

# THE TRANSVAAL OF TO-DAY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### HISTORY OF THE BOERS.

Serfs or subjects?—Pilgrim Fathers—Fighting for life—Glimpse of freedom—Chaka—Policy of Earl Grey—Founding Republics—A Convention—The Transvaal Treaty.

WHILE many writers have devoted much space to descriptions of Kafir life and character, none have even attempted to deal with the state and position of the Boers, in such a way as to lead intelligent readers to form anything like a fairly accurate mind-picture of them as a people. This it is my pleasing duty to endeavour to do; and bringing, as I can, ten years' actual experience of Boerdom to the task, I hope to be able to set before the public a correct view of them in all their relations—social, political, and religious.

The Boers were subjects of Holland, and were essentially the Cape Colonists, when, by treaty and conquest, England got, in the beginning of this century, a footing in South Africa. As my object is not to write a history of past events, but to explain the facts of the present hour, I shall not encumber these pages with tedious descriptions of the marches, fights, and sufferings of those poor people during the last fifty years, but shall, as nearly as possible, confine myself to an examination of the reasons they put forward to justify them in their exodus from British territory. In 1833, a large number of farmers found themselves, without any

desire on their part to become British subjects, in the position of "accidents of territory" ceded to the British by the Dutch. The sovereignty over the LAND on which they dwelt was undoubtedly vested in the European Government of Holland; but it is an important question whether a cession of territorial sovereignty can really be held to include the transfer of people as serfs from one Government to another. A serf is undoubtedly a person attached, and owing certain servitudes, to the soil on which he is born. I know of no law, human or divine, by which the right of the Dutch inhabitants to remove from the soil transferred in sovereignty to England can be denied. Therefore if any one of those "subjects by cession" desired to remove himself, with his belongings, to the Dutch East Indies, there could be no objection to his doing so; nor, because he fell under British dominion by the cession of the Cape territory, could he have been prevented from returning to other Dutch territory and to his Dutch allegiance. I hold that he had only become a British subject in relation to his occupation of British territory, and that it was perfectly open to him to cease to be a subject by quitting that territory. It is certain that if the emigrant Boers had passed on in their flight from British rule to lands subject to the authority of other states, they would have again become foreign subjects, and could no longer have been compelled to own an allegiance to England. But the lands to which the Boers retired did not happen to belong to any recognised or constituted authority. They fled from what they, rightly or wrongly, considered to be misrule, into the "desolate places of the earth," where no man was master. Mr Oliphant, the Cape Attorney-General (in 1834), in speaking of the Voortrekkers (advanced pioneers), says, in answer to a question put to him by Sir Benjamin Durban, then governor of the Cape Colony:—

"The class of persons under consideration evidently mean to seek their fortunes in another land, and to consider themselves no longer British subjects so far as the colony of the Cape of Good Hope is concerned. Would it therefore be prudent or just, even if it were possible, to prevent persons discontented with their position to try to better themselves in whatever part of the world they pleased? The same sort of removal takes place every day from Great Britain to the United States. Is there any effectual means of arresting persons determined to run away

from an enforced allegiance short of shooting them as they passed the boundary line? I apprehend not—and if so, the remedy is worse than the disease. Government, therefore, must ever remain without the power of preventing this evil, if evil it be.”

The Boers did not want to be British subjects. They found what even Englishmen to-day are complaining of as an inconvenience, if not an evil threatening their very existence. They said they were badly protected as against the aborigines of the country—a set of thieving savages, whose conduct on the frontier in 1878 seems to differ very little from what they were guilty of in 1834. The Boers knew that the territory then actually under British rule in South Africa was limited; and gathering together their flocks and herds, they proceeded to march out of it into “fresh fields and pastures new.” It must never be said that any hatred of civilised government, as such, led to this step. This would be a base calumny on the character of a body of men whose motives were as pure as those that actuated the “Pilgrim Fathers”—Englishmen who left England for conscience’ sake.

When, and so often as, those people secured new homes for themselves, and established laws and government for their own guidance, they have found that their allegiance has pursued them, and consequently they have been overtaken, shot down, and annexed repeatedly—all their efforts for their own emancipation from a rule which they never sought, being defeated by brute force. It is now not denied by impartial historians, that when the Boers entered Natal that land was no man’s land. Nor can it be asserted that their irruption into the Transvaal destroyed any settled government, or effected any injustice. It is, on the other hand, admitted that their march towards the Orange River, and beyond it, was the means of breaking the power of Moselekatze, a warrior chief whom they found engaged in a course of rapine and destruction almost without parallel. This man with his army had burned and devastated an enormous tract of country, and until he met with the Boers, had succeeded, not in subjugating, but in almost entirely annihilating, the various tribes and disorganised bodies “under the name of Barolongs, Basutos, Mantatees, Kor-

annas, Bergenaars, and Bushmen," whom his advance had found occupying the game-covered flats and hills outside and north of the British line. This great murderer himself commenced hostilities by attacking a small weak party of the fugitives from the Cape Colony. The main body of the emigrants succeeded, however, in 1838, in resisting successfully a raid made by the "Amandabele" upon one of their camps; but having lost in the encounter much cattle, their only means of subsistence, they sent forth a party to follow up the raiders and recover the booty. This little body succeeded so well in its mission, that Moselekatzé, who had never before been checked in his career of bloodshed and extermination, fled hastily to the northwards. By this means, by breaking the power of this formidable warrior, the emigrant farmers became fairly possessed of vast territories which they had delivered from his murderous sway.

Subsequently another—a very large—portion of them penetrated into Natal, which was certainly not then British territory. At the period when the Boers succeeded, after wonderful labours and difficulties, in opening up pathways for themselves through the great Drakensberg down to the sea, there were not, on the millions of acres that lay below them, any population worthy of mention. A great conqueror had swept over the country before them, reducing its inhabitants to less than 3000 in number, who dwelt in holes, without cattle or means of subsistence,—an unarmed, feeble, and disorganised fragment of the former resident tribe. This had been done by Chaka, who is well described in the excellent though prejudiced work on "South Africa" published last year by John Noble, clerk of the House of Assembly of the Cape Colony, in the following words:—

"He was a cruel, savage being, who steadily pursued one object,—to destroy all other native governments, and exterminate such of their subjects as did not choose to come under his rule. The fame of his troops spread far and wide; tribe after tribe was invaded, routed, and put to death by them, either by firing their huts or by the spear, and in a few years Chaka had paramount sway over nearly all South-Eastern Africa, from the Limpopo to Kaffraria, including the territories now known as Natal, Basuto Land, a large portion of the Orange Free

State, and the Transvaal. It is estimated that not less than one million human beings were destroyed during the reign of this native Attila, between 1812 and 1828. His death was, as might be expected, a violent one."

Now it can hardly be said that to occupy a country which had no inhabitants and no government, and to snatch it from the power of such a wretch as Chaka, was an act which should properly arouse the anger of any civilised Government. The Boers were weak, and they say that therefore they were found to be in the wrong by the powerful Government from under whose sway they had thought to deliver themselves.

To Chaka succeeded Dingaan, also a Zulu, and of course, like other Zulus, a treacherous and murderous ruffian. Dingaan and the emigrants at first seemed to have been on friendly terms. Dingaan resembled modern monarchs in one noticeable particular: he was greatly in the habit of allocating to the use of friends and confederates, and giving away to applicants, what never belonged to him, and that to which he had no right. About the period of his accession to the sovereignty of the Zulus, a few white men lived at "The Bay," where Durban now stands. These were the means of introducing missionaries amongst the Zulus, and one of them obtained from the chief a recognition of the independence of the small white settlement on the sea. The chief also about the same time gave to the emigrant Boers permission to occupy the country, the desolation of which by Chaka I have just pictured. This is Natal, as distinguished from Port Natal, the small coast settlement referred to. But Dingaan's profession of friendship was hollow and insincere. His savage nature incited him to an act of wanton and unnecessary bloodshed. He attacked and killed, with circumstances of great barbarity, a large party of the farmers under Piet Retief, who were visiting at his chief town, and engaged in the peaceful enjoyment of his hospitality. Then, flushed with his easy triumph, and stimulated by the hope of plunder, he endeavoured to cut off all the Europeans, without respect of persons, in Natal and on the coast, and invaded a country to which he had no claim, and to whose occupation by strangers he had consented. The coast

English and the Boer countrymen both offered to this scheme a vigorous resistance,—even the Boer women and children performing prodigies of valour and shedding blood that would have consecrated their freedom in the eyes of equitable men of any race. In the joint campaign, however, they were terribly unsuccessful, the British settlers not only quitting the country entirely, but even taking ship from the coast.

The farmers in Natal, left in the hand of God and to their own resources, rallied around one Pretorius, invaded Zululand itself, and nearly entirely destroyed Dingaan's power in two expeditions; in the latter of which they were assisted by Panda, a revolted brother of the great Zulu warrior with whom they were contending. Then, and not till then, when they had conquered a peace, and purchased security at a vast outlay of blood—just when one would have thought they had sufficiently demonstrated their self-reliance—British protection sought them out. They were again informed that they were guilty of unwarrantable conduct, and once more found themselves called upon to give ready obedience to the rule of the English governors of the Cape Colony.

Once more, however, for a short period the poor persecuted people were destined to be free. The commander of the English forces in Natal, Captain Jervis, withdrew his troops from the country in 1840, saying—

“It now only remains for me to wish you, one and all, as a community, every happiness, sincerely hoping that, aware of your strength, peace may be the object of your counsels; justice, prudence, and moderation be the law of your actions; that your proceedings may be actuated by motives worthy of you as men and Christians; that hereafter your arrival may be hailed as a benefit, having enlightened ignorance, dispelled superstition, and caused crime, bloodshed, and oppression to cease; and that you may cultivate those beautiful regions in quiet and prosperity, ever regardful of the rights of the inhabitants whose country you have adopted, and whose home you have made your own.”

