

## THE ROMANCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

of a sensation, no doubt, in his cassock and surplice as he went through circle upon circle of clay-built, straw-thatched huts. The naked warriors who basked in the sun, the women with hoe in hand or pitcher upon head, must have crowded round to look at him, and the fat little black children who rolled in the warm dust with the dogs and the poultry no doubt roared with terror at the sight. But Antonio Caiado, who lived, as I have said, at the Monomotapa's court, and was "very friendly and familiar with the king," had been at pains to inform the great monarch that the Father was a very noble man and one of the principal people in India. So he was well received in the royal enclosure where the young king sat with his noble mother and his wizards and warriors and drumbeaters and music-makers behind. The king offered him gold and cows and a large number of wives, and when the Father, "with great humility and gratitude," refused the gift, His Royal Highness, as we are told, was astounded, and was heard to remark that as the stranger desired nothing of these things which were desired by all, "he must have been born of the herbs and had his origin in them."

The priest was at first a great favourite, for since the world began kings have been fond of novelties; and, moreover, he had brought a nice assortment of presents from Mozambique. Now one of Dom Gonçalo's dearest possessions was "a very beautiful picture of our Lady of Grace" which the king, according to the story, very much desired to possess. Accordingly, the father went to the royal bedroom—if the word may be used for an apartment which had neither bed nor wash-hand stand—and there he arranged a kind of oratory with rich hangings, and in the centre placed the picture of our Lady. "For four or five days, the king, who is still quite young, being half asleep, the Lady of the picture appeared to him, surrounded by a divine light of soft and glorious splendour, and spoke to the king with a

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great and gentle sweetness of countenance." By such miraculous means the Monomotapa was instructed in the faith, and after the good Father had catechised him sufficiently he was baptized with the name of Dom Sebastian, his Lady Mother being christened Dona Maria. Then there was a great killing of cows in the royal capital; the Father distributed the meat among the poor, "by which the people were greatly edified," and "all the people, noble and plebeian, wished to become Christians."

Alas, this bright dayspring of success was but brief. "The devil," as the monkish chronicler states, "could not bear to see the triumphant spoil of souls, over whom he had lorded it peacefully for so many years"; and some Moors from Mozambique, who earned a precarious livelihood as wizards at the capital, were just as envious, or so at least Antonio Caiado would have us believe. They drew lots with four sticks and told the king that the good Father was really a moroo, the very worst sort of wizard, who had come with a dead man's bone and other medicines to stop the rain and take the country and kill the king. This they said was the meaning of the water which had been poured upon the royal head. All this the king heard with much alarm, and he determined at once to put Dom Gonçalo to death.

From Antonio Caiado's letter and from other accounts gathered from eye-witnesses, it is possible to imagine this good man's last evening upon earth, "on the Saturday before the Sunday of St. Susanna," 1561. He knew what was coming, for he had been warned by his friend, and so he sent the vestments and the chalice and the other ornaments of the mass to Caiado's house, so that they might not be desecrated by his murderers. Imagine, then, the inside of a round hut of mud and straw bare of everything but a crucifix and lit by the glimmer of a little lamp. The Father is bowed and thin

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and yellow, for he has been sore stricken by fever, and he has lived, never touching meat, on "a little millet cooked with herbs and some bitter fruits found in the thicket." He is dressed in his new cassock with a surplice over it as for a great occasion, and he prays without ceasing. Caiado enters, and he greets him with "a face wreathed in smiles." "I am better prepared to die," he says, "than the enemies who are to kill me. I forgive the king, who is but a youth, and his mother, because the Moors have deceived them." Caiado is moved to tears and takes his leave, but sends two of his servants to bear him company. They remained all night and saw all that happened. The Father walked up and down upon a piece of ground near the hut until close upon midnight. "His steps were hurried, as if he wished to be already free and reigning with Christ; his eyes were nearly always raised to heaven, his hands now raised, now extended in the form of a cross, his deep and heartfelt sighs came from his inmost soul." Then he entered the hut and prayed before the crucifix, and lay down on a mat of reeds with the crucifix beside him and the lamp alight.

And so I should like to leave the poor good man, but as he slept and the night drew towards morning and the servants watched, a dark figure crossed the light in the door. Then another and another, black and naked savages, till eight of them stand over the sleeping form on the mat. At least it did not take long to extinguish the flickering spark. A knee on the chest, a rope round the neck, perhaps one groan and the blood at mouth and nose. And so the end; as the old monk says, "he gave up his spirit to the creator."

When Antonio Caiado and his servants came the next day at dawn they found a track of blood leading to the river and on the floor lay a broken crucifix.

Such was the "happy end," as he himself would have called it, of the holy Father Dom Gonçalo da

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Salveira, the first Christian martyr of South Africa. His bones were never found ; but the story of his life and death has in itself the virtue of a relic.

And now let me go back for a moment to his friend Father Andre Fernandes, whom he left building up, as he thought, the infant church of Tongwe. From his letters to his brethren at Goa we learn how gradually he came to see that neither the waters of baptism nor the picture of the judgment nor his own Christian teaching had any effect upon these graceless savages. They first took him for a wizard, and then they grew tired of his rebukes and his threats of hell fire, and came near to killing him with their assegais. "Nevertheless," he says, "I do not think I was ever overcome with terror by their threats, so as to desist from boldly reprehending them for their superstitions, even the king himself, in such a manner that the people were alarmed by what I said and feared to be present at the time." And then they left the poor old man alone to starve to death if he liked, so that he had to sell everything that he had for food, his candlesticks and the foot of a copper cross and part of his clothing. "After this," he says, "I began to be more sparing and only ate once a day, and if I felt very weak at night I ate a few mouthfuls, not of bread or meat but a sort of caterpillar, or of vegetables of this country, the worst thing possible to my taste ; and though I wished it I could not have had more than a little, having only a small cake of it every day." So he dragged on with an occasional alms of eggs or milk ; and it gave him great anxiety that when he should die there would be none to bury him, because the savages "only buried those to whom they were bound." So, he says, "I thought that I would dig a grave at the foot of the chest on which I slept, so that if they tried to open it to take what was inside, which was of small value, in opening it they would cast me into the grave, and I was satisfied with this remedy."

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At last, after two years of this so wretched life, the poor old man was commanded by his Provincial to return to Goa, and we last hear from him on the coast being well cared for and recruiting his former strength, "for I had lost all or part of my faculties, and felt them all diminished." And so we may bid farewell to these two pious and simple souls, who endeavoured so heroically to grow figs upon thistles.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SIEGE OF MOZAMBIQUE

AND now we must bid farewell to these stout fidalgos of old Portugal; but by way of taking off our hats in parting, let me tell you one more story of the bravest of them all, Dom Stephen d'Ataide, the Captain-General of the Castle of Mozambique. You will remember that Mozambique is the little island to which Vasco da Gama came after he had sailed past the Cape and Natal and the River of Good Omens. It is only a little strip of coral reef drawn across a bay into which three rivers fall.

The surf of the Indian Ocean breaks on the white sand of its eastern shore, and in the centre of the little island is a cluster of square white houses, an old fort and a church and a hospital, always full of sailors sick of the scurvy from the sea and soldiers sick of fever from the land. The gardens round the houses are set with orange trees and pomegranates, and overhead wave the green balls of the palmheads loaded with dates and cocoanuts. Inside the bay is the harbour where the king's ships come to rest on their way to India, and guarding the little passage where they enter is our captain's castle, the great new fortress of San Sebastian.

Now Captain d'Ataide was a very gallant gentleman. I do not know how he really looked; but he had the bearing of a soldier we may be sure, and very likely he had fought the Dutch in the Low Countries. He wore

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a corselet of steel, made by the skilled armourers of Milan, all inlaid with traceries of gold, and a white ruff of point lace upon his neck with his black locks falling over it, and a Spanish morion embossed with figures of Hercules and Neptune and the dreadful Gorgon with the snaky hair, and under it his black eyes shone like a hawk's. And he had a long sword by his side and a strong hand on the hilt of it; but as he lived at Mozambique it is certain that he was sallow with fever. And a very anxious man was Captain d'Ataide. We are now a hundred years away from the time when Almeida and Albuquerque conquered the Indian Ocean for the King of Portugal. Portugal was a great country then; but at the time of which we write it had sunk into a province of Spain, and Dom Stephen was a subject of King Philip the Third. The Royal flag of Castile floated over the fort of San Sebastian.

And Spain herself was no longer the Queen of the Seas, for seventeen years had passed since our English sailors shattered the great Armada. The Dutch sea-beggars and the brave men of Devon were everywhere, and whenever they saw a Spaniard they fought him. Just as the Portuguese in the old days sailed round the Cape to find their enemies the Moors, so now the Dutch were sailing into the Indian Ocean "to cut the throats of the Spaniards." Their little galliots, bluff at the bows but light and small and fast, could far outsail the lofty, slow-moving, stately sea-castles of Spain. And they could outfight them too. They had followed the Portuguese to the ports where the silks and spices came from; they were fighting them at Diu and Goa and Ceylon and the Spice Islands and away as far as China itself, and many a great galleon had Heemskerck and van der Hagen robbed and scuttled among the scented islands and the palm-fringed harbours of the Indian Seas.

