigar, and stroll around until our steeds were harnessed, which happily was not long. Our comparison of notes of that experience was not complimentary to our late host.

Seated cosily in the back corner of the coach was a genial old German, who benignly smiled upon us from

among the fumes of his Boer tobacco. He had brought his basket of provisions along with him, and was, of course, provided with all those delicacies of sausage, sauerkraut, etc., which go so far to add to the happiness of our neighbours of the "Fatherland."

We are now at about the best part of the day. The sun having set, and the air being cool, we rolled along more happily, looking forward after our day's really hard work to some few hours' rest.

At last, about eleven o'clock, we arrive at Bloemhof, at which we are to "sleep." Of all the hostelries in South Africa surely this is the least inviting. But there was no help for it. One fellow, dead tired, threw himself, clad as he was, full length on the bed, and three minutes after was "fast as a church." Myself, with the other occupant of the room, proceeded more leisurely. After a slight inspection we decided on not venturing within the bed-clothes; so, with very slight alterations in our toilet, we lay down on our respective couches—in my case to turn over and over without sleeping, as I was thoroughly overtired, and almost too done up to sleep. Bloemhof is a village of a handful of burnt-brick houses, and here and there one with a plastered front. Some seventeen years ago this was the scene of the Bloemhof arbitration, perhaps better known as the Keate award. There was a definition of boundaries, and the village became geographically important.

Four o'clock next morning, and the bugle sounds. After

a cup of "filthy" coffee we curl ourselves up in our lairs in the coach, to endeavour ere the day has well begun to make up for the shortcomings as to sleep during the previous four or five hours. It seems a long time before we have breakfast, which is two outspan stations from Bloemhof, by which time we are really started on our second day's ride. This is a repetition of the day before, with if anything more uninviting food.

At tiffin I went into the hotel, sat down, and was served with something in the shape of a stew; it looked so nasty I had fairly to beat a retreat, a biscuit, washed down with a little weak whisky-and-water, being more to my taste. Only occasionally could we obtain a glass of milk; this, laced with spirits, formed a change, and very sustaining too. In the course of the afternoon one of the stopping-places particularly took my attention, from the beggarly condition of the whole shanty. It was the residence of a Boer farmer, his wife, and two children; and consisted of one room (a hovel), the walls of mud and floor of cow-dung, the only light being that which came in at the door and from a nine-inch square window; the entire furniture consisted of one old chair and one table, the remainder being turned-up boxes, with a shake-down in the corner for the family. The wife was engaged in manufacturing some coffee, which was presently served to us with condensed milk instead of the real article. It was a very hot afternoon, and I remarked that it would indeed have been a luxury had we been able to have a

basin of cold water, soap, and towel, more refreshing a hundred times than all the wretched Dutch coffee, and more profitable too.

On we travel over the interminable veldt, until between seven and eight o'clock in the evening we arrive at Klerksdorp; this is, I believe, even a younger town than Johannesburg, and quite a wonder in point of the rapidity with which it has sprung up. It has an enormous hotel, with a large dining-hall, capable of seating, I daresay, two hundred persons. A large straggling town, chiefly composed of corrugated iron buildings, after the usual pattern of mining towns.

After a "wash and brush up" we found our way to the dining-room, where the regular attenders were just finishing their meal; so we rather came in for the fag end. Although our anticipations of a better meal were good, yet the reality was disappointing—I suppose in consequence of being late. A quiet cigar on the hotel stoep, and listening to conversation on local topics, completes our second day from Kimberley. Then to a more comfortable couch, and first-rate night's rest.

Near Klerksdorp is the cave of Wonderfontein, the discovery of which some years ago suggested, it is thought, the underground river described by Mr. Rider Haggard in the adventures of Allan Quatermain. I had not the good fortune to see the wonderful cave, as we arrived too late and departed too early to admit of our visiting it; but from the description given by

Dr. Matthews one may infer that it is a remarkable subterranean hall.

“On our arrival at the place,” says Dr. Matthews, “pointed out to us by the guide, which was surrounded by trees, we scrambled down a few feet into something like a pit, twenty feet deep and about thirty yards in diameter, having at one corner a little hole, barely large enough to admit a man.

“Through this we groped one at a time. We did not advance far before the pitchy darkness caused us to stop and light the candles and lamps with which each visitor had been provided. Then continuing our descent for twenty minutes at least, as it were into the bowels of the earth, we were suddenly ushered into a hall of dazzling whiteness, a scene of startling, fairy-like beauty presenting itself which words fail me to describe. Passing on a few yards, we found ourselves in a large amphitheatre at least one hundred yards across, with a dome sixty feet in height arching above. From this hung in profusion groups of glittering stalactites, like giant icicles, some being as much as thirty feet in length, others shorter, and all the colour of driven snow, which, combined with the stalagmites growing as if out of the floor, and in some cases meeting, produced an effect which was simply superb.