The Boers, although sadly reduced in numbers both in Natal and in the country west of the Drakensberg, now considering themselves free from further interference, proceeded, for the first time, to form “republics.” On doing so, their territory was again invaded, by Captain Smith in

1842, with a flying column sent forward for that purpose by Governor Napier. The Boers attacked and cooped Smith up on the coast, but not until he had first assumed the aggressive. When the weak fight against the strong, the result is not hard to foresee. More British troops arrived; the Boers were, of course, defeated; and Natal became again, and probably for ever, British territory. But, wonderful to relate, a number of the Boers were still dissatisfied, and again abandoned their lands in order to be free from all obligations of allegiance to England; and they went back still further from the Power they dreaded, reuniting themselves to their brethren in the vast plains of what are now known as the Free State and the Transvaal. These countries had, as I have said before, been desolated by Moselekatze, and were, so far as regarded human inhabitants, a desert. Mr Noble, an historian anything but favourable to the Dutch, says—

“They found no difficulty in taking possession of the territory, for the greater part of it was lying waste, the haunt of wild game and beasts of prey. The dreaded chief Moselekatze had abandoned it, having fled north into the region between the Limpopo and the Zambesi rivers, where his tribe, the Matabele, under his successor Lobengulo, now dwell. Those remaining were ‘weak and broken’ people, ruined by Moselekatze. They welcomed the emigrants as their deliverers from that tyrant’s cruel sway, acknowledging them as the governors of the country, and allowing them to appropriate whatever ground they required. As the emigrants found their strength increased by the accessions they received from Natal and the colonial boundary, they asserted more authority,—establishing their own form of government, under commandants, land-drosts, and field-cornets, and dictating to the natives encompassing them the laws which should prevail. These laws were similar in character to the regulations which applied, under the old Dutch government, to the coloured class in servitude within the colony—namely, that they should, when required, give their services to the farmers for a reasonable sum; that they should be restricted from wandering about the country; and that no guns or ammunition were permitted to be in their possession or bartered to them. Potgieter and his followers, in declaring their new government—the ‘Maatschappij’—claimed absolute independence; and when a proclamation issued by Governor Napier reached them, stating that the emigrant farmers were not released from their allegiance to the Crown, and that all offences committed by British subjects up to the 25° of south latitude were punishable in the courts of the colony, they resolved to abandon Potchefstroom, and moved further northwards, forming new settlements at Zoutpansberg, Ohrigstad, and finally at Lydenberg, whence they contemplated opening communication with the Portuguese port of Delagoa Bay. In these remote wilds, now forming the Transvaal,

they were left to work out their own destiny, without any interference or control."

Even here they were again called on to give allegiance to the British authorities. A Mr Menzies issued a proclamation declaring that, in the name of her Majesty, he claimed what may be briefly described as "all South Africa." Who was Mr Menzies? He was a Judge of the Supreme Court of the Cape Colony, and had apparently no business whatever to meddle with boundaries, or to set himself up as an extender of the empire. This act was subsequently disclaimed and disavowed by the Colonial Government; yet, in pursuance of it, or at least of some fixed plan based on a similar policy of monstrous usurpation, the flying people were again pursued, again fought with, and, of course, again defeated. A long series of troubles, quarrels, and vacillations on the part of the British authorities ended, in 1848, in her Majesty's Government eventually proclaiming its sovereign authority over "territories north of the Orange River, extending as far as the Vaal River on the north, the junction of Vaal and Orange rivers on the east, and that portion of the Drakensberg which forms the boundary of Natal on the west." The Natal Boers—that is, those who had remained there—had by this time again got into a state of utter discontent with British government.

The real cause of this is not far to seek. When they (the Boers) first entered Natal, they had found it depopulated; and before the British had come into possession of the country, the Boers had not only conquered their fierce neighbours the Zulus, but had imposed a king of their own nomination upon the enemy. Under the English, however, myriads of Kafirs were permitted to flock into Natal; and the country by 1848 showed visible symptoms of becoming what it now is—a colony under European government, but in which all the abominations of paganism flourish, to the disgust of European women and the moral corruption of Christian children,—a land overrun by 400,000 Kafirs, speaking their own language, practising polygamy, holding females in the most debasing slavery, and constituting for the settlers a great and ever-increasing danger. It is needless to record here the attempts, no doubt well



meaning and kindly, which were made by the British authorities to keep the Dutch farmers in Natal. A large body of them, in March 1848, fled from the country, and joined the western emigrants. Of course there was another war. Sir Harry Smith, with his usual vigour and success, attacked the Boers at a position called Boom Plaats. Lives were lost; and the result, of course, was a still further humiliation of the Dutch and a still stronger reassertion of British authority. Pretorius, the Boer commander, fled to the far Transvaal, still hoping to be let alone.

The English Government for a short time ruled over the territory they had conquered between the Vaal and Orange rivers, which they called the Sovereignty. This, however, they afterwards abandoned, when it was found to be a costly and troublesome possession.

Earl Grey writes, in 1851, when speaking of this renunciation—

“The ultimate abandonment of the Orange River Sovereignty must be a settled point of our policy. . . . If you are enabled to effect this object, you will distinctly understand that any wars, however sanguinary, which may afterwards occur between the different tribes and communities which will be left in a state of independence beyond the colonial boundary, are to be considered as affording no ground for your interference. Any inroads upon the colony must be promptly and severely punished; but, after the experience which has been gained as to the effect of British interference in the vain hope of preserving peace amongst the barbarous or semi-civilised inhabitants of these distant regions, I cannot sanction a renewal of similar measures.”

This statement of rational policy becomes of serious importance when, later on, we have to consider the recent annexation of the Transvaal. It is sufficient for the present to state that the Boers of the Sovereignty thus became free. In 1853, British Special Commissioner Clerk voluntarily proposed to the inhabitants that they should elect representatives to take over from him the government of the country. A convention was subsequently agreed to in explicit words and terms, which still holds good as regards the State called **THE ORANGE FREE STATE**. A republic was founded under its provisions, and subsequently acknowledged as an independent State by royal proclamation of the 8th April 1854.

In the Appendix will be found the text of the convention,<sup>1</sup> which mainly consists of a clause declaring the Boers to be a free and independent people; a declaration that her Majesty's Government will not enter into treaty or alliance with natives to the detriment of the new Republic; and the agreements for reciprocations, exchange of prisoners, recognition of marriages, &c., necessary for mutual comfort between states having lengthy conterminous border-lines.

While this was in progress, the same policy that dictated the liberation of the Boers of the Orange River Free State had manifested itself in a similar direction with regard to the emigrants north of the Vaal River; and as the tale can be told in no shorter or better form of words than I find in 'Noble's History,' I shall extract his account of the transaction by which was created the late South African or Transvaal Republic:—

“While the Assistant Commissioners were yet at Bloemfontein, making efforts to establish affairs on a footing more in unison with the wishes of the inhabitants, they received, through accredited messengers, a communication from the emigrants north of the Vaal River. The majority of them—Pretorius among the number—said they were anxious for peace and friendly relations with the Government, in order that their hands might be strengthened in establishing order, and effectually checking the agitation of a few reckless spirits who wished to make another attempt at rebellion in the Sovereignty. The Commissioners considered that the reconciliation of the emigrants to the Government would doubtless have a favourable effect in checking native hostility, and encouraged the suggested negotiations. They at once made use of the power provisionally intrusted to them by the High Commissioner to rescind the proclamation of outlawry against Pretorius and others. This act of grace paved the way for a meeting with the delegates of the emigrants, headed by Pretorius himself as Commandant-General. The meeting took place near the Sand River on the 17th January 1852, when a convention was entered into on behalf of her Majesty, allowing the community north of the Vaal River to form such government as might seem best to themselves. They were assured of non-interference in the management of their affairs, and non-encroachment on the part of the Government. This boon had been virtually granted by Earl Grey's explicit directions that British dominion should not be extended, but the Commissioners were able to make a favour of what must have soon followed as an inevitable concession. The convention thus concluded was fully approved of by Sir G. Cathcart as High Commissioner. The confirmation of it was one of the first acts of his administration, and in the proclamation ratifying it he expressed his hope that the freedom which the emigrants were now graciously per-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

mitted to exercise might result in lasting peace amongst themselves, and in fast friendship with the British Government.

“ The following were the articles of the Convention :—

“ 1. The Assistant Commissioners guarantee in the fullest manner, on the part of the British Government, to the emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal River the right to manage their own affairs, and to govern themselves according to their own laws, without any interference on the part of the British Government; and that no encroachment shall be made by the said Government on the territory beyond, to the north of the Vaal River; with the further assurance that the warmest wish of the British Government is to promote peace, free trade, and friendly intercourse with the emigrant farmers now inhabiting, or who hereafter may inhabit, that country; it being understood that this system of non-interference is binding upon both parties.

“ 2. Should any misunderstanding hereafter arise as to the true meaning of the words “ The Vaal River,” this question, in so far as regards the line from the source of that river over the Drakensberg, shall be settled and adjusted by commissioners chosen by both parties.

“ 3. Her Majesty’s Assistant Commissioners hereby disclaim all alliances whatever and with whomsoever of the coloured nations to the north of the Vaal River.

“ 4. It is agreed that no slavery is or shall be permitted or practised in the country to the north of the Vaal River by the emigrant farmers.

“ 5. Mutual facilities and liberty shall be afforded to traders and travellers on both sides of the Vaal River; it being understood that every waggon containing ammunition and firearms, coming from the south side of the Vaal River, shall produce a certificate signed by a British magistrate or other functionary duly authorised to grant such, and which shall state the quantities of such articles contained in said waggon, to the nearest magistrate north of the Vaal River, who shall act in the case as the regulations of the emigrant farmers direct. It is agreed that no objection shall be made by any British authority against the emigrant Boers purchasing their supplies of ammunition in any of the British colonies and possessions of South Africa; it being mutually understood that all trade in ammunition with the native tribes is prohibited both by the British Government and the emigrant farmers, on both sides of the Vaal River.