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It is easy, then, to understand why d'Ataide was an anxious man, for he could not send as much as a carrack to Sofala but it was robbed of its gold and ivory and ambergris by these wicked rebels and pirates as he called them; and he knew they meant to have Mozambique itself, for was not van der Hagen there only four years before blockading the island and cutting out the ships from under its very guns. Hardly a ship came from Spain; but the Dutch ships passed and repassed over the Indian Ocean as if it were the Zuider Zee. No wonder that d'Ataide was an anxious man.

And that was not the worst of it. In the whole island there were only a hundred and fifty men who could bear arms, while some of them were sick and some of them hardly knew a pike from an arquebus. The fort was strong, no doubt, with the sea lapping against its walls on three sides, and a moat to guard the fourth. But the captain knew its weak spots. The cannon—esperas and camellos and culverins—no doubt they figured very bravely on paper in the Spanish War Office; but they were not even mounted on carriages, and could only point one way like a glass eye. Some were pointing towards heaven, and some were squinting down into the sea, for the embrasures in which they lay were rough and unpaved. And in some of the emplacements it was worse still, for they were empty. But if he had few guns, he had few gunners, that was how Dom Stephen consoled himself.

And now if one could follow the captain's gaze out to sea, away beyond the little palm-plumed island of Saint George—where Vasco da Gama built his altar—one would see eight little clouds of sail bearing in from the horizon. As they drew nearer they turned into tall ships bristling with cannon and crowded with sturdy Dutchmen. Men were working at their case-mates and buckling on their armour, and their hymn drifted over the water—



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Voor Zee, voor Zand, voor vyer en brand  
Voor de Helsche boose vyand,  
Voor Alle quaed ons God bewaere.

Preserve us, Lord, from shoal and sea  
And fire and the hellish enemy.

And just in the same way in the convent which lay opposite the fort, the Dominican fathers were chanting a Latin prayer to very much the same effect. But the captain did not wait to make out the colours of the Republic before he ordered every fighting man into the fortress, and a strange garrison they must have been—clerks and traders, Dominican friars from the convent, sailors from the hospital, every one who could handle a sword or fire a musket.

The sea-beggars came in double line, their high white sails dipping to the breeze, like the palms bending on the island. They were racing for the harbour mouth, the *Bande* and the *Bantam*, the *Ter Veer* and the *Zieriksee* and all the rest of them; they sailed in as if they were making their own port of Amsterdam. They were under the fort and over the bar with a roar of cannon and a cloud of smoke and round into the harbour before d'Ataide could screw and twist his guns to bear upon them; but he gave them a volley, all the same, for the honour of old Portugal.

And so the siege began, as tough a fight as ever was fought in the Low Countries. For though van Caerden had a thousand men and d'Ataide but a hundred and fifty, there were the moat and the high walls of the fort to get over. Three of the walls looked over the sea, and the fourth looked down the island, over a little open plain of coral and sand with the great convent opposite, and in the centre, over the harbour, stood the little chapel of Saint Gabriel. Van Caerden landed his men at the convent and turned it into another fortress. Van Caerden came of a good school; he had learnt siege work from Prince Maurice, and he did everything that man could do. He

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dragged the guns out of his ships and threw up batteries ; he filled bags and boxes with earth to guard his men, and he sewed up his guns in khaki-coloured calico so that the Portuguese could not tell them from the earth round about. He cut trenches and zigzags and parallels till the little plain looked like a ploughed field. He burrowed nearer and nearer to the wall like a mole, never letting his men be seen, and at last he reached the little chapel, and there he mounted more guns and threw out more zigzags, until he was at last under the walls of the fort. And then his sailors got ropes and spars from the ships and rigged up a platform, floor above floor, all faced with bags and boxes of earth until at last they got on the level of the ramparts. And now they could fire into the fort with muskets and little cannon, and they were as close as if they had been looking through windows on opposite sides of a street. D'Ataide all this time had been doing everything in his power, encouraging the men and comforting the women and labouring to get his guns pointed in the right direction. But this platform was a terrible business. Still he was equal to it. From the parapets he pushed out long poles and laid planks across so as to make scaffolds that jutted far out from the walls on either side of the platform. He protected them as the Dutchman had done with sacks of earth, and his men crept along till they could fire into the Dutchmen on both sides. Is it not strange to think of them in their helmets and breastplates hanging between coral strand and African sky and fighting away on scaffold and platform like cats on a roof?

To tell all that happened in this great siege would be too long a story—how van Caerden fought and threatened, and threatened and fought; how he told d'Ataide that he could get no help from Spain, where all the king's ships were blockaded inside the bar of Lisbon; nor from the Indies, where the Viceroy was

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fighting for his life in the Spice Islands, and how scornfully d'Ataide replied; and of how the Dutch built a house against the wall, and worked under it with pick and crowbar; and how the Portuguese sallied out one dark and rainy night; and of the fight under the walls with the Dutchmen on a narrow bridge, and the Portuguese, with their backs against the stonework, thrusting at them with their spears, with a flare of torches on the parapet above glinting on helmet and sword below, and fireballs bursting and hissing in the dark waters of the moat. But this was the end of the siege, for van Caerden's men were dying fast of the fever, and they were all sick of Fort San Sebastian and its fighting captain. Van Caerden had only one more card to play, and it was this. He sent d'Ataide a letter: it was borne to him in state by six Dutchmen in Spanish dress, and the Portuguese from the parapet pulled it up on a string as if it were a fish at the end of a line. Unless he surrendered, said the letter, the churches and the monastery, the hospital and the houses and the gardens, everything on the island, would be destroyed. But d'Ataide only laughed scornfully. "I have no other orders from my king," he wrote back, "nor any other wish than to carry on the war with all my might." So they cut down every palm tree and burned down every house, and then sailed away, with Mozambique blazing like Kilwa and Mombasa a hundred years before. But as they went over the bar d'Ataide, with a mighty effort, tilted his guns so as to reach them, and mishandled the *Zieriksee* so grievously that she was left flaming to the skies like the town on the island. And we may imagine d'Ataide leaning over his ramparts and smiling grimly at the sight.

Poor d'Ataide! his town was in ashes, the convent in ruins; but he had made a good fight; he had beaten the sea-beggars, and that was a great consolation. And if I am not mistaken, he was more glad than sorry

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that they had come and gone, for he was a fighter born. And now the convent ruins were cleared away, and van Caerden's trenches were filled up, and the castle was revictualled from some ships that came from Spain, and everything was put in order to give the Dutch a hearty welcome when they cared to call again.

And they did call again, only a year afterwards. And this time it was that terrible fellow, Pieter Willemzoon Verhoeff, with thirteen ships and near two thousand men. He was a truculent old sea-dog was Verhoeff, and he hated the Spaniards as he hated the devil. When he met a Spanish galleon it was stand and deliver with him, and, as like as not, when he had taken their cruzados out of their pockets, over went the Spaniards sewn up in their own sails. For those were the days when quarter was neither given nor asked. When the Spaniards caught the Dutchmen they hanged them on the mast-end, or stretched them on the rack, or chained them in the galleys, as it pleased their pleasant fancies; and when the Dutchmen caught the Spaniards there was short shrift and a long rope very often. And this Verhoeff was one of Heemskerk's fighting captains, along with Pretty Lambert and Long Harry. He had waded in blood up to the scuppers, and killed more Spaniards than one could reckon without a slate. Only the year before he had sailed into Gibraltar Bay side by side with Heemskerk to fight Dom Juan Alvarez d'Avila, the great Spanish admiral. And it was Verhoeff's hand that Heemskerk pressed when his leg was shot away by the sternpiece of the *Saint Augustine*. And it was Verhoeff who killed the Spanish admiral when the great galleons were blowing up like fireworks all round him. And Verhoeff, you may be sure, had a hand in the massacre afterwards when the Dutch cock-boats darted about after the Spaniards who jumped into the sea from their burning galleons, and speared them as if they were seals or

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porpoises. Yes, he was a terrible fellow, Verhoeff, a burly Dutchman, with a fiery face, an orange plume in his helmet, and an orange scarf across his breastplate. And now he was breathing fire and slaughter against all Spaniards, and swearing he would bring d'Ataide's castle about his ears.

He was in and over the bar before our captain could get his drawbridge up, and he started the ball by taking a carrack that lay under the guns of the fort, with thirty-six men in her. But d'Ataide, just to show his mettle, made a sortie, and retook the ship and burnt her to the water's edge, and went back into his fortress again. Then another siege began, more furious than the last. All that van Caerden had done Verhoeff did and more. He brought great guns out of his ship—whole batteries of them—and he threw up banks of earth, and cut trenches and zigzags, and battered away at the wall, till he blew a breach in it. But d'Ataide built it up again as fast as it was thrown down, and gave as good as he got, and made such a bold show that the enemy dared not storm. To show you the sort of man he was, when a careless soldier dropped a fuse into some gunpowder it was d'Ataide himself who put out the fire and saved the fort. And when Verhoeff demanded a surrender, and said he would starve the garrison out unless they pulled down the flag, d'Ataide said nothing at all, but gave the Dutch trumpeter a splendid dinner, and drove a flock of sheep and goats out of the gateway to show Verhoeff how much he thought of his threat. The Dutchman stormed and fumed, and swore in his beard, and threatened all sorts of vengeance; but Dom Stephen only smiled at him from his ramparts, and said he had driven one rebel away, and hoped to send another about his business.