“In one corner the stalactites extended nearly to the ground in circular pillars, and to the eye of fancy seemed like the carved confessionals in some Continental cathedral. A little farther—still allowing fancy scope—there could

be seen the pipes of a magnificent organ extending to the dome; while, seemingly to prove that all was real, our guide ran his fingers over these vibrating pipes, bringing out a succession of tones both musical and clear. I must not forget to mention that the echo which reverberated through this majestic hall reminded me most vividly of the Taj Mahal at Agra, and of the curious acoustic properties of that white marble mausoleum."

Friday morning we were summoned by four o'clock. The usual cup of coffee; but on getting to the coach found additional passengers. In room of one leaving we had a gentleman who I found out afterwards was one of the originators of the Oceana Company, and a most intelligent and agreeable companion. The other passenger was a lady with her infant. Poor wee mite! it seemed very poorly; and, like all selfish men, we looked askance at this latest addition to our already crowded conveyance. This feeling did not, however, prevent one of our number immediately giving up his seat (the most comfortable one, being that with its back to the horses), nor from our doing all we could to make her as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

Off we start through the silent streets of Klerksdorp, and soon are shaken down again into our places, and away over the veldt. We get to Potchefstroom about seven o'clock. This is one of the oldest towns in the Transvaal, prettily situated, and with plenty of trees and other vegetation, the houses more substantial, and

the whole aspect of the place more pleasant and inviting than anything we have yet seen since leaving the coast. With these fair surroundings and greater signs of civilization we learned that we should here stop for breakfast.

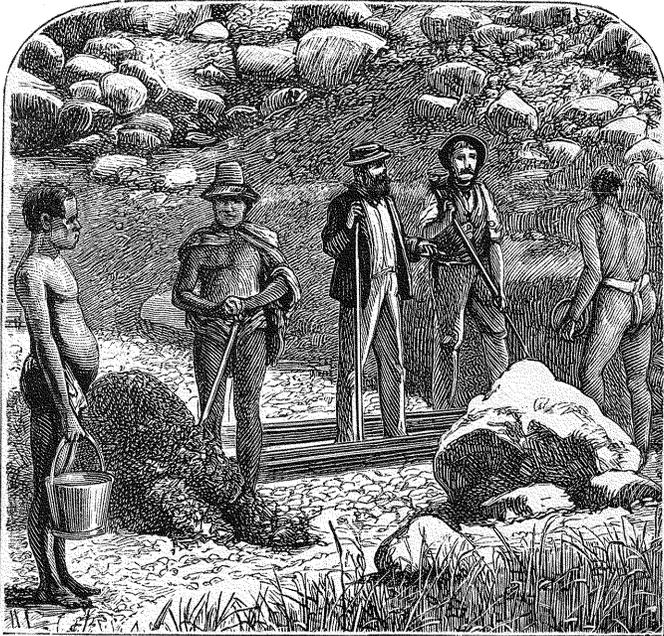
At a really good hotel (for the Transvaal) we had a comfortable meal, the only want being butter, of which the supply had entirely run out; so preserves (all English make) had to do duty instead. In conversation we learned that Potchefstroom was strongly fortified during the Boer war of 1881, and a stubborn resistance was here made. The court-house was one of the places held by the British troops. Here are still the marks of the Boers' bullets; and the hole in the door is pointed out through which Captain Falls, on the first day of the attack, fell.

It may be of interest to give Dr. Matthews' account of the affair:—After Captain Falls' death, Colonel Clark took command, and with the thirty-five men he had with him defended the building for three days, until the Boers fired the roof, and he was forced to surrender on December 20th. The Boers, elated to a degree, outraged every rule of war, sentenced the men who had capitulated to hard labour, and forced them to work in the trenches which they (the Boers) were digging in front of the fort where some of our troops had taken shelter, and which they were defending. There, exposed to shot and shell, several lost their lives—killed by the bullets of their comrades, who knew them not. I next

visited the fort itself, which had been the scene of so many painful events. In a space but twenty-five yards square were crammed during the siege nearly three hundred souls, of whom about a hundred could only bear arms. These men, women, and children remained cooped up from the date above mentioned until they surrendered March 20th, evacuating the fort on the 23rd. In the rear of the fort a stone enclosure was pointed out to me, containing the graves of those who died during the four months' siege.

With regret we leave this fair and smiling town, as, although we are travelling by coach, time is kept, and (accidents excepted) we are due in Johannesburg at seven, and usually arrive almost to the minute. During this day's journey we passed a most unusual sight. A span (sixteen) of oxen had been struck by lightning and instantly killed. They lay as they fell, one on the other; and a sickening sight it was. The vultures had not touched them, nor Kaffirs removed their skin and horns, as the mode of death prevented either touching them. The smell from their sweltering carcasses was something too horrible to think of. One of our number gave us timely notice, "Handkerchiefs out," but not at all too soon.

At a good pace our team completed the remaining distance; and at seven o'clock, with aching bones and much soreness of flesh, we reached our destination. A friend had secured a room for me at the Grand National Hotel, and there I remained during my stay at Johannesburg.



CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

As I have already said, it was evening when we arrived at Johannesburg. And for a new town, named only in 1886, there was a surprising manifestation of old-world liveliness. It almost seemed as though a handful of miners had bought a town ready made, with streets and squares and public buildings complete, and that some great carrying