“ 6. It is agreed that, so far as possible, all criminals and other guilty parties who may fly from justice either way across the Vaal River, shall be mutually delivered up, if such should be required; and that the British Courts, as well as those of the emigrant farmers, shall be mutually open to each other for all legitimate processes, and that summonses for witnesses sent either way across the Vaal River shall be backed by the magistrates on each side of the same respectively, to compel the attendance of such witnesses when required.

“ 7. It is agreed that certificates of marriage issued by the proper authorities of the emigrant farmers, shall be held valid and sufficient to entitle children of such marriages to receive portions accruing to them in any British colony or possession in South Africa.

“ 8. It is agreed that any and every person now in possession of land and residing in British territory, shall have free right and power to sell his said property and remove unmolested across the Vaal River, and vice

*versd* ; it being distinctly understood that this arrangement does not comprehend criminals, or debtors, without providing for the payment of their just and lawful debts.' "

In 1854 the Voortrekkers had thus at length won their independence, and set up government on their own account.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE BOER OF TO-DAY.

The "trek"—Unprofitable occupation—Material successes—A race of peasants—Domestic habits—Mission work—The Mountain of Sorrow—Heroic women—Hospitality—Paying for his plunder—Our girls.

THE Free State having little to do with this work now drops out of my narrative, except so far as I may require to illustrate some phase of Boer character by reference to it or its inhabitants. Omitting the history of the struggles of the Transvaal Boers with nature, and their natural enemies the Kafirs, during the earlier days of their independence, I come now to the men themselves, and their habits and customs as I found them. One indelible feature has by their long and continuous wanderings been impressed upon their character—that is, an unsettled and vagrant disposition. Having been on "trek" for forty-four years, the "trek" has eaten itself into their hearts. They are still on "trek;" and few, indeed, are there who are not ready at a moment's notice to hurl themselves once more into the desert in search of brighter and happier homes. This "trek" feeling had led them, in the earlier days of the Transvaal, to overdo their occupation, to spread themselves too far out into the wilds around them. The Boers coming from the Cape Colony naturally sought in their new homes the peculiar features that had made the old ones pleasant; wood and water, easily worked ground, and rich runs for their cattle were the chief objects of their search. These the Voorloopers<sup>1</sup> did not find on the Highveld, as the large, bare, but

<sup>1</sup> Every team of bullocks has a leader—generally a native boy—who holds a tow-line fastened to the horns of the front oxen, hence the word

healthy elevated plateau—the great watershed of the Transvaal—is called ; but where it declined into the lower country, north and east, suitable locations, abounding in grass, water, and warm-looking bush, were discovered. The people, therefore, marched on to the lower levels, leaving unoccupied behind them vast tracts of country, which, after remaining for years the abode of countless thousands of game, are now being more and more closely settled and built upon by the farmers, who have found that at first they had neglected the very best part of their country, and occupied only the unhealthy and less profitable places. This is the real cause of that abandonment of certain fever districts to which Sir Theophilus Shepstone alludes, and of which he makes such forcible use in his annexation proclamation when he says : “ After more or less of irritating contact with aboriginal tribes to the north, there commenced, about the year 1867, gradual abandonment to the natives in that direction of territory settled by burghers of this state, in well-built towns and farms, and on granted farms ; ” and “ that this was succeeded by the extinction of effective rule over extensive tracts of country included within the boundaries of this state, and, as a consequence, by the practical independence, which still continues, of large native tribes residing therein who had until then considered themselves subjects.”

That a recession of white people from points long previously occupied has occurred I do not seek to deny, but that such was a sign of weakness in the Republic no one who knows the country thoroughly will feel inclined to admit. The Gold Fields have been, since the British annexation, practically abandoned, yet no one would venture to blame the Government of Sir Theophilus Shepstone for the existence of the state of things that led to this movement. The Origstadt valley, with its pretty town, was deserted because, and only because, of its fatal fevers ; and the wheat-growing farms of the northern portions of Lydenberg district have been allowed to fall out of cultivation simply because wheat did not pay,—a sufficient reason to a man of ordinary common-sense who is not forced to

“ Voorlooper,” which is applied variously to any advanced settler—to the star that heralds the morning star, &c.

strengthen an argument by alleging false motives for acts in themselves easily explained.

Sheep on the Highveld pay better, and with less labour and risk, than corn does in the bush country. Besides this, Origstadt and the wheat districts are unhealthy for horses; and all other things being equal, a farmer will prefer to live where he can ride to where he must walk. Wheat, when grown, had to be brought down by waggon to Natal—a distance of 400 miles—to find a market. This became a yearly labour. Such absences from the family were not patiently borne by farmers; so, naturally, when they discovered the value of the plateau as a sheep country, they fell back on it. Besides this, it is notorious that wherever wool is produced, stores soon spring up to buy the farmer's produce at his own door, and thus save him the yearly journey to far-away Natal. Schoemansdal, in Zoutpansberg, was abandoned for not altogether dissimilar reasons. In the early days traders went there attracted by the vast quantities of ivory, feathers, and interior produce, then obtainable at low prices, in exchange for goods. Then was brought to market by the natives, ivory and other treasures, the accumulations of years; fortunes were made, and great things planned. In due time this excessive supply fell off, and only what was bartered for and shot in each season came to hand. Even this yearly supply became scantier as the game got driven further and further back, until, finally, the cost of bringing goods so vast a journey, and of living, was not equalled by the value of the ivory and interior produce got in, and the place collapsed. Fever played its part in thinning out the inhabitants; and no doubt Kafir neighbours were troublesome at times; but if "it had paid" on the old scale, Schoemansdal would not have failed to retain a population. Like the Gold Fields under our new Government, Zoutpansberg was deserted because it was not what the slang of the present day calls "good enough." Still, with all this abandonment of non-paying and fever-stricken localities, the Boers occupy an extensive country: and on its surface they have wrought improvements, which, compared with their numbers, are sufficiently astonishing. There are roads—and very good roads—everywhere. There are

churches, courts, and jails in sufficient number; and when one considers that in consequence of their distance from the coast, they had for years no local markets for their superfluous productions, but had to consume all they grew, the extent of ground under cultivation is very great. There are, roughly speaking, in the Transvaal about 7000 families living by farm-work of one sort or another; and they have all houses, habitable, and, under the circumstances of the country, fairly comfortable. It would appear to an impartial investigator to be little less than miraculous how a people, fresh from their wanderings, had succeeded, in so few years, not only in planting the features of a successful civilisation over 130,000 square miles of country, but in wringing from the land of their adoption the wherewithal to pay for the clothes, arms, and imported articles consumed by them during their periods of "trek" and settlement, as well as for the materials and utensils of comfort and necessity which they have gathered round them or used for the ornamentation of their houses.

The Boers are really a peasantry—the largest land-owning peasants and peasant proprietors in the world—but they are nothing more. Hence the feeling of disappointment with which some visitors—casual observers—view their present condition. Men cannot conceive how the proprietors of vast lands and owners of flocks and herds have advanced so little in the acquisition of the comforts and luxuries of European civilisation. They look for farmers where they should expect only to find wealthy peasants; and as they see no evidences around them of the wanderings, fights, fevers, agonies of long travel and suffering through which these poor people have passed, they are but too ready to accuse them of unprogressiveness and want of enterprise, where really the enterprise has been exceptionally great, and the progress remarkable, under the circumstances. The character of the Boers, as well as their habits and customs, are strongly impressed by their wanderings and sufferings. If one of the family is about to ride but a few miles beyond his own extensive holding, before leaving his house he respectfully bids farewell to his father and friends with almost as much ceremony as a European would use before undertaking a journey



of weeks' duration. In the same way persons, whether they be visitors, strangers, neighbours, or kinsmen, coming to a homestead, greet each of the family on their first entrance under its roof, and are in turn shaken hands with by each and every member of the household. This custom arose from the meetings and the partings of forty-four years, during which those who met, met as persons delivered from great dangers; and those who parted, parted as do those who may meet no more. The Boers had few candles in the wilderness during their long and weary pilgrimage. A little coarse fat from slaughtered animals, with a bit of rag, made their only lamp. They consequently acquired habits of retiring early to rest,—the daylight throughout its entire length being utilised for their labours. This habit, with the necessity for early rising incumbent on herdsmen, has clung to them; and it is but rarely you meet with a family that enjoys those pleasant evening hours so dear to Europeans, when, amidst comfortable lights and fires, the labours of the day being at an end, the household devotes itself to the innocent pleasures of social and domestic intercourse. With the Boer, the sun being set, and the cattle and stock impounded in their kraals and places of safety, the short twilight is almost immediately followed by a dinner and supper, all in one—the meal of the day. The table is no sooner cleared than the family assembles, as it had done for years in the desert, for united prayer. This duty accomplished, they separate at once to their various quarters. People complain much of the Boers' houses, saying they are untidy, unfloored, and insufficiently lighted. It should be remembered, on the other hand, that the house is almost always the work of the owner's own hands. It has been put up under difficulties of a most exceptional nature, in a country but yesterday rescued from wild beasts and still wilder barbarians. Whether it be beside some beautiful stream, or standing upon a naked and desolate flat, or buried under steep hillsides in some lonely or almost inaccessible mountain kloof, it has been constructed without the assistance of skilled labour, and from rough materials found upon or near to its site. Beams do not grow in every direction ready cut and dressed to the builder's hand. Those

that the Boers have used have been procured at a cost of much labour and expense from very considerable distances. The difficulty in obtaining heavy timber has exercised an influence even over the shape of the farmers' houses, which cannot afford the luxuries of immense rooms and spreading roofs. In the same way window-frames, and glass to fill them, were for years almost entirely unobtainable by the settlers north of the Orange and Vaal rivers. Therefore the windows are in many houses small and few in number, resembling, more often than otherwise, shot-holes.