Now, one day it happened that a soldier came running from the trenches, and shouted to the men on the parapet that he was a Catholic and a Frenchman, so

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the captain let down a rope and pulled him up, and he was made one of the garrison. Then four Dutchmen came along, and they also said they were Catholics, and d'Ataide treated them as he had treated the Frenchman. And in return for his protection the deserters told him how the enemy was placed, and all the secrets of the camp, so that d'Ataide's gunnery and the sorties of his men grew more formidable than before. Now Verhoeff was beside himself with fury. He did not mind about the Frenchman so much; but to think that four of his own Dutchmen should be helping the Spaniards: it was more than he could stand. Then he bethought himself of the Portuguese he had taken from the carrack, and he sent word to the captain that unless his men were given back he would shoot every man of his prisoners. Poor d'Ataide: he did not love Dutchmen any more than Verhoeff loved Spaniards, and you may be sure he did not love deserters. But he had given his word—the king's word—to protect them, and now he would not give them up. Then Verhoeff, as he tells us in his own diary, had out his thirty-four prisoners, with their hands bound behind their backs, and shot them every one. But I like to think he was not quite so black as he paints himself, for the Spanish chronicler says that he only shot six. But whether it was six or thirty-four, we may be sure that d'Ataide had a sore heart as he saw his friends fall before the firing party.

But worse was to come, for a great Spanish galleon, the *Bom Jesus* by name, sailed into Mozambique, never dreaming what sort of welcome awaited her. And Verhoeff's little galliots were round the tall ship in a flash, like dogs round a deer, and raked her fore and aft till she hauled down her flag.

Then Verhoeff rubbed his hands. A hundred and sixty Portuguese on board! Now, said he, I shall get my Dutchmen back.

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Then he ordered the prisoners before him, and we may imagine the great crowd trembling with the thought that their last hour had come.

Verhoeff spoke to them in a voice that rattled in their ears like a volley of musketry. He would shoot them, he said, every man, unless they persuaded d'Ataide to give him back his deserters. Let them choose a man who could write, and let him write well, for their lives would depend on it.

And we can imagine the poor scribe on the deck of the *Bom Jesus*, with his anxious friends crowding round him and the Dutch soldiers mounting guard.

An eloquent epistle, no doubt, for men are eloquent when they plead for their lives.

"Tell him of our wives," says one.

"And of our sweethearts," says another.

"Remind the captain how I fought by his side in the Low Countries."

"Tell him I played with him as a boy."

"Be sure you say there is one here of his own blood."

"Adjure him in the name of his country," says a soldier.

"And in the name of his king," says a courtier.

"In the name of God," says a priest.

And I can imagine also d'Ataide as he gets the letter, and reads its moving and impassioned appeals with anguish in his heart. How he must have groaned within himself as he paced up and down his ramparts, and looked over the water where the *Bom Jesus* lay with the Dutch ships about her. One hundred and sixty of his own friends and countrymen against four beggarly Dutch deserters! If he gave them up who would say he was wrong? If he kept them, how many in all Spain would say he was right? Would his chief, the Viceroy of the Indies? would his king?

Poor d'Ataide, he had a sore struggle as he paced up and down his parapet.

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But he who had fought so good a fight with the enemy fought this last good fight with himself. "No," he said again, "I will stand by my word."

The Spanish chronicler says he was wrong, for, as he argues, the Dutchmen might have been liars and no Catholics after all. I, for one, am not going to judge between them; but of this at least I am sure, the captain did not trouble himself overmuch whether they were telling truth or lies. He had given his word—the king's word. That was truth enough for him.

All night he must have waited for the rattle of the muskets in the bay. But no sound came.

In the silence and darkness of the night, as the Spanish chronicler tells us, the Dutch ships hoisted sail and crept out over the bar, and as they passed the island of St. George, Verhoeff landed his prisoners every one, and there d'Ataide found them next morning under the palm-trees safe and sound, the gift of one brave man to another.

And here the story should end, if I had my will; but Truth is not so kind, for Dom Stephen was commanded by his king, who was more greedy than wise, to search for silver mines hundreds of miles up the Zambesi. Now d'Ataide had only a hundred and fifty men, so he left twenty-five in the fortress, and with the rest he set off, like Barreto, to conquer the Monomotapa. Then the king heard that the Dutch were sending out another great fleet to capture the fortress, so he wrote to d'Ataide again, and told him to strengthen his garrison. When the captain got this letter, he saw there were only two things to be done—to give up the silver mines or give up the fortress. So down the river he went again with all his men, and he waited in his castle until ships arrived with more soldiers. Then off he started once more, brave soul that he was, up that dreadful fever-haunted river, where so many Portuguese



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soldiers have laid down their lives. But the king was angry because d'Ataide was so slow in getting the silver. And he said the captain could have had soldiers enough for both conquest and garrison if he had used the king's money aright. So he disgraced d'Ataide, and sent out a judge to try him.

If he is found guilty, said the king, send him home to Portugal in chains.

But whether he was guilty or innocent I cannot tell, for when he got the king's message his brave heart broke, and he died upon his island ; and there his bones lie still under the coral sand beneath the green waving palms of Mozambique.

## CHAPTER VII

### OLD LETTERS

Now and again workmen digging in the streets of Cape Town come upon a great stone, with an inscription rudely carved upon it—the name of a ship, English or Dutch, the *Ter Veer* or the *Black Lion*, the *Anne Royal* or the *Trade's Increase*, and the name of her captain, Spilbergen or Middleton, Kerridge or Down-ton, with a date somewhere in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the legend beneath, "Here-under look for letters." The Cape Town people are proud of these old stones; they have kept some in the museum, and built one into the wall of their post-office—an appropriate place for it, since, in the old days, long before there was any Adderley Street, or indeed any town or house at all round Table Bay, these stones were the sailors' post-offices.

We have seen already how Dom Stephen d'Ataide held Mozambique for the king of Spain against all the attacks of the Dutch. But the Dutch sailed the Indian seas nevertheless, and with them the English; and together they gave Spain in the East Indies "a wound almost incurable." Just as in the old days the Portuguese carried the war against the Saracens round Africa, and took the Moors where they were least expecting them, so now the Protestants carried the war of the Low Countries into the Indian Seas. There was fighting

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everywhere ; in coral lagoons and palm-fringed harbours, and in the crowded bazaars of the East. Such a hubbub had never been heard in Asia, and the Great Mogul threatened to turn all the Christians neck and crop out of India if they could not keep the peace. Wherever they met they fought, and there was very little quarter. Thus the great Spilbergen, after sinking a Spaniard overnight, saw sixty or so of the Spanish sailors still struggling in the sea when dawn broke. He saved a few, but could not keep his sailors from killing others, and left the rest to "the mercy of the waves." Admiral Matelieff attacked a great Spanish fleet in the very harbour of Malacca, and those he did not sink or burn he drove ashore. And the English ships fought too. Sometimes they joined with the Dutch "to doe the Portingalls all the spoyle that may bee, and to destroy their carracks and galleons," and sometimes they fought alone, as when Captain Downton tackled a Portuguese fleet and killed many of "the gallants of Portugal," or as when Martin Pring captured a cargo of "elephaunts' teeth." They were great fighters, those old sailor men who called in at Table Bay before Cape Town was born or thought of ; and when there were no Portuguese left to fight they fought one another.

To understand the story of Table Bay and Cape Town we must keep these quarrels well in mind. There were three great regions of Asiatic trade in those days. Up in the north there were ports like Aden and Mocha and Jasque where the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf took in the silks and spices of Asia to be sent on camel-back to Samarcand and Alexandria. Here the Grand Seignor and the Shah of Persia kept the peace. Then there were the Indian coasts, and chiefly Malabar and the port of Surat, where the Great Mogul held sway through his governors. And then there was Ceylon, and farther east there were the Spice Islands, where there was no great king to keep order, and so here the

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Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English fought at their own sweet will for the cloves and nutmegs of the Moluccas. The Portuguese were there first, of course; but after the Dutch had driven out the Portuguese they claimed the right of the spice trade as a Dutch monopoly; they bound the natives down to sell to them only; they fixed the price of spices lower than it had ever been before, and the natives came to hate the Dutch rather more than they had hated the Spaniards. When the English came they were forbidden to trade, and as the English thought they had as good a right to the spice trade as the Dutch, there were a good many broken heads in consequence.