If one also considers that in a majority of instances, boards suitable for flooring, after being purchased far away in Natal or the Cape Colony, had then to be conveyed by waggons, at an immense expenditure of valuable time and labour, to the Boer's place, the poor people who have settled down and built their houses in a new land, within the last few years, may well be excused the heinous crime of living upon earthen floors hardened with ant-heaps. Everything that the Boer required of comfort or luxury had to be brought from a distance. Even now, most of the commodities consumed by him are imported, reaching his hands only through Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, or Port Natal, loaded with heavy duties and middleman's profits. Yet, with all these difficulties, observant persons can always see signs not only of progress, but of an active, living, and quick improvement amongst even the rudest of these unfortunate but brave and enterprising people. I have noted with satisfaction, on nearly every farm I have visited, that new and improved buildings follow rapidly on the completion of the first. Everywhere one may observe that older houses are being used as waggon-shelters, coach-houses, and tool-rooms; whilst the families, and especially the more recently married members, live in buildings of later date, much more carefully constructed and incomparably better furnished than the first had been. Frequently these improvements have followed so rapidly upon each other, that upon one farm may be seen five, six, and even seven dwelling-houses; while yet another is in course of construction for the occupation of some would-be "Benedict." Quite apart from the influences of the various South African

Governments, the same class of progress is everywhere visible,—just as much visible in the far Transvaal as along the north-western border of the Cape Colony, or in the nearer and more recently settled district called the “Middleveld” of the Orange Free State—a district whose progress has been accelerated by its nearness to the Diamond Fields.

There are hundreds of English farmers living away from the coast, whose houses are quite as open to reproach, on the grounds of clay floors and ugliness, as are the worst of those of the Boers. Yet *these* farmers had advantages the Boers never had. They had come prepared with money, brought from Europe, or perhaps earned on the Diamond Fields, to settle and set up houses for themselves. Their capital, much or little, was in their own hands, and could be laid out upon improvements. How different from the condition of the Boer! This man, with his family, surrounded by women and helpless little children, driving before him a few animals, then of no market value, but which he had to defend from hour to hour against watchful and ever-hostile enemies, having saved a remnant of his stock and his family from fever, thirst, war, and the desert, at length found a spot whereon he could make his home. He had to commence almost like another Adam. Yet in twenty-five years he had not only created a home, but a country, which was worth taking from him. This is what angers the Boers. It has been asserted that the country was insolvent—hopelessly broken and bankrupt. It has been proved that it owed a quarter of a million. The people, however, point to their 145,000 square miles of new territory, traversed in every direction by roads; adorned in a few places with churches, small towns, and rising villages; and sprinkled over, at distances of nine or ten miles apart, with the dwellings of faithful and persevering pioneers. They say:—

“The debt of which you accuse us bears no proportion to the work we have done—is nothing compared to the value of the wilderness we have reclaimed. Crime is unknown amongst us. We have jails, but they are comparatively empty, although convictions here bear a very large proportion to the reported criminality. We fled from you years ago—leave us in peace. We shall pay our debts easily

enough—your presence can but tend to increase them, and to drive us through fresh wanderings, through new years of bloodshed and misery, to seek homes whither you will no longer follow us. We conquered and peopled Natal; you reaped the fruits of that conquest. What have you done for that colony? Do you seek to do with our Transvaal as you have done with it,—to make our land a place of abomination, defiled with female slavery, reeking with paganism, and likely, as Natal is, only too soon to be red with blood?"<sup>1</sup>

It is with arguments such as these, urged by desperate men, those who have, in the name of England, annexed the Transvaal, will soon have to deal; and it is to prepare England and the English people for a ready comprehension of difficulties rapidly arising, that I have ventured, in plain and unmistakable language, to put the Boers' case—as Boers see it—before the nation.

The Dutch South Africans, as a people, have never been averse to religious or educational influences, though they have been accused of being hostile to both. Occasionally, however, one finds, by reference to the works of persons who cannot be accused of being prejudiced in their favour, little incidents that show their character in a very different and much brighter light than one would expect from unfriendly critics. The Rev. Mr Thomas, a Welshman, even so far back as 1858, spoke of them in the following way: "Although the coloured people are seldom allowed to enter the Dutch Church, still the masters build commodious places of worship for them, and even support missionaries who labour amongst them." He gives an instance of this, as seen by him at Victoria West, which was then, and still is, as much a piece of Boerland as if situated north of the Vaal River. He mentions that the Rev. Mr Leibrandt, whom he calls "the respected and much-beloved minister of the Dutch Reformed Church," had succeeded in erecting a large

<sup>1</sup> "Here, in Natal, are nearly 400,000 natives who have come in under shelter of the British Government to escape the tyranny of their own chiefs. They are allowed as much land as they want for their locations. They are polygamists, and treat their women as slaves, while they themselves idle, or do worse. There is little wonder that with such surroundings few English colonists think of Natal as a permanent home."—FRONDE.

and substantial chapel for the use of the natives—for whom the Dutch farmers supported a missionary. Again, we find that the services to the natives at all the mission stations were almost invariably in Dutch, proving sufficiently that it was the civilising influence of the Dutch and their language that had brought light first amongst the converts. In page 47 of his book, the same writer, after describing the Boers' conquest of Sechele, says :—

“Being taught by sad experience that the level country or open field would give his foe the advantage over him, Sechele had selected a most inaccessible spot upon which to build his new town. It was a high and very rocky hill in the midst of others; and to prevent the approach of the Dutch cavalry he had sunk holes around the foot of it. Since the breaking up of the mission at Kolobeng, six or seven years previously, a native teacher named ‘Paul’ had been left with Sechele. Not satisfied with a man of the same colour as himself, and despairing of getting another European missionary from the London Missionary Society, Sechele appealed to Pretorius, the President of the Transvaal Republic, for German missionaries, and obtained them. These missionaries were Hanoverians, and had been resident at Liteyana for some time before we passed through.”

In addition to this incident, which shows the desire of the Dutch to extend honest Christian influences even amongst the unfriendly tribes, it has come within my own observation that much consideration has been shown to missionary interests in the Transvaal proper. At many places, the most noteworthy of which is Botsabelo, large establishments are maintained for the conversion of the heathen; and it is a matter of complaint amongst Englishmen, and persons engaged in trade, that too many facilities, and too many protections, and too much consideration, have been given by the Dutch Government to these institutions. It is a fact—and I wish here to draw especial attention to it—that the stations are permitted to import goods duty free, whereby they are enabled to undersell the storekeepers and shopkeepers of neighbouring villages. That trading forms a marked feature of some of the foreign mission stations in the Transvaal is simply undeniable truth. A couple of years ago I wanted saddles at Middleburg, which I could only obtain at my price, by the shopkeeper from whom I desired to purchase obtaining them from the missionary, who had imported them duty free.

In the matter of education, the Boers, notwithstanding the slanders of their enemies, can be proved to be eminently progressive. I have never known any other people whose children, of themselves, so earnestly sought for and so constantly desired to be placed within reach of modern culture. I have known English children shunning the schoolmaster as they would the plague, whilst little Boers were glad to avail themselves of every possibility of acquiring instruction. Their Church law and their domestic system both tend strongly in this direction; and it is want of opportunity, and not want of earnestness, that should be cited as an all-sufficient reason for the (to casual observer) apparent ignorance of too many families. I have known repeated instances where the children of even the poorer Boers, struggling for light and knowledge, complained, with justice and reason, to their parents of idleness and neglect on the part of the masters hired to teach them.

In connection with this subject, it is not a little interesting to remark the hold education has taken in the Orange Free State, essentially a Boer republic. Its grants for educational purposes are greater, in proportion to the number of its inhabitants, and its allowances for teachers and schools of the normal and rudimentary type are more liberal, than those of any of our colonies. In every village, and in nearly every ward, schoolhouses have been built at an expense of from £300 to £400 each; and the provision for teachers is sufficient to enable them to live and marry in comfort and respectability.

In the district of the Great Middleveld, which a few years ago was but a trackless plain of limestone and sand, great and important changes have been effected through the loan by Government to the farmers of capital destined for an educational fund. This money was lent to proprietors, on mortgage (at from 6 to 12 per cent per annum), for purposes of permanent improvement. By it, dams in great numbers, and having an enormous collective capacity, have been constructed to retain the rainfall over a previously arid and desert country. The interest of the money so invested forms a permanent source of income for the Education Board.

Whether one looks to the Boers of Natal, where there are

still a few—to the Cape Colony, where they are the majority—or to the Free State and the Transvaal, in which they are predominant,—hearty praise and genuine admiration must be the result of an examination of their attempts at self-education. Children are not, by the Church law, admitted to Church membership by confirmation till they can show some progress in the knowledge of that which is the foundation of all true education—“religion and the truth of the Gospels.” This Church regulation is capable of being made more stringent as years roll on and educational facilities become multiplied. I have thus no doubt whatever that these peasant proprietors will, ere long, place themselves on a level with, if not ahead of, races labouring under no such terrible disabilities as they have been subject to during their forty-four years of sorrowful journeyings in the wilderness.

I have said before that their character is deeply impressed by their long period of homeless flight. This is remarkable even in the names they have given to their settlements. Weenen, in Natal, means “the weeping;” Lydenberg, in the north-east of the Transvaal, is “the mountain of sorrow.” The “trek” has set its mark even on their household ways. Hundreds of families, down to the present hour, have not abandoned the practice to which they were reduced in the wilds, of sleeping half dressed, ever ready to repel an enemy, or to protect their stock from wild beasts and prowling thieves. This habit, so easily accounted for, is abhorrent to the untravelled European, who, not finding in his own experience anything to justify such a departure from civilised custom, most uncharitably sets down these poor people as persons of dirty ways and uncleanly habits, because they are not as he is. I think it must have been many years after the Israelites made good their journey over the Jordan before they had regained the point at which the commencement of *their* great “trek” found them. An impartial historian, comparing the two peoples, would certainly be inclined to give a great deal of credit to the South African Dutch for their adherence to virtue, their fidelity to religion, and their steadfast clingsings to old customs and old ways through long periods of contact with an ever-present barbarism, and of separation from every refining and conservative influence.

They have come victoriously out of a dreadful trial. Is it to be wondered at that now they cry aloud to England, saying, "Do not rob us of the freedom we have won through so much trial and agony?"

Amongst the influences which have been most potent in restraining the Dutch South Africans from being corrupted by the barbarism with which they were in almost continual contact, the chief was that of their wives. These devoted females have ever been more patriotic and more determined to be free than even their lords and masters. When the great "trek" commenced from the Cape Colony, the women took as prominent a part in the emigration as did the men. Families moved off together, old and young, male and female, with their waggons, horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and some little furniture. Thus a domestic character was given to the movement from its very initiation, which made it differ, in an immeasurable degree, from the pouring forth of hordes of young unmarried men that we witness nowadays. The proportions between the sexes maintained themselves throughout the whole of the journeyings of these people. Children grew up and were married, new families were formed, other children were born and grew up in their turn to be fathers, before the final settlement and consolidation of the Transvaal took place in 1858. Throughout the whole of this period—as girls, as mothers, and as grandmothers—the softer sex accompanied and shared in the perils, the labours, and the privations of the men. In Natal, in the earlier days, many of them performed acts of heroic courage—carrying the bullet-bags, replenishing the powder-flasks, removing the wounded, bringing water to the thirsty and food to the hungry, in many desperate and fatal engagements. True as wives, tender as nurses, earnest in prayer, and wise in council, these women not unnaturally gained a lofty influence amongst the migrating people. They have ever been, and still remain, entirely anti-English. Major Charters, R.A., speaking of them as he saw them in 1841, says :—

"The spirit of dislike to English sway was remarkably dominant amongst the women. Many of these who formerly had lived in affluence, but were now in comparative want, and subject to all the inconveniences



accompanying the insecure state in which they were existing,—having lost, moreover, their husbands and brothers by the savages,—still rejected with scorn the idea of returning to the Colony. If any of the men began to droop or lose courage, they urged them on to fresh exertions, and kept alive the spirit of resistance within them."

This feeling in favour of independence is as vivid to-day, and as truly a part of the character of the female Boer, as it ever has been. These women are thoroughly and entirely attached to their families—are strictly conservative, and would urge, and are prepared now to urge, that every sacrifice, including life and property, should be made for the furtherance of the desire of their people to be free from the original allegiance that was forced on them by the cession of the Cape Colony in 1806. I have heard them say that, "if the mothers and wives of England could be made aware of their losses, trials, and sorrows, and of their determination to expose themselves to fresh miseries and still greater evils rather than submit to a rule they detest, the sons and husbands of English homes would never have been sent to destroy theirs."

This feeling has, I am sorry to say, been recently added to and strengthened by a most uncalled-for and reckless attack upon the Dutch South African women, which appeared in the 'Nineteenth Century,' and is ascribed to an inexperienced *attaché* of Sir Theophilus Shepstone—one who knows about as little of the women he defamed as a Patagonian savage might.

This aversion to English rule must not, however, be supposed to include any personal hostility or want of hospitality to Englishmen. Captain Patterson, who was recently travelling with Mr Sargeaunt, junior, a son of William C. Sargeaunt, C.M.G., Crown Agent for the Colonies, and others for hunting purposes, through the north-eastern districts of the Transvaal, has repeatedly and publicly stated the extreme gratification he and his party felt at the kindness with which they were everywhere treated. A Scotch store-keeper also, who attempted to journey from Upper Caledon to Durban, with a trap and two horses, told me "that he was not only most kindly welcomed and made comfortable all along his road, but that he could not prevail upon his Boer entertainers to accept payment, even for the feeds supplied to his horses."

Of course, along the main routes of traffic, travellers cannot expect to meet with such liberality from the farmers whose houses are continually invaded by wanderers—chiefly poor Englishmen and other Europeans—who resemble in many important peculiarities the ubiquitous British tramp, so well known in casual wards and county prisons. The Boers have acquired a horror of this sort of representative of England's greatness. The fellows have been known, at lonely farmhouses, to force their unwelcome presence on the inhabitants with threats; and their appearance throughout the country has become a source of continual complainings and heart-burnings by reason of their depredations and levying of black-mail. But very different from the reception given to these vagrants is that accorded to people of any nation, travelling with decent equipages or on horseback. These, if they are commonly polite, and fall in with any degree of grace with the customs of the country, are invariably well treated, being admitted to the house, and freely offered what food and accommodation it can afford. I may here note one of the charges most frequently made against the Boers,—that they are unneighbourly, cannot live at peace with English farmers, and are always striving to shake themselves free from the ways and surroundings of civilisation whenever it approaches them. That this is not unnatural a glance at their cattle-farming arrangements will easily show. An Englishman has to live beside a Boer farm, instantly a danger arises that disease will be brought amongst the cattle. The Englishman swaps (chops) and exchanges, engages in transport-riding, obtains cattle he cares little how or where, and may at any moment be the cause of great loss to his neighbours by contaminating their herds with lung sickness and worse diseases. Disputes, therefore, constantly arise about boundaries, which would be of little or no importance if only Boers were neighbours to Boers, because the Dutch South African farmer's stock is always of his own, or of other clean and well-known raising. So fond, indeed, are the Boers of keeping the same stock in a family, that at their auctions, which invariably take place on the occurrence of a death, members of the deceased's

family will bid double the market value for the animals put up for sale rather than allow a clean herd to be broken up and scattered away from the original proprietary. Disputes about boundaries are quickly followed by the impounding of cattle—a source of grave irritation. I am sorry to say that English settlers have been known in a poor neighbourhood to live almost entirely from pound-fees and mileage, earned by continual and often very unnecessary intermeddling with their neighbours' herds.

This, with the insolent contempt for his neighbour's ways and habits too often manifested by the stranger, is the cause of many feuds and removals. The foreigner comes into a country which has been conquered by the energy and at the risk of other men. For a few pounds he finds ready to his hand a place cleared equally of wild beasts and fierce barbarians. He has no sympathy with the people amongst whom he comes to plant himself—no share in their sorrows, and no interest in their history. Is it to be wondered at that a mutual repulsion should exist between such opposites? There are often also to be found amongst our colonists men capable of any meanness, and who are only restrained from open robbery by fear of the law.

A circumstance which took place some years ago, and by which the English name was brought into great contempt amongst even a Kafir race, may not here be out of place.

A Basuto chief wanted a cannon, and had repeatedly asked an English trader located at his kraal whether one could not be made if he provided the materials. The trader knew nothing about cannon-founding, but having been a puddler, or some such thing, in his youth, he calculated how he could best outwit the man under whose protection and at whose place he was living. He told the chief that a brass cannon could be made; and to that end induced him to purchase no less than 12,000 lb. weight of expensive brass and copper wire, promising that by the time all the material would be collected, a brother of his from the Royal Arsenal in England would arrive to make the gun. The difficulty now was about the brother. One night, however, a half-starved vagrant crept up to the trader's hut, having slipped into Basutoland to be out of the way of the police. The instant

he hove in sight our friend rushed forward eagerly, exclaiming in English, "Don't speak for your life! throw your arms round my neck and pretend you are my long-lost brother." The warm greeting requested was instantly exchanged between the two rascals, and the new-comer was speedily hurried into the house, out of sight, where he was washed, dressed, and instructed in the part he had to play. The next day the chief, who of course had heard of the arrival, came down to inquire if this was not the cannon-founder? and was gratified by hearing that it was. An attempt was now made to commence the work. A large quantity of metal was actually fused, and a coarse casting made of what might, by a stretch of the imagination, be conceived to represent the rudimentary form of a cannon. With this success the Basutos were, of course, delighted.

The next part in the play was to get a last haul out of the chief before the confederates would decamp. He was sent for and told that a lathe with a bore of enormous size, some valuable finishing tools, and other things, were required to complete the work. These goods could be obtained in Natal, but only by white men, as an inquiry for them by Kafirs might arouse suspicion. The unsuspecting chief gave sixteen horses for this purchase. The thieves then pretended to remember that a portion of the breech—that containing the touch-hole—should have let into it a mass of solid silver to prevent its burning away too readily. Accordingly a collection of half-crowns and shillings was made, with which and the horses the confederates bolted, leaving their brass casting as a standing monument and perpetual reminder of their rascality. Other blackguardisms are often practised not only against Kafirs but against farmers. There are everywhere to be found men whose thefts, frauds, and daring robberies have rendered them almost universally known throughout South Africa.

Those who read newspaper "daily" reports will not find it difficult to guess who are pre-eminent in brutality. As I was travelling in June by post-cart from Pretoria, I heard from a fellow-passenger, Mr Jennings, a story of revolting cruelty, that has evoked, for hundreds of miles throughout Boerland, deep and widespread contempt for a people who

can be guilty of such crimes. There was not long ago a forge near Strydoms Spruit, a little river on the Pretoria road, where a white girl of good family was brutally ill-used by her brother, and compelled to labour as a blacksmith's help. This unfortunate creature eventually became mad, and has been seen tied up, hungry, to a willow-tree, while her screams pierced the air. Death, I have been told, subsequently released her from her sufferings. Such foul treatment of a woman, and that woman the fellow's sister, had never previously been heard of amongst the primitive, order-loving, mother-revering farmers. They could hardly conceive it possible that earth could shelter such a monster as this inhuman brother. I have been told that they have been additionally shocked since by seeing the same man or his brother—a leader of *ton*—received into governing circles, and placed amongst the new rulers of their land.