Now in this great struggle the Dutch had much the best of it. It was not that they were better fighters or better sailors than the English; the men who served under Drake and Hawkins and Middleton had no need to doff their bonnets even to the Sea Beggars. There were other reasons. In those days it was not private merchants who traded, but whole nations. Thus the Indian trade of Spain belonged to the king; his merchant ships were his men-of-war, and his merchants were his admirals and generals. The Dutch took their lesson from the Spaniards. True, the Dutch East India Company was not exactly the same thing as the Dutch Government, but it was almost like a separate government. Every province and great town in Holland was represented, according to its importance, on the Council of Seventeen, so that the "Seventeen" was a national council, and this council had so much power in Holland that the Government generally did what it wished. England, on the other hand, did not throw her whole mind into the East India trade. She was greatly taken up with the new colonies in America, and the London East India Company was much smaller than the Dutch, and much more of the nature of a private enterprise. Moreover, for a long while, every East Indian voyage

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from London was a separate venture—the promoters of one might have no interest in the next—and so they thought only of loading their ships, while the Dutch were thinking of building an empire. And another reason why the English were weak in the East Indies at this time was that King James was anxious to curry favour with the Spaniards, a very poor sort of policy for the king of England. It was for this reason that he cut off Raleigh's head, and for this reason he never allowed his soldiers and sailors to fight the Spaniards in the East as openly and whole-heartedly as the Dutch fought them. He could not prevent it altogether, of course, for in those days when men sailed away in ships no one knew what they did, and the sailors made peace or war pretty much as they liked. Dutch and English were fighting hard in the East Indies when the two nations were good enough friends at home.

Now in those days there was no house or pleasant garden in Table Bay, yet it was a place that all the sailors loved; it was the halfway house on the way to India. The Portuguese had their resting-place at Mozambique, where there was a hospital and a supply of fresh food and lemons and Alicant wine against the scurvy; but there was nothing but hard blows there for English and Dutch sailors. Yet in those days, when voyages were long and ships were small, and water and provisions were bad and scarce, it was necessary to find some place for a run on shore, a change from shipboard diet, and a supply of fresh meat and fresh water for the rest of the voyage. Sometimes Madagascar was chosen, but it was too far from England; and when the commander of one voyage tried to go past Table Bay the sailors protested "that if the Generall putt alonge and touched not att the Cape, that they w<sup>d</sup> goe to their cabins and dye, for they knewe that they weare butt dead men." And so indeed they might after a voyage perhaps of six months through the storms of the "roaring forties" and the calms of the

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tropics. What they suffered on their little ships we can but faintly imagine. An old sailor, Thomas Stevens, tells us of the "heates" and "lacke of wind" of the "Burning Zone" on the coast of Guinea, so that "sometimes the ship standeth still for the space of many days." "The coaste," he adds, "is not cleare, but thicke and cloudy full of thunder and lightning and the rain so unwholesome that if the water stand awhile all is full of worms." And scurvy is a foul disease which rots the flesh, and makes the mouth like an open sore. So we may imagine how glad the sailors were to see the long seaweeds—the alkaner or brembastin, and the birds—the rush-tails and fork-tails, and velvet-sleeves and Cape pigeons, which told them that this sweet and temperate land was near, and then—

When a boy  
From the tall Am'rall's scuttle shews the shippes  
Land to the prow,

to see the great mountain with its white plume of cloud, and the silver woods beneath it and the Island of Seals, in the lee of which there was good anchorage; and at last when they got ashore to run on the green sward and drink of the clear waters of the brook that tumbled down the hillside to the sea.

Every old sailor who writes about it has a good word to say of the "Cape de Buona Esperance." "A very healthy and temperate land," says Spilbergen, "very fit and useful to be cultivated and inhabited and produce all kinds of fruits; and although it appears to be somewhat mountainous and hilly, there are also very fine and wide valleys covered with verdure and sweet-smelling herbs, as well as many green woods and bushes, where herds of stags and deer are seen grazing, all very pleasant and delightful to behold." And like Herbert he praises "that pleasant brook of crystal water" on whose banks the sailors used to rig up tents of sailcloth

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in which to place their sick comrades until the sweet air and the sweet water should revive them. So much was this the custom that one of the captains advises his company thriftily to save the old sails for this purpose, as new sails were apt to be spoilt by the wind of the place.

Drake did not land at the Cape, though the *Golden Hind* passed within sight of it, and he called it a noble headland; but Middleton—"our men being weake and sicke in all our shippes we thought good to seek some place to refresh them"—landed in the "goodlie baie," and speaks of the "blacke salvages very brutish," with whom he bartered at the rate of "an ox for two knives, a stirke for a knife and a sheepe for a knife." This was only four years after the Armada; but later on, when Dutch and English sailors grew bolder in their Indian ventures, there would be a throng of ships in the bay at certain seasons, and here the sailors of the two nations would lay aside their quarrels and discuss joint action against the Spaniards, "whereby they might expect both wealth and honour, the two main pillars of earthly happiness." It was at Saldanha Bay that the great Sir Thomas Roe set up a pillar, and meeting the Dutch admiral agreed to a truce. Outgoing ships would leave their letters under the stones of which I have already spoken, to be taken home by the returning fleet. There was an agreement between the Dutch and the English to carry each others' letters out and home, and even the terrible Coen, who hated the English as much as the English hated him, passed on some letters—after he had read them. You may see the letters still in the archives of the Colonial Office, yellow and faded epistles in a sailor's crabbed hand, and dated from "the watering-place of Saldanha," as Table Bay used to be called.

But if you read these faded letters, you will find much indeed about the diabolical schemes of Coen and

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the cruelty of his "bloody agents," and much about pirates and Portuguese and Eastern ports and merchandise, but very little about Africa. For the Cape in those days was but a port of call—a place for ships to fold their wings and rest after a long flight; there was little thought then of a time when cities would flourish along the coast, and the "wide valleys," of which Spilbergen speaks, should be green with vineyards and white with blossoming orchards. Yet there were some Englishmen who saw the worth of the place long before van Riebeck built his fort and tilled his garden. English captains were constantly urging their company to settle the place; English sailors built the first fort there, and two English captains annexed the bay—and indeed all Africa—in the name of King James twenty years before van Riebeck set his foot upon it.

John Jourdain was a factor in the service of the East India Company; in his youth he may have seen the Armada sailing up the Channel, and he grew to be a brave man whose life, as told in his *Journal* and the letters of the Company, would make a fine tale of adventure. Four years after Queen Elizabeth died he was in at the Cape with the *Union* and the *Trades Increase*. 'And cominge aland we found about twenty people or more (of the cuntrye) in little symple cottages made with bowes, better to keep them from the sunne than from the raigne, which this cuntrye doth afford in plentye. To these people we made signes for cattle and sheepe . . . showing them iron hoopes, which is the best money which they doe esteeme. And vewing over the stones where the shipps that are bound outward or homeward doe use to sett their names, we found the names of Captain Shilling, Captain Hawkens, Captain Myddelton and dyvers others. The people brought store of cattle and sheepe dayelye, which wee bought vizt. a cowe for a peece of an ould iron hoope of a yard longe, and a sheepe for halfe so much. And



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many times, havinge sould them to us, yf we looked not the better to them, they would steale them agayne from us and bringe them agayne to sell ; which we were fayne with patience to buy agayne of them, without giving any foule language for feare lest they would bring us noe more. As lykwyse if they stole anythinge yf yt weare of smale valwe, wee would not meddle with them but suffer them to carry yt awaye which they tooke verye kindly, insoemuch that they brought such plentye downe, more than wee were able to tell what to do withall." And for the further entertainment of these simple people the commander sent boats to Penguin Island—now called Robben Island—to fetch "seales alias seawolves," "to give them content and partly to renew our store of oil." There were so many seals on this island in those days that "within lesse than a daye a man might loade a good shippe with them." Having brought back the boats laden with seals and cut away the fat for oil, the rest was thrown a good distance from the tents "because of noysomenes." "Upon which fish," Jourdain goes on to tell us, "the Saldanians fed very heartily on, after it had lyen in a heape 15 daies, that no Christian could abide to come within a myle of itt. Notwithstandinge the loathsomnes of the smell, these people would eate of it as if it had beene better meate, and would not take of that which laye upon the topp, which were the sweetest but would search under for those which were most rotten, and laye it on the coales without any ceremonyes of washinge and being a little scorched of the fire w<sup>d</sup> eate it with a good stomache, in soe much that my opinion is that if without danger they would come to eate man's flesh, they would not make any scruple of it, for I think the world doth not yield a more heathenish people and more beastlie."

Besides the seals, there were penguins on the island, "soe naturallie simple that you may drive them as you

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w<sup>d</sup> doe a flocke of sheepe," and these also were much relished by the Saldanians to whom they were given, while the sailors grew fat on the fish, 3500 mullets being caught at two draughts in the mouth of the river (the Salt River), into which Jourdain supposes they had been driven by the whales which were playing about in the bay. The ships had to wait while a pinnace which had been brought from home was being set up, and a fort of earth was built with a cannon at each corner in case the Saldanians should think of mischief. Jourdain had thus plenty of time to explore the place. "For recreation myself with other merchants would take our walke to the topp of the Hill called the Table, which before wee returned found it to bee a wearisome journey." He also explored Zeekoe Vlei, and on his way saw "many estreges and the footinge of elephaunts, much fishe and fowle, etc.," though he does not mention the hippopotamuses, which subsequently gave the lake its name.

Jourdain was a man with a head on his shoulders, and his opinion of "this place of Saldania" is well worth quoting, since everything he said of it came true, though those who did the work and reaped the profit were not his countrymen, as he hoped, but the Dutch who fought and killed him years afterwards in the roads of Patani. "I hold it," he said, "to bee very healthfull commodious for all that trade the East Indydes. As alsoe if it were manured, I am of opinion it w<sup>d</sup> beare any thinge that should be sowen or planted in it, as for all kinde of grain, wheate, barlye, etc., besides all kinde of fruite, as oranges, lemons, limes and grapes, etc. Being planted and sowen in due time, and kept as it ought to bee, if this country were inhabited by a civell nation, haveing a castell or forte for defence against the outrage of those heathenish people and to withstand any forraine force, in shorte time it might be broughte to some civillitie, and within five yeares able of itself to

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furnish all shipp's refreshing." And Jourdain thought that besides the refreshing of ships "other hopes might be expected."

"These people being brought to civility may likewise in time be brought to know God and understand our language and we theirs, and by them learn of other trades which may be within the country. This being in the midst of two rich countries, as Guinee and Mozambique, and noe doubt that here are store of elephaunt's teeth within the land for that wee sawe the footing of many."

The English Company actually did make some feeble effort to settle the place. In one letter we hear of "nine condemned men landed at Saldanha" to shift for themselves, the first white settlers at the Cape; but they did not remain long. After a stay on Robben Island, upon which they were stranded owing to the loss of their boat, Crosse, the leader of the band, endeavoured to reach a ship on a "gingada of timber," but was drowned in the attempt (March 1615). The rest appear to have been rescued. We have a curious document signed by three criminals similarly marooned, thanking King James, who "rather than that we should taste the sharp stroke of death, hath graciously vouchsafed to let us be transported hither into this foreign land, where by our own good endeavours, God blessing us, we hope to live and to do His Majesty and our country good and acceptable service." Their valour did not last long, however, for we hear that before the departure of the ships, they "humbly beseeched that they might be hanged" rather than left to perish in that savage land. The commander replied grimly that he had no commission to hang them, and left them like the pirates on Treasure Island; but another ship had mercy on them and took them on board. And so ended the first and most futile of English attempts to colonise South Africa.

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The Company made an equally vain attempt to bring the gentle natives to "some civillitie." To this end a certain Hottentot called Coree was kidnapped and brought home to the house of Sir Thomas Smith, the chairman of the Company. The English people in the time of "our James" had a fondness for such curiosities. "When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian." Coree may have met Pocahontas, who married Thomas Rolfe and was presented at court as an Indian princess—though the relentless historian of these latter days has found out that she was kidnapped with the bribe of a copper tea-kettle,—or that other aristocratic foreigner, John Davis, "son of the King of Sestros in Guinee," so called after the buccaneer who brought him over and with whom he was two years "at the stocks." The captivating Coree lived for six months with Sir Thomas, "where he had good diet, good cloaths, good lodging, with all other fitting accommodations," and had besides "to his good entertainment made for him a chain of bright brass, an armour, breast back and headpiece with a buckler, all of bright brass, his beloved metal. In spite of all this he was not happy." Never any "seemed to be more weary of ill-usage than he was of courtesies." And when he had learnt a little of our language, "he would daily lie upon the ground, and cry very often thus in broken English: 'Coree home go, Souldania go, home go.'" Captain Downton, who took him back, reports ruefully to Sir Thomas that he bolted as soon as he got on shore, and had not been seen since, and that the Hottentots wanted brass in exchange for their cattle, "neither esteeming copper nor iron, and desiring so high a price that the sailors were fain to live on fish." The captain feared that the "ungrateful dog" was the cause of their "worser entertainment," remarking that "it w<sup>d</sup> have been better for us and those who come after if he had never seen England." And the year after

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another sailor remarked that "Cory the Saldanian is returned to his old bias of guts about his neck" (the natives wore dried entrails as ornaments); "he hath done some good and some harm there." Whether the balance was for good or harm is not quite clear. Another captain reported that Coree had educated his people, who were now "neither so fearful nor so thievish and sold cattle at very reasonable rates, while most of them can say, 'Sir Thomas Smith, English ships' which they often with great glory repeat." But Edward Blithman avers that owing to Coree the people would sell nothing "except for brass kettles which must be very bright"; and Jourdain, on his return voyage, shrewdly suspected that Coree and his Hottentots designed to lead him into an ambush. Their growth in "civillitie," in fact, did not please him. They were no longer afraid of a gun, "whereas in former times one peece w<sup>d</sup> have made a multitude of them to fly, and whereas they were accustomed to eat rawe stinking meete, they are now content to eat the best and boil itt themselves in potts which they carry with them for the purpose." So far from a yard of old hoop iron contenting them, they turned up their nose at copper, and would not even take shining brass since they had discovered that all that glitters is not gold. "And that dogge Corye," in Jourdain's opinion, "is the cause of all this rogerye." The results of civilisation are apt to differ from what is expected, and in this case the Dutch expressed their disapproval of Sir Thomas's policy by hanging Coree and two of his companions on a neighbouring tree. Poor Coree—after all, he seems to have done his best to educate his people in two of the chief elements of our civilised life, currency and cookery—and his story is in the nature of a parable; he was the first victim in the fierce strife between the missionary spirit and the instincts of the settler.

Thirteen years after Jourdain had come under the

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spell of Table Mountain, two English captains, Robert Shilling and Humphrey Fitzherbert, both men of power in the English East India Company, were in Table Bay. Shilling had three ships, the *Hart*, the *Roebucke*, and the *Eagle*; and Fitzherbert commanded the *Exchange*, the *Bear*, and the *Unite*. The bay was thronged with ships. Nine Dutch vessels left for Bantam the day Fitzherbert arrived, but a Dutch ship, the *Schiedam* of Delft, came in, and another English ship, the *Lion*, homeward bound. Now Shilling and Fitzherbert were both fighters and true-blue Englishmen. Shilling was an old Royal Navy man who had risen from before the mast to a seat in the Admiralty of those days. It is not too much to suppose that he had fought under Drake as a lad and had been the companion of Raleigh, and we hear of him chasing pirates in the Red Sea and sitting with the Governor of Mocha "on faire Turkie carpets and Persian felts" and discussing questions of trade with that potentate, from whom he succeeded in extracting the "Grand Seignor's phirmand" to trade, signed with the Governor's "own chop." Humphrey Fitzherbert was a gentleman of birth and breeding—and I make no doubt he had talked with Shakespeare and Ben Jonson in the Mermaid Tavern. Perhaps it was he who told the author of *The Tempest* about the island "of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance." For he writes like the poet himself of Amboyna which "sitteth as Queene between the Isles of Banda and the Moluccas" and of Poolaway as a "contrived orchard with varieties"—"the Paradise of all the rest," "not a tree on that island but the nutmeg," and so forth. Fervently he pleads with the Company not to surrender the island of Poolooroon to the Dutch: "It would be a disgrace to our nation, both here and at home, to forego a thing so slightly, that was so long kept by Mr. Courthope so obstinately."

Now when these two empire-builders found them-

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selves in Table Bay with seven English ships and only one Dutchman, they were not the men to let slip so golden an opportunity. The Dutch had taken English ships and killed and tortured English sailors and driven them out of the Spice Islands. Here was a chance to get their own back, and by seizing Table Bay to make the English masters of the road to India. Fitzherbert seems to have been the inspiring soul, but he found a ready ally in Shilling. They had already put the fear of death into the Dutchman by overhauling him on a suspicion of piracy, and "Mounsiere" Gracewinkle and "Mounsiere" Block, factors of the *Schiedam*, Captain and Master John Cornelius Kunst and Francis Duist, a Dutch merchant, were all witnesses of the annexation. The "solemn publication of His Majesty's title to Soldania" was made on King James his Mount, the Lion's Rump or Signal Hill, as it is now called, a smooth round hill where flags now signal the approach of a Union Castle liner. And not only was Table Bay annexed but the whole territory to "the boundary of the nearest Christian kingdom," for Shilling and Fitzherbert were not the sort of men to do things by halves. We may imagine the scene, the great crowd of English and Dutch officers and men, with plumed hats and long swords and bright breastplates, on the top of that windswept hill, with the high-pooped ships riding gaily in the bay beneath, and the sailcloth tents of the sick by the stream, all under a glorious African sky. The flag went up with a cheer for King James, both from English and Dutch, and salutes from the ships no doubt and an answering cheer from the sick in their tents. It was the first move in the great struggle which was fought out on that little piece of land for the next three hundred years. Was it ominous of a good ending that on this first occasion English and Dutch joined in the cheer together and for the English flag?