That the Boers have vices and strong prejudices I do not deny. Some of these give rise to comical incidents, showing at once their simplicity and their weakness.

I remember long ago, some farmers at *Nacht-maal*—the communion service of the Dutch Church—thronged into a store to make purchases after their usual fashion. One of them who had bought a box of tea, open, and out of which a few pounds had been taken as a sample, became enamoured of a fine bar of lead lying on the counter. With a rapidity which, nevertheless, did not escape the eyes of the store-keeper, he popped it into the tea-chest, which had been already weighed. When he was settling up, however, pretending to discover some defect in the weighing, the counter-man reweighed the case; and as he charged 4s. 4d. per lb. for tea, the Dutchman (who of course could not draw attention to the nine-pound bar he had thrust into it) had the pleasure of paying at that rate for the lead.

The principal evil amongst them seems to be their system of too early marriages. Young people are not unfrequently beginning life as married men and women at the period when an Englishman's apprenticeship more often commences. They take on themselves the cares of a family, and all the troubles of domestic life, at almost incredibly early ages, sometimes beginning the world with very scanty

means, and having to labour in much the same way as their fathers did during the original settlement, for many long years before they can gain any approximation to the comforts they enjoyed in the paternal homes. This early domesticity, no doubt, has in some directions excellent results, but it unfits many young men for war and border service, weakening terribly the available force of the farming population. Many of the girls are extremely pretty, and I have found beauties amongst the Boers quite as much in demand as amongst more favoured nations. I have known a young girl whose manners, self-possession, and education would have been creditable to the daughter of people of a far higher class in life. She could dress well and dance well, and was as virtuous and amiable as any young lady in Europe. She married among her own people; and I am not the least ashamed to say that many Europeans, including myself, seemed to have been very sorry for it. Many of the elder Boer ladies are not uncomely. Even in the wild neighbourhood of Lydenberg itself there are some to be seen bearing traces of beauty of no ordinary character, and whose lives are useful, adorning and cheering the homes of their husbands and children.

The men, as has been remarked by many previous writers, are splendid specimens of humanity—far over the middle height, powerful, robust, and inured to hardships and long travel; simple and temperate, they are the material of which, with proper care, a far-seeing man would essay to build up a nation. They are called parsimonious and mean, but for my part I feel inclined to commend them for frugality and thrift, rather than to despise them for their avoidance of luxury. They are essentially colonists and settlers. They look for no home outside South Africa; and in this, I am persuaded, consists their great excellence as a colonising people. A European entering into South Africa almost invariably directs all his exertions to the making of what he considers a sufficient sum with which to return to his old home: this too frequently leads him to acts of questionable morality. But South Africa is the home of the Boer. He is ever and always the domesticated South African settler; and therefore, as a rule, we find him a farmer and

a herdsman, a flockmaster or a minister of the Dutch Church—but seldom or never a storekeeper or a middleman.

In connection with these middlemen and their influence on political questions I shall have something to say when I deal with trade in a later chapter. In this, I have tried to confine myself to the Boers and their ways.

I have said before that the Dutch are, in religion, a narrow-minded people. This was exhibited in a peculiarly strange form, during the late war, in the Kruger's Post laager. In the little fort was an English storekeeper named Glynn, whose daughters had a piano, on which they would occasionally play “dance and other profane” music. This was a source of great annoyance to their pious neighbours, who in many respects resemble our own early Puritans. It was requested that the piano should be silenced, as the music might tempt the anger of Heaven, if persisted in, during a time of war and trial. If a girl in the laager (a defended encampment) were frivolous or light in her conduct, she was liable to be arrested and brought for trial before the fathers of the Church, from whom she might receive a severe caution, or even the punishment of removal. I have not heard, however, that this authority had to be at any time enforced against any of the young ladies, whose conduct in confined quarters and crowded barracks, exposed to many temptations during the war, was thoroughly and entirely creditable to their religious training.

## CHAPTER III.

## FIRST SECOCOENI WAR.

Secocoeni's people—Gold—The outbreak—Misunderstood piety—Mistaken impressions—A Bushman's stratagem.

SECOCOENI, chief of the Bapidi, the son of Sequati, as I have more fully explained in another chapter, occupies a very rugged and barbarous district in the far north-east of the Transvaal. This reserve, by treaty with Sequati his father, should be bounded on the south and south-east by the Steelport River, and would comprise the district (including the Lulu Mountains) confined in the angle between that stream and the Oliphants River, into which it flows. By the Boundary Treaty, armed men were prohibited from crossing the Steelport River, lest they should disturb relations on either side. Later on, the chief, following a policy not dissimilar to that which marked the course of the formation of other and greater Kafir nations, and especially of the Aman-dabele, sought, by receiving refugees under his protection, to increase his tribal power and territorial influence. In this way he added to his hereditary tribe a body of men who had quarrelled with the Amaswazi. The chief of these refugees—Umsoet—brought about 300 warriors with him. Besides these there came Mapolaners, Knobnose Kafirs, Cannibals, Mambeyers, and other small knots of men from broken tribes, or sections that had split off from greater tribes, having quarrelled with their supreme chief. Each of these fragments, seeking refuge with Secocoeni, marched in under the guidance of its own chiefs and headmen, under whose government their new protector permitted them to remain. He



gave them land and fixed them along the outposts, and in places where they could protect the more exposed portions of his own mountainous and difficult country. These gradually formed a chain of defence, extending from the Drakensberg along the hilly country by the Origstadt and Speckboom, past the south point of the Lulu to Mapoch, a chief whose strong position almost impinges upon the main road from Middleburg to Lydenberg. As the chief thus increased the number of his people, he was favoured in his project for extending his territory, by natural circumstances, which conspired to force back from the "treaty boundary line" the European farmers living closest to it. The border lands, which may generally be taken to mean the whole country between the main transport road—from Middleburg to Pretorius's Kop, *via* Pilgrim's Rest—and the Steelpoort River, consist of Bushveld, the habitat of fever of a malignant description, and are unhealthy during the greater part of the year, not only for stock but for men. In the valley of Origstadt, a town formed by the Boers was long since entirely abandoned by them—not in consequence of Kafir aggression, but because the settlers had been twice decimated by fever. There was no family resident in that valley into which death had not made its way. Some perished entirely. The same thing occurred along the whole border line, and the farmers tracked out to what is known as the Highveld—the great, bare, but healthy and excellent pasture-lands forming the plateau of the Transvaal proper. It is unnecessary for me here to go at great length into the distinction of Highveld and Bushveld. It is sufficient for the purpose of this narrative to state that northward and eastward from Lydenberg, Bushveld and Lowveld are convertible terms, and that the prevalence of sickness has hitherto caused hundreds of farmers, with their families, to quit the lower and more bushy country, and go to the higher, cooler, treeless regions which they had neglected to occupy on their first migration into the country. This enabled Secocoeni, without actual hostilities, to fill up with his new allies and dependants lands on the Transvaal side of the treaty line. The tribes or fragments of tribes to which he gave lands were invariably better fighting men than were his own sub-

jects; some of them were Zulus; all were poor, fierce, and contentious, and they swarmed, armed and insolent, over the ground which, by Sequati's treaty, they should not have intruded on. I must now state what seems to have been hitherto ignored,—that my own observations have led me to the conclusion that the Boers did not in any way covet the lands of the chief; neither did they object very much to the slight extension of territory gained by his system of harbouring refugees; all they seemed to have desired at any time was, that the savages on their borders, or living on and amongst their farms, should not steal, or make armed encroachments into the more settled portions of the country. Discoveries of gold, however, in 1871, brought into the neighbourhood, and especially into a location called Pilgrim's Rest, 36 miles from Lydenberg, numbers of adventurous miners. These men sought labour, and also desired to be permitted to extend their prospecting and mining operations over territories beyond the limit of Republican control; and the first hint that reached my ears of trouble with Secocoeni was when, in 1874, an English gentleman—the gold commissioner—irritated (justly or unjustly, it matters not which) by the conduct of his Kafir neighbours, got himself into a position of pronounced hostility against Secocoeni.

Of course there had been in previous years border troubles. Mapoch, living within the line, had been in arms against the farmers, but had been twice reduced to submission, and was now confined to his own mountain. Thefts had occurred; Umsoet and others had stolen cattle from the Boers; but with the Bapedi there had been peace from the time of the treaty with Sequati, Secocoeni's father, of whom I have spoken.

A new element now comes into the story. Some German missionaries having failed to convert to their views the chief and headmen of the Bapedi, left Secocoeni's country, flying by night from the vengeance of the king, and took refuge with their converts near certain Transvaal towns. The Rev. Mr Nachtigal subsequently established a very fine and flourishing station between Lydenberg and the Speckboom River. Lower down this stream, however, one Johannes settled himself in a strong position, where he built a

fortified village, whence he could either visit the mission station or steal cattle, whichever suited his disposition. Now, although the ground on which this man, who called himself a convert (because he and his people wore clothes, and were greater rogues than any other Kafirs in the vicinity), settled, was rocky and sterile, yet its possession was important, situated as it was amongst occupied farms, which were lawfully and entirely the property of the neighbouring farmers who visited this part of the country for purposes of timber-cutting and winter-pasturing. It is not to be expected that the Rev. Mr. Nachtigal and the expelled missionaries bore any goodwill to the chief who had banished them from his territory, by whom their lives had been threatened, and themselves seriously injured in property and prospects. I am not going to say that in anything which afterwards occurred, the Rev. Mr. Nachtigal, for whom I have much esteem, acted maliciously or from a desire to create ill-will and bloodshed; but it is to be feared that he, having suffered so much, not unnaturally was prone to exaggerate the hostile intentions of the Kafirs to his mission people, and to call out "War! war!" when there was no war. In the early part of 1876, Johannes's people began to be peculiarly obstructive to the farmers and mission station "volk," forbidding them to cut wood on the farm of Jankowitz, to which the Kafirs had not a shadow of right. From this small circumstance came the first war—a war for which Boer aggression is in no way responsible—a war which was perhaps unavoidable, but a war which, as I hope to show clearly, was not the result of an insatiate desire for lands on the part of the farmers, nor of a desire by any person to rob the Kafirs of their cattle; but which was deliberately provoked and brought about by Johannes's contempt of law, and fostered, I am sorry to say, by persons who had personal motives for believing the worst of the Kafirs, and who were not sorry that an opportunity should arise for weakening or breaking altogether the power of Secocoeni.