And now let us follow these three Englishmen on

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their way to the East, just to see what they did and what ends they came to, since they are our first South African worthies. Jourdain was wrecked on the Malabar coast and made his way to the court of the Great Mogul, where he met William Hawkins, who had been for a while that monarch's favourite, but was now somewhat in disfavour for appearing drunk in the royal presence. From there he made his way to Surat to meet the next English voyage; but found the Portuguese keeping guard between the English and the harbour. He got through them, however, disguised in "Mogol clothes," and it was Jourdain who showed Middleton Swallyhole, the famous English harbour, which ships of our nation used in defiance of the Portuguese. Then Jourdain went to the Spice Islands and fought the redoubtable Coen for a share of the spice trade. Then back to England and out to the East again, this time as the Company's chief agent. But Coen, that Dutch Clive of the seventeenth century, is too strong for him; and Jourdain, with two weak ships, the *Sampson* and the *Hound*, is brought to bay in the roads of Patani. With three strong Dutchmen against him he might have made a running fight of it with honour; but he said "it should never be reported that he would run away from a Fleming." After a fight of two hours and a half, in which this civilian "behaved with as much resolution as ever did any commander," he was forced to surrender. Jourdain relied on the white flag, and stood out to parley with the Dutch captain, when "the Flemings espying him, most treacherously and cruelly shot at him with a musket, and shot him into the bodie neare the heart of which wound hee dyed within halfe an houre after." As for Fitzherbert, we next hear of him as Vice-Admiral of a Fleet which joined with Jacob Dedell, the Dutch admiral, to fight the Portuguese, and he is mentioned as pulling down a Dutch flag set up in the Isle of Nero. But in those



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days sailors in the Indies were addicted "to the inordinate drinking of a wine called tadie, distilled from the palmetto trees." The bad example seems to have been set in high quarters, for we hear that the King of Johore and the King of Acheen did often "drink drunk together." To this amiable weakness Fitzherbert fell a victim and died of a surfeit. More glorious was the end of Shilling, as you may read in Purchas or better still in that rare pamphlet entitled: "The True Relation of that Worthy Seafight which two of the East India ships had with four Portugals of great force and burthen in the Persian Gulph with the lamentable death of Captain Andrew Shilling."

After Shilling left the Cape with his two ships he sailed to the Persian Gulf, and there captured a Portuguese ship with forty-two fine Arabian horses on board. They then came on four great Portuguese ships, and Shilling advised that this ship should be fired and sent among the enemy. "When some interposed as pitying the loss of so many brave horses, he as bravely replied, How doe they then in the wars, when they are compelled to kill their prisoners in colde blood, and therefore thinke neither of scruple or nicity, but let us follow the business we take in hand"; and he went on board the prize himself with two barrels of powder and some tar and "other combustibile provisions," intending with her to lay the Portugal Admiral thwart the halse to burn together. Shilling was a determined fellow. "I leave it to you all as a principle," was another of his sayings, "never to slacke your hand if you find the enemy staggering, never to give over till you have made a faire composition or dispatched the business." "Fight courageously," he cried, "that the Portugals may confesse they have met with Englishmen." Unfortunately, his ruse failed and the poor horses died for nothing in the burning ship; but Shilling laid his ships alongside the enemy and "raked them, thorow and thorow.

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before and after, with all our broadsides." They fought nine hours the first day; but night enabled the Portuguese to get away. They met again, however, and Shilling anchored his ships a cable length and a half from where the Portuguese were moored, and fired at them until the enemy cut their cables and were towed away on the tide all "mangled and torn." "If the shot had not failed us," says the narrative, "they had scarce any of them troubled Englishmen more." In the midst of the conflict "our Captain Andrew Shilling received a mortall wound, yet was valiant and spake cheerfull, with thankfulness to God the last minute of his life."

Such are the stories that you may find in the old faded letters placed under the stones on the shores of Table Bay. They take us far enough, some of them, from the Cape and the subject of this book, yet they are properly a part of our theme; for the romance of the Cape is that it was the tavern of the Indian seas, and its story cannot be disentangled from the great conflict which was fought out for so many centuries between nations for the wealth of Asia.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VAN RIEBECK

IN my last chapter I tried to show how, as the years rolled on, the other nations followed Portugal into the Indian seas by way of the Cape of Good Hope. They were keen, hard-fighting swashbucklers, those old English and Dutch and French merchants and sailors, and they were bent on having for themselves and their own nations the whole wealth of Asia. But in those days of long voyages and small ships and salt junk it was necessary to have a half-way house on the voyage to the East. The Dons held fast to Mozambique, and try as they might the Dutchmen could not dislodge them. The English chose Saint Helena as the best place to victual and refresh themselves, and our old tars had many a chase after wild pig on that lonely little island. The French laid hold of Madagascar; but the Dutch were the wisest of them all; they raised the flag of the Republic over the old "watering-place of Saldanha," Table Bay as it is now called. \* If you look at the map of Africa you will see that the Cape of Good Hope is like a little curly tail attached to the south-west corner of the continent. It is a narrow, pear-shaped strip of mountainland, only four or five miles broad at its broadest, narrowing to the rocky promontory of the Cape of Good Hope, and some forty miles long, and it is attached to the mainland by a low, flat spit of sand

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not much more than a dozen miles broad.\* On the south side of this spit are the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, breaking in league-long rollers on the sands of Muizenberg; on the north the cold waters of the Atlantic, sweeping up from the South Pole, swirl round into Table Bay.\* It might have been an island once, this little mountain promontory, for the sand flats are almost flush with the sea, and the Dutchmen, when they came first, thought of cutting a canal from False Bay to Table Bay, and so making an island of it again. A Dutchman finds it very hard to resist making a canal wherever he has the slightest excuse, and in this case he thought by so doing to make of Table Bay a secure little fortress against the savages of the interior; just as Mozambique on its island was secure against the savages of East Africa.

But I am going a little too fast with my story.\* I have told you how for years and years before van Riebeck landed the English and Dutch sailors used to visit Table Bay and camp along its stream of pure water, and eat the scurvy grass, the wild mustard and sorrel and leek, that grew upon the banks. But it was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that the great Dutch East India Company at last decided to go a step farther and place a little refreshment station in the Bay. It came about in this wise. A Dutch ship called the *Haarlem* was wrecked in the Bay, and the crew were forced to stay on its shores for a space of five months. They built a fort in which they stored the cargo, they bartered cattle from the natives and explored the promontory, just as John Jourdain and his friends had done some forty years before. When at last another Dutch ship, the *Princesse Royael*, came to take them off, they had so much cattle and sheep in hand that they were able to feed their deliverers with fresh meat, and so, it is said, to save the lives of many, for the ship was full of scurvy.

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Two of the *Haarlem's* company, Jansen and Proot, men, as we may guess, of very much the same temper as Jourdain and Shilling and Fitzherbert, had been thinking hard during their stay at the Cape, and when they got to Holland they laid their heads together and wrote a memorial to their High Mightinesses the Dutch East India Company. Their letter said very much what Jourdain said in his diary. They showed that by making a fort and a garden in Table Valley, and protecting it with a garrison of 60 or 70 soldiers, the Company would save the lives of hundreds of their men. Everything, they said, would grow there: fruit and vegetables, cabbages and pumpkins, onions and water-melons, oranges and shaddocks, cattle could be had from the natives,—and here they put in a pious word about the conversion of these hopeful savages,—and so the interests of the Company and the kingdom of God would be at the same time extended. It is an able document—every word of it proved to be true—and their High Mightinesses were mightily impressed by its cogency. They submitted the “remonstrance” to a gentleman of their service, Johan van Riebeck, who thus first comes into our history.

But before we come to him let me say a word or two about his employers. The Dutch East India Company was the greatest trading body of the world in those days. It was greater than Venice; it was greater than Genoa; it was greater than the Hanseatic League; it was greater than the King of Spain; it was greater than the City of London. Its capital was subscribed by all the towns and states of Holland, and all the cities and provinces were represented upon the great Council of Seventeen which managed its affairs. The Seventeen had as much power as the Prince of Orange or the Government of the Republic. It declared war; it made peace; it recruited armies; it fitted out navies. It had a vast empire in the East with fortresses and

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garrisons and tributary princes. It had a system of government so perfect that there was seldom any friction. Governors and captains, lieutenants and ensigns, merchants and fiscals, all had their order of precedence and fitted into the local schemes of administration automatically. Everything was done by councils, by committee; the great Council of Seventeen was over all; but wherever there was a Company's ship or a fort there a council could be constituted, and its members and duties and powers were all laid down in a way that worked with almost mechanical regularity. It was a splendid piece of co-operation of the old guild order: it was in fact a nation organised into a company for the purpose of trade.

Now in the service of this great Company families grew up and flourished, generation after generation. And one of these families was the van Riebecks. Johan's father, Anthony van Riebeck, was a stout old sailor; in his portrait he looks a little like "Old Noll," with his broad white collar, heavy-hilted sword, wide gauntlets, and strong, heavy face. You would take him to be a sea-captain in a big way by his dress, and no doubt he sailed many a good ship of the Company before he was knocked over by the yellow jack in the Brazils and was laid to his last rest in the Church of San Paulo at Olinda de Pernambuco. His wife was a van Gaasbeeck, a fine Dutch lady with as much white linen about her as would make collars for a whole Eton house, and ear-rings and bracelets of pearls—a sailor's gifts, no doubt, from Ceylon or the Persian Gulf. Their son, Johan, was a merchant and surgeon in the service of the Company. He was a gentleman of position, married to a beautiful lady, Maria de Querelleri, such a lady as Rembrandt would have been proud to paint, daughter of the Minister of Rotterdam. Above the great linen collar, her oval face is very sweet, with its full lips, long nose, soft dark eyes, level eyebrows, and

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hair brushed back to a coil of pearls. And van Riebeck himself was a handsome fellow, if we may judge by his portrait, dark with cavalier locks, a van Dyck moustache, black piercing eyes heavily shadowed, a fair white forehead and a beautiful hand resting upon the cloak over his breast.

Well, to this gentleman their High Mightinesses submitted the "remonstrance" of mynheers Jansen and Proot, and van Riebeck's note upon it is full of interest to us. He himself had been at the Cape for three weeks salving the cargo of the *Haarlem*, and he strokes the "t's" and dots the "i's" of his two colleagues. We can see from his recommendations that the young official has been a great traveller. He advises the planting of close thorn hedges as a protection against the natives, "a brutal gang in whom he has no faith, as he has seen done in the Caribee Islands." Then if the cocoanut could be made to grow they might make arrack and vinegar, and feed hogs on the wash as they do in Batavia. From personal experience he judges the Cape water to be much better than that of Saint Helena, which is sulphurous. As there are many elands, steenbucks, and other wild animals in South Africa, their skins might be dried and packed closely together as is done in Siam; when he was in Japan there was a good demand for such skins. Then "train-oil" would also yield a profit, "as I have before this been in Greenland and seen how the industry is carried on there." And the dispatch, after a pious but guarded reference to the conversion of the natives, concludes with a promise that "with God's blessing I will not fail in my zeal for the benefit of the Company, and the personal honour of your servant." Thus you may see that van Riebeck, like Hans Breitmann, was a "true cosmopolite," with a "kop bemossed mit egsperience." He was something of a botanist, something of a doctor; he knew as much about scurvy and anti-scorbutics as was to be known in

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his time ; he had an observant, scientific eye that noted everything ; he had some knowledge of farming ; he had, like all Dutchmen, shrewd notions as to the main chance ; and like most men of his time he had also—if we may judge from his observations on the defences of the settlement—a good knowledge of soldiering and the work of the military engineer. Above all, he was a Company's man ; their affairs were to him almost a religion ; the Seventeen almost a deity. He was, in short, just the man the Company wanted, and the Company, who were very shrewd judges of men, chose him for the work.

And so just about two years after King Charles was beheaded by Cromwell and his Parliament, Johan van Riebeck was given his sailing orders by the Council of the Seventeen. He was to be on his guard against, but neutral to, all nations, except the Portuguese, "whom the Company has declared to be its enemies, and with whom it is at war in the regions falling within the limits granted by charter to the Company"; and he was to beware of Prince Rupert, who was reported to be cruising with eight ships and a Portuguese commission somewhere in the South Atlantic. He was to land at the Cape and take possession and build a fort and barter for cattle and grow produce for the Company's ships ; and "you are likewise ordered to correspond with the Company on all matters, and we wish you good fortune and prosperity on your voyage and the fulfilment of your trust, looking forward to the proper time when we shall be informed of your good success." So van Riebeck set out with his little fleet, the *Drommedaris*, the *Reijger*, and the *Goede Hoop*, from Amsterdam on a rainy afternoon in mid-December, and you may imagine that his pretty brave little wife shed tears as she stood on the deck with her girl in her arms and waved farewell to all her dear friends on the quay and prepared to face with her husband that long and perilous voyage.



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And they had a rough voyage, for the *Drommedaris* was badly ballasted, and a gale in the channel laid her on her beam-ends under storm sails, so that every moment looked like her last. But she weathered it; and when they were well south of the Canaries out of reach of Prince Rupert and the Turkish pirates, they lowered nine of her cannon into the hold to steady her, and so made better weather of it, till on 4th April 1652, "about five glasses of the afternoon watch, Table Mountain was sighted by the chief officer, 15 or 16 Dutch miles away." He received "four Spanish reals in specie" for the intelligence, and you may imagine that many healths were drunk and deep prayers of thanksgiving offered, as the three high-pooped ships made for the land, and the great bulk of Table Mountain, with its white plume of cloud, grew on the horizon.

They stole in very circumspectly for fear of enemies; but the coast was clear, and when Skipper Coninck landed with the sloop he found a packet of letters left under a stone addressed to the commander from Jan van Teylingen, the admiral of the return fleet. Van Teylingen had brought horses for van Riebeck from Batavia; but as the commander had not arrived and the fleet could not wait, he had left them with an "English speaking Ottento," no other than the redoubtable Herry of whom we shall hear much later on. On the 8th it was blowing a south-easter; but on the 9th van Riebeck landed to mark out the site of the fort. It was drawing to the end of the dry weather; the ground was cracked and hard; winter, the winter of the southern hemisphere, was coming on. Work was begun with a will; the men of the *Drommedaris* were busily discharging the cargo while others set to work to raise tents, catch fish, or throw up embankments.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I need hardly say here that my account of van Riebeck's work at the Cape is drawn from the Commander's Journal, in which everything is set down from day to day for the information of their High Mightinesses. The Journal is the

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Van Riebeck found a suitable site for the fort somewhere near what is now the middle of Adderley Street, where the river could be led round it to form a moat with beautiful land for a garden behind it. We see him rubbing his hands over the lovely soil, "as good and fruitful as anywhere in the world," and longing for a few Chinese as gardeners. "Thousands of Chinese," he goes on in a burst of enthusiasm, "would not be able to cultivate a tenth part of the country, which is so rich that neither Formosa nor New Netherland can compare with it." He is enthusiastic, too, about the fishing; the great draughts of "beautiful bream," and other fish "of more delicate flavour than any fish in the Fatherland." The natives appeal to his sense of the picturesque: "fine fellows dressed in prepared oxhide, and stepping like any dandy in the Fatherland who carries his mantle on his shoulder or his arm." So the work of discharging and fort-building went on merrily; and Hendrik Boom, the gardener, an expert in his trade, and a man of merit, began to prepare plots for the sowing of his Dutch seeds.

\* But soon hardships came upon the little company. No cattle were to be got from the natives; the *Dromedaris* was badly loaded, and the supply of wood was deficient. Then the winter came on, and with it colds and dysentery and other diseases, for the men were ill-lodged; the fierce south-easters tore down the frail coverings of tarpaulin; floods washed away the garden soil and inundated the little shelters, and the men, cold, ill-nourished, and overworked, began to die fast. \* Thus we find, on the 7th June:—

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frankest and most complete account of administration it has ever been my good fortune to read. The springs of policy are laid bare without shadow of reserve, and hardly a sow or rabbit litters but it is recorded in the diary. Most of it, no doubt, was dictated by van Riebeck himself, and the journalist, whoever he was, took a pride in the work, and wrote with some style and feeling for the picturesque. The Journal has been admirably translated by one whom I am proud to call my friend, the Rev. H. C. V. Liebbrandt, Keeper of the Archives, that modest old scholar, to whom South Africa owes so heavy a debt.

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Cut reeds in the downs behind Lion's Rump to thatch our dwellings; hope that this will be a success, as planks and tarpaulins cannot keep the wet from our heads, etc. More cases of sickness, some on the point of death. Yesterday and to-day the under-gardener, his wife, and eldest son, have been laid up, and now almost all are ill, which stops the works almost completely. We hope for a change by the mercy of God.

And on the 10th:—

About fifty men at work—the rest all ill; nourished them with wine and some greens grown from our Dutch seeds. Since our arrival not more than one cow and calf have been obtained—life is growing a misery, one after another falls ill, and many die—poor prospect for the works. We trust in God's mercy.

And so it goes on, day after day, a doleful tale. The plantations are all destroyed by heavy rain; vegetables and everything washed away. "We sit in leaky tents, suffering severe discomfort." There are dysentery and violent fever, and death after death in the little company. They suffer from severe cold; there is snow on the mountain and hail in the valley. The men become insubordinate; some desert; the Commander brings down a heavy hand upon them, for he is not the man to stand any nonsense. But he feels for them all the same, as month after month goes by and no cattle and no ships arrive. Here is the entry for November 11:—

Quieter. Twenty-four in hospital complaining of pains through their joints, which feel as if broken—no wonder—as labour is hard, food is old and so scarce that no one gets what he absolutely requires—no fish when weather is bad—the seine very old and bad—enough to do to repair it. If no supplies in cattle or from ships quickly come, the people will grow too weak to work, as peas, barley, meat, and pork are running out—the fish caught have saved provisions, otherwise we would have nothing now. Pray earnestly for arrival of natives with cattle—see their fires across the bay.

Poor van Riebeck! He had some sore trials and

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disappointments in those early days. Thus we read, under July 20 :—

Sowed some wheat, barley, and peas, and likewise other seeds. It is delightful to see how beautifully the peas, large beans, radishes, beet, spinach, and other garden produce, spring up; also the wheat and turnips sown near the fort, and the cabbages, which at the distance of a musket-shot we have planted in very fat soil between the two fresh rivers. More ground is being prepared, and we trust to have abundant supplies of refreshments for the return ships from India.

And, three days afterwards, this heart-breaking entry :—

Gardens flooded with all the crops spoilt—a miserable sight, as we had sown various beds with wheat, peas, cabbages, etc., some of which looked beautiful—very heavy rains indeed—everything inundated—too much water for the rivers—half a foot of water in the store—canals full—a clay wall intended for a kitchen, 2½ feet broad and 8 feet high, collapsed—but the walls of the fortifications remain uninjured—did our best to make them strong—damp weather, wind and rain continuing—in the evening south-west wind with hail and rain, destroying whatever had been left of our garden produce.

Indomitable man! Five days after he is busy planting again.