A wood-cutting party being turned back by Johannes's people, they complained to the magistrate. This man was a European, named Cooper. Under him there were no strictly Dutch officials, the public prosecutor being a German officer

from the British German Legion, and the sheriff and jailor Englishmen, or of English, not Dutch, descent. Mr Cooper very properly ordered the sheriff to protect the woodcutters, and to arrest and bring before him any persons molesting them. They subsequently returned with their waggon to the farm, close to Johannes' Stadt, where they proceeded to cut poles, and load them up for removal. Here they were again ordered by Johannes to desist, and were molested and threatened. The sheriff unfortunately failed to do his duty; and thus, for the first time, the Kafirs successfully defied the law. This was duly reported to the Executive in Pretoria as an act of rebellion.

From the time of this occurrence it began to be alleged that Johannes was acting under the orders of Secocoeni, that his intention was to provoke a quarrel, that the Bapedi had hostile intentions to the mission station and its people, and that war was inevitable. Kafirs employed on farms and in villages began to abscond, some stating that they had been sent for by their chief, while others left without giving notice. The foreign residents on the Gold Fields called loudly for protection, and by their action very much embarrassed the Republican authorities. On the Gold Fields, as elsewhere, there were to be found unscrupulous men, whose interest lay in fanning the flames of war. They may be briefly described as gun-runners and powder-sellers. They are a class not unknown in strictly British territory. Some of the miners, who had been prevented from prospecting in Secocoeni's territories, desired war, in order that that country might be thrown open to them. The mission Kafirs, fearing the king, spread the most alarming reports concerning his intentions; and whilst the executive power in Pretoria was engaged discussing the contempt of law committed by Johannes, a letter arrived from the Rev. Mr Nachtigal, stating that his mission station had been burned and mission Kafirs killed.

There is but one post weekly from Lydenberg to Pretoria; and although it turned out afterwards that Mr Nachtigal's report was unfounded—being the result of some panic rumour that had reached him at the last moment before the mail started—war was declared against the Kafirs. For

this war the Republic was unprepared. The President was entirely on the side of peace; but the news of the attack on the mission station, with the other reported lawlessnesses of the Kafirs, so excited the Raad, that Thomas Burgers, even against his own convictions, was forced into the field.

Of the war itself I need say little. Its history has reached the public distorted to such an extent by the bias of partisan writers, that I can have little hope that anything I may say will induce persons to view the circumstances connected with it in a way different from that in which they have hitherto viewed them. The public have been told that the Boers behaved in a most cowardly manner—that they fled from 'Thaba Mosegu in wild confusion to their homes, after having refused to advance against the enemy, or even to continue an assault already commenced. This I must say, —farmers are not under the same discipline in the field as drilled soldiers have to submit to. The war was not conducted according to farmers' methods of fighting. It seemed to them a vast meaningless promenade, undertaken at enormous expense, which kept themselves, their waggons, and cattle, from their homes at a most unseasonable period. They knew the country they were in; they were aware that if they remained a few weeks longer in its deadly and pestilential climate they would be almost certain to lose hundreds of horses, thousands of cattle, and many valuable lives, by irresistible fevers and dreadful desolating sicknesses. There was no more chance of holding them together than Charles Edward had in his attempted advance on London, in 1745, of keeping his Highland clans from retreat, when they had once resolved upon their return homewards.

The army was too large. Some had left their houses hurriedly, and wanted to go back to look after their children and stock. Self-interest, family ties, weariness of continual travel, fear of fever and horse-sickness—all these, combined with the most amiable motives, which in any other place but a battle-field would have been highly praiseworthy, dissolved the Commando.<sup>1</sup> The enemies of the Republic have since

<sup>1</sup> Commando, an unpaid force levied under border law, with the published consent of the Executive.

succeeded in inducing the world to fix upon it the stigma of cowardice.

But whatever may be said of the Boers' desertion from the field, they had already done the Kafirs much injury, and had effectually checked the cravings for war of a majority of the Basutos.

I intend to deal in another place with the story of Johannes's Kop, the Boers having in this instance been accused not only of cowardice, but of treachery to their allies. The circumstances, doubtless, still dwell in the remembrance of many. I shall only now say that I have good grounds for stating that a fine of £500, imposed by the Boer Government on Commandant Coetzee for alleged cowardice on that occasion, has been remitted by the English authorities, who are satisfied that the punishment and the imputation were alike undeserved.

A short story will illustrate the very feeble grounds on which some persons pretend to impute cowardice to others whose simple manners and religious training they are unable to appreciate.

On the march from Lydenberg to the ground to be occupied before Johannes' Stadt, a farmer and hotel-keeper was riding through the night on a small worthless pony beside a Boer. The way was dark, the ground broken and intricate. There was no road, and every bush or rock might swarm with enemies. A man might reasonably expect wounds or death at any moment. The Englishman heard the Boer praying to himself, or rather to God, as he rode along—praying that God would deliver him from the dangers of the fight, and give him strength and courage to do his best for the Commando. The Boer's simple habits of earnest piety had taught him no false shame; he felt nothing to be ashamed of in praying at a period of danger. This prayer did not stop his horse; he was still riding on to where they expected to meet the enemy.

My civilised friend mistook the man's feelings altogether, and said to him, "Change horses with me; my pony is good enough for you to ride home on. I shall make proper excuses, so that you shall not be blamed for your absence.

As you are afraid, why not go?" The poor Boer's reply was characteristic, at once of his faith, his simplicity, and his idea of duty, which, after all, is something higher than mere courage. "No, my friend," he said; "I have come, and I have got to go on, and do my best. I am afraid, but I will go on, and God will help me." The man, in my opinion, both then and on the next day, did his duty with honour and courage; but I cannot yet persuade my sceptical friend that this pious man was not a most horrible coward. So much for Johannes's affair.

If the President, Thomas Burgers, had known the Kafirs thoroughly, the ridiculous statements that got into circulation after his retreat from Secocoeni—to the effect that the Kafirs were victorious, and were now prepared, as the 'Scotsman's' correspondent of 4th December 1876 says, in their turn to invade the Transvaal—could never have got afloat. If the Boer Commando had been really unsuccessful in the estimation of their enemy, it would never have escaped without serious loss from the valley of Mosegu. The fact is, and was in reality then, but the President did not know it, that the natives looked on the Boers' return to their own country as the most natural and proper thing in the world. Secocoeni's town was in flames; he had seen an enemy clambering over his highest hills, burning and slaying within the stone walls of his favourite stronghold; and he considered their retreat from the fever, horse-sickness, and other disagreeables of his miserable and devastated country, a most reasonable, rational, and victorious proceeding.

Throughout the march from Secocoeni's hills to Kruger's Post, but one attempt was made—and that by but a small body of Kafirs—to molest the Commando. One man only was lost—shot dead in the President's waggon—in this so-called disgraceful fight. This phase of the question has been very clearly and accurately referred to in a letter, dated "Albemarle Hotel, 10th July 1878," written by the deputation from the Transvaal farmers, Messrs Kruger and Joubert, to her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, wherein I find the following words:—

“With respect to the third point—viz., the defencelessness of the country, the encroachments of the natives, and the failure of the war with Secocoeni—these, as well as the financial troubles, we are also prepared to a certain extent to admit, though we utterly reject the exaggeration with which they have been described, and the inferences of utter disorganisation and danger which have been drawn from them.

“We deny the inference which has been drawn from the failure to dislodge a chief from fastnesses, such as Secocoeni occupied, at the first attempt. He had been reduced to the greatest straits, and had sent to Pretoria to sue for peace, which, under the pressure of the circumstances in which the Government of the Republic found themselves, owing to the action of the British authorities in supporting the cause of the rebel chief, was ultimately agreed to upon the payment of a fine, which fine is now being enforced by the Administrator. It is utterly incorrect to say that there was any danger to be feared from Secocoeni, for it is well known that he never came beyond his own strongholds.”

The Kafirs, far from being likely to invade the Transvaal, were in a condition of utter doubt and uncertainty for weeks after the great Commando had left the country, and the abandonment of the campaign by what is most unjustly termed the flight of the farmers, which occurred on the 2d of August 1876.

It was not until the 29th of September that the natives mustered courage sufficient to assume the aggressive against Fort Burgers, where, as I have told elsewhere, they failed to make any impression on the little garrison. From this latter date, as is well known, the initiative had always to be taken by the volunteers.