But the rain was doing a blessed work though they might not realise it. Everywhere the grass was coming up, green and fresh and deep, and the land was soon smiling with flowers, such wild-flowers as grow nowhere else in the world. And then there were more fires across the Bay and rumours of natives approaching with vast herds of cattle and sheep, until at last the “Saldanhars,” as van Riebeck calls them, came with their flocks, following the grass, a vast multitude not to be counted. Sometimes herds estimated at 20,000 were seen together. For the people of South Africa were then nomads, whose wealth lay in their cattle, and who travelled, like the swallows, with the seasons. It must have been a wonderful sight! “Saw along the

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hill beside Table Mountain the country covered with cattle and sheep as with grass." At first van Riebeck could only get a few by barter, and he gnashed his teeth. "With 150 men," he says, "ten or twelve thousand cattle could be secured, and without any danger; as many of these savages could be caught without a blow, for transmission as slaves to India, as they always come to us unarmed." A sore temptation, but it "requires more consideration and wiser judgment than ours alone." Still the situation was saved. Bartering went on steadily, and soon a considerable herd was secured. But anxiety was not yet over. We read on March 1: "To-day the last rations of bread were distributed." But now the ships were at hand, for on March 2, the very day after this last distribution of bread, we read: "Arrival of the ships '*t Hoff van Zeelandt*' with the Vice-Admiral Junius on board, and the *Walwis*. And about noon also the *Malacca* and *Parel*, with the Admiral Gerard Demmer, Ordinary Councillor of India and late Governor of Amboina." And there is a ring of the pride of achievement in the next entry:—

Provided the ships with cattle, sheep, cabbages, carrots, milk, etc., and sent the Admiral in the galiot 10 sheep, some cabbages, carrots, and beet. . . . Each vessel to have per week three head of cattle and cabbages in proportion, and for the cabins four sheep, besides cabbages, carrots, beet, salad, etc., the Admiral's, however, to have six sheep and the Vice-Admiral's five sheep, etc.

And so the battle was fought and won.

## CHAPTER IX

VAN RIEBECK—*continued*

FROM this time onwards there was a growing prosperity in the little settlement. There were indeed occasional blows—and heavy blows—as for example the loss of the company's herd of cattle in circumstances which I shall presently narrate to you ; but development and progress were none the less steady. The Commander laid his colony on sound foundations, and the building was strong and secure.

Van Riebeck's chief problem was the natives. And here the Commander followed the famous motto of the Company in all matters of native policy—"First to creep and then to go." To win their favour, "to draw them to us," as his own phrase goes, nothing was left undone that could be done. Not many pages of the diary pass without some reference to a "treat" to the natives—presents of tobacco, a "bellyful of rice," and "as much arrack or brandy as they could drink." There was no philanthropy in this matter. Here is a typical extract that explains the situation very well—"Gave them some tobacco. More bread, rice, and arrack should be at hand, as they draw the natives towards us, who continually say that the English gave them whole bags of bread, much tobacco, and whole cans filled with arrack and wine—we ought, therefore, to be better provided to outdo the English if we wish to draw the

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natives towards us, otherwise not an animal will be had, which may, if natives are humoured, cost so little that we could afford to add to the price some bread, tobacco, wine, or arrack." When we remember that the price given per head for cattle was ordinarily two copper plates, and for sheep "as much tobacco and wire as the sheep is long with the tail," we will realise 'that the shrewd Dutchman was not far out in his calculations. So the Hottentots were "drawn to us" with "the very strongest tobacco and brandy obtainable, and also with music and dancing," the Hottentots being very fond of music and firing of salutes, "in short, whatever might serve to draw them nearer and amuse them." Here is an idyllic picture of a pleasant Sunday afternoon at the fort with van Riebeck's native policy in full swing:—

After the sermon they were also treated with food and liquor, whilst a tub filled with a mixture of arrack and brandy was set open in the middle of the square within the fort, with a small sailor's cup in it, out of which they drank themselves so drunk that one beheld them making the strangest antics in the world, singing, dancing, leaping, and with other strange behaviour; at one time one, at another another, fell down through drunkenness, and were picked up by those not so far gone, carried outside the fort and laid on the grass to sleep.

Van Riebeck and his Dutchmen entered into the entertainment with spirit. On one occasion we hear of certain natives being "introduced into the Commander's own room and placed before a large mirror, at which they appeared to be completely at a loss, at one time thinking that the reflections were persons in another room, at another time recognising themselves and other persons; they believed that they were seeing spectres, so much so that Eva, Doman, and other Hottentots living near the fort had enough to do to explain matters to them. Thus we have often wonderful jokes and amusing oddities with these strangers." And we have a delightful account of the reception given to Sousoa,



Van Riebeck Entertains the Hottentots



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“chief of the Chainouquas,” who “entered the fort, riding on a large ox, accompanied by his son’s wife.” “He was treated to cheese, fresh bread and sugar in a tin dish, and seated on a mat in the Commander’s room with the aforesaid dirty princess (his son’s wife), a favour never shown to anyone before. We also played for him on the *claversingel*, all which appeared to please him immensely, as well as the beer, Spanish and French wines, which he relished exceedingly. However, he did not take so much as would have intoxicated him. His followers were entertained in the front hall with biscuits and brandy in such a way that they sang lustily, jumped and performed various monkey tricks.” Cannot we imagine the scene—the rudely-timbered room in the fort, hung with weapons and horns and other trophies of the chase, the chief and the “dirty princess” with their mantles of skins about them on the floor, and the jovial Dutchmen in their mid-seventeenth century dress pouring out the wine or strumming some rollicking tune on the *claversingel*, while Vrouw van Riebeck in white kerchief and stiff farthingale stands in the doorway looking on, with one half-frightened child in her arms and another hiding his head in her skirts.

The Hottentots of those days were not over-careful as to personal cleanliness. Indeed, as the Commander puts it, they were “grievously tormented if not allowed to wallow like swine in all kinds of filth,” and van Riebeck tells us ruefully that he spoiled a new suit of clothes in embracing one of them. Perhaps no greater proof of the Commander’s zeal for the Company could be given than such an embrace.

But van Riebeck had more methods of gaining influence over the natives than these genial entertainments. When he came to the Cape he set himself to study their tribal politics and profit by their divisions and jealousies. On the peninsula itself he found a wretched tribe, which he calls the Watermen, miserable

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Calibans who had no cattle and lived on the mussels of the rocks on the seashore and roots and herbs dug out of the ground. Besides these Caapmen or Watermen, there were other tribes, one behind the other receding into the interior, which were known to him by picturesque names of more or less doubtful authenticity—"the true Saldanhars" (Saldanha being the Portuguese captain who had given his name to this region), the Gorachouquas, or tobacco thieves, the Chainouquas, the Goringhaiquas, the Hesaquas, "regular Dagga-makers of the Hamcumquar," the Namaquas, and so forth. I need not go into their mutual relations, and the respective tracts of country over which they wandered with their herds. Sufficient it is to say that they all desired tobacco, copper, and arrack, that they were all more or less hostile to one another, and that van Riebeck skilfully used their greed and their hate to serve the interests of his Company. He had several Hottentot instruments from whom he learned all he could of native lore. There was Eva, the interpretress, for whom the Commander had a soft spot in his heart—though not for a moment do I suggest that there were the same picturesque relations between them as between Cortes and his famous interpretress Marina. Eva was aristocratically connected, her sister being married to a chief, and she seems to have been devoted to the Dutch, so that her information and influence were of great value. Then there was her uncle, Herry, a rascally Caapman, who had gone on a voyage to the East Indies in an English ship. "Herry," says van Riebeck, "likes the English better than he does us"—a characteristic of most natives who have tried both—"being always full of them—no doubt he has persuaded the natives to keep their cattle back until the arrival of the English, as he seems to know pretty exactly when their fleet will be here from India." Herry was by no means a faithful servant; his aim was to line his nest at the expense of the Company by making himself

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the sole intermediary between Dutch and natives, and his tricks in the pursuit of this policy soon led him into trouble. For van Riebeck was a true Dutchman, cleverer than any native at his own game. "Herry was also in the fort pretending that he had urged the natives now here to bring cattle; pretended we believed him"—one entry goes; and Herry, as I shall presently show, soon found himself laid by the heels and a prisoner in Robben Island, where Eva also was for a time (and behaved herself most scandalously). He was only brought to the mainland when his services were urgently required on some special mission. When, for example, the Commander was looking for certain cattle thieves, a resolution was passed that "Herry will therefore be brought over from the island and employed for the purpose, but well secured. Golden promises as big as mountains will be made to him, but none will be held binding"—a remark which may be regarded as typical of van Riebeck's code of political morality. Herry ultimately escaped in an old boat, and afterwards succeeded in getting into favour with the Dutch again, though he is reported as "trembling like a lap-dog owing to his bad conscience." Dominy was another creature of the Commander's. He was called "Dominy" because he was "such a very simple-minded man"; but in the end was found to be by no means so simple as he looked. He "tries to thwart the Company in everything," says the *Journal* at last, "and is thrice as bad as Herry ever was during his whole life." But between these three people, the visitors to the fort and the expeditions inland, van Riebeck contrived to learn much of the native and to get a great deal of influence over his affairs, so that at last he became known among the Hottentot tribes far and wide as "Lord of the Land," "who wishes to make friendship with all nations."

But before he reached this position he had to get many lessons from hard experience. The first, and in