I knew a Bushman once, who, when in the Thornveld, far from his home, discovered that a lion intended to make a meal of him. The great brute met him in a jocose sort of way, at two or three points of his path, bounding on each occasion back into the bush, making his startled victim fully believe his time had come. When the lion had played this trick for a third and a fourth time, in much the same way as a cat might do with a cockroach, the path entered great reeds and tall grass. The Bushman, who still kept his wits about him, now determined to pay off his enemy in his own coin. Knowing the lion was in front of him, he dodged off to the right, under the wind, ascertained the whereabouts of the beast, and betook himself to a course of quiet watchfulness. The big cat, when he in his deep wisdom thought the man



should come along the path, found to his evident surprise that disappointment was in store for him. He put his head to the ground and roared with annoyance, when his eye caught sight of the Bushman peeping over some grass at him. Before he had quite made up his mind what to do, the poor little man was taking sights at him from another quarter, to which the lion of course at once directed all his attention. The Bushman now shook the reeds and showed in another place, when the powerful but suspicious animal, getting alarmed in his turn, began to think he was the hunted party. The brave little Bushman, who left no circumstance unnoticed, began to steal slowly but visibly towards his foe, who, falling into a state of utter doubt and trepidation, fairly bolted.

The Kafirs, after the retreat from Secocoeni's town, felt much as the lion did, and consequently were not dangerous to the Transvaal. The Boers, who are well aware of this fact, feel not unnaturally aggrieved at Lord Carnarvon being so easily persuaded to sanction an annexation, which was unfairly represented to him as necessary for their preservation.

In the beginning of August 1876, the President decided to contain Secocoeni within his own limits during the spring, summer, and autumn—that is, the then fast-approaching sickly season—by volunteer forces who would live in forts, stop the Kafirs from cultivating their lands, and prevent them making irruptions into the settled country. One of these forts was occupied almost entirely by Africanders, the other by men of European birth. The men who occupied these advanced positions were, by the enemies of the Republic, who now became noisy, repeatedly accused of committing atrocities, and of murdering captives and others in cold blood.

I am glad to be able to state that the British authorities, on taking possession of the Transvaal, after proper inquiry made from the enemy, as well as of the volunteers, have found no reason for believing those charges; and a distinguished officer of the Queen's army, General Sir A. T. Cunynghame, K.C.B., said, at a public banquet given in

his honour at Lydenberg, "The army which he represented was satisfied that the volunteers had done their duty with honour and courage."

In January 1877, Secocoeni sued for peace from the Republic, which was granted to him, after some demur, conditionally—on his confining his tribe within narrowed limits, and on his agreeing to pay a couple of thousand cattle as a war indemnity.

## CHAPTER IV.

## LYDENBERG VOLUNTEER CORPS.

The Fort—Scenes in Kafirland—Recruiting under difficulties—Our first fight—Foreign Enlistment Act—Kafir intelligence—Battle of Mount Moronè—A fatal fight—Fall of Von Schlieckmann—An ancient city—Skirmishing—Windvogel—Life amongst the L. V. C.—A night march—Kafir allies—Wild dogs—Stratagems of Kafir war—"The Gunn of Gunn"—A converted piper—Burnt alive.

I do not think any work on the Transvaal would be complete without a sketch of the Lydenberg Volunteers, the first body of foreign troops ever employed by the Republic. Their origin was thus: When the Boer Commando determined on moving homewards, and had reached the Steelport River, about eighteen miles from Secocoeni's town, Captain von Schlieckmann, a young, handsome, and brave German, the favourite nephew of General Manteuffel, related to many Prussian notables, who had been decorated for Weissembourg with the Iron Cross, and had been *aide* to Count von Arnim, and who had attracted the President's attention by his reckless valour, proposed that he should raise a corps which with others should occupy the frontier, live in forts, and from them harass the enemy during the spring and summer, so as to prevent Secocoeni acquiring an undue stock of food with which to engage in a second campaign. This counsel was plainly good. It would not do to leave the border-line exposed to any raids Secocoeni might feel inclined to make. At the same time, the farmers could hardly be expected to remain on duty the whole season. It must always be remembered in favour of the farmers, that the country they inhabit is as large as France, and that they are thinly scattered over an immense area—so

thinly, indeed, that the average distance from farm to farm throughout the whole Transvaal is nine English miles. Each family requiring a protector and bread-winner, it was clearly necessary that some force must be hired to keep the field whilst the farmers went back to their proper avocations.

A very great difficulty now started up. If the forts were built far from Secocoeni, he would enlarge his boundaries, and be all the harder to watch; if, on the other hand, they were built close to Secocoeni's town, the loss of human and animal life during the coming sickly season must prove enormous. A sort of compromise was effected. It was settled that one fort, for which Afrianders were to be recruited, was to be established on the comparatively healthy and open plateau west of the Lulu Mountains. A second was projected for the spot then occupied by the retreating army—viz., the confluence of the Speckboom and Steelport rivers, in the bushveld and fever country.

Von Schlieckmann volunteered, if properly supplied with "salted horses" and arms, to hold this most dangerous position. Rules were drawn up by which volunteers were bound to occupy the forts, and do their utmost to prevent the enemy from picking, ploughing, or sowing. Government, on its side, was to find for them 100 horses: rifles, ammunition, saddles, food, and £5 per month per man, and give each of them a farm of 4000 acres on the close of the war. These farms the volunteers should occupy and defend, by themselves or by approved substitutes, for a period of five years.

A few men were got together on the spot, and the Steelport fort, afterwards called Fort Burgers, was commenced,—a six-angled enclosure about thirty yards wide, having a ditch, drawbridge, parapet, and platform. This did not take long to build. From its easterly angles were run out two long curtain-walls, enclosing what is known as a "kraal" for cattle and horses. These curtain-walls were protected by the fire of the angles from whence they sprang. The kraal or cattle-enclosure had its own gateway and drawbridge. At the end of the kraal furthest from the angular fort, was a sort of irregular redoubt, with a deep ditch and mud walls, defended by the thorns of the country laid along the para-

pet. The whole constituted the fort, which was situated on the edge of a flat overhanging a sharp bend of the Steelport, where this river, after flowing for miles between high mountains, turned and ran straight across the front of the position before bending again eastwards to its junction with the Speckboom.

For beauty the site could hardly be surpassed. West from the gate the view was splendid. In front over the river was a plain, dotted with mimosa and camel-thorn, here and there forming even a close bush. This plain was hemmed in by mountains—on the right by the spurs of the Lulu, and on the left by the towering height of Mount Moronè, along the base of which the Steelport ran. The plain narrowed backwards between the ranges into a valley or poort, which, as it receded from the fort, presented a gloomy and sometimes even terrific aspect. This was the Steel Poort, or pass. Through it,—winding in and out amongst rocks, under fearful precipices, past wild and gorgeous hollows rank with semi-tropical vegetation, through heavy clumps of thorny bush, and over naked rocky ridges,—ran a small footpath that led slowly upwards into a fertile valley, over which frowned the stronghold<sup>1</sup> of Umsoet, the most notorious and daring of the robber chiefs that fought for Secocoeni. To the north, and trending northwards twelve miles from the fort, spread the Lulu Mountains, a large portion of whose lower sides being clothed with bush presented a sombre aspect; but the upper portions of which, formed of crags and scarped walls of granite and porphyry, glittered grandly in the sun, affording in daylight a glorious and ever-changing spectacle, stretching out for miles to where the range ended abruptly near the Oliphants River.

Separated from this range by a sandy and thorny valley, down which ran the main road to the king's place, was Dwarsberg—a lofty mountain, presenting a vast buttress of red rock towards Fort Burgers. High on its rocky terraces eternally smoked the fires of the enemy's scouts, who, from their sheer elevation of 1700 feet, watched the fields and the fort below. To the east, vast piles of mountains cut the sky-line, ending far off in their parent mass, the

<sup>1</sup> Magnet Heights.

Drakensberg. South and south-east the view was more limited, being closed by some rising grounds, bushy, thorny, and barren, over which lay the road to Kruger's Post and home. On every side the fort was cut off from supplies, save those that might find their way through the devious defiles and dangerous passes of Oliphant's Poort and Krum Kloof (crooked glen). Wherever one looked—on the flats or down the valleys—nothing but dark thorns, large and small, met the view; wherever one turned his eyes higher, frowning mountains, wooded kloofs, stony gorges, or brilliant-red precipitous rocks were to be seen in endless variety. And on these rocky points, and deep in those wooded glens, fires and smokes constantly told of the presence of a wandering and watchful foe.

The fort being commenced, the great Commando continued its march, and as it has no more concern with us, I shall follow it no farther. Von Schlieckmann started for the Gold Fields to recruit. There he found a certain hostile element, which, encouraged by the mistaken action of the English Government in giving belligerent rights to Secoconi, and in recognising him as an independent sovereign, had now determined to prevent volunteers from the Fields joining the Republic. This was simply madness. The Gold Fields were in the Transvaal, and subject to Transvaal laws. A more stupid piece of impolicy can hardly be conceived than that which, for political spite or personal antipathy, would refuse assistance to order against barbarism. Newspaper articles were written, meetings held, and resolutions passed, deciding that any man daring to volunteer for the fort should never be permitted to return to the Gold Fields,—much the same thing as if the French Huguenots, when first in England, resolved to cut off and expel from their society any refugee who might enter the British service; or as if the Germans resident in America during the civil war had resisted recruiting amongst them for Federal purposes.

In defiance of all this nonsense thirty-seven volunteers were mustered, and marched off to Fort Burgers, the road to which, as I have previously said, ran through desperate defiles and gloomy passes. At one of these places Mapethle,

one of Secocoeni's principal warriors, lay in wait for them. The path, after leading for a few miles over a bushy flat, skirting the vast mass of Mount Moronè, was here suddenly obstructed by, and forced to wheel round, three lofty, rocky hills, also clothed in bush—spurs of the great mountain. The way narrowed to a width of a few feet, and passed so close under the rocks that stones could be thrown from them far over it. On the other side of the road spread an almost impenetrable jungle, as far as the Speckboom, about four miles off. At this nasty place an ambush was laid, but the volunteers, although they had never before been under fire, rapidly dispersed the enemy, driving them up the rocks and out of effective range in a few moments. The men reached the fort some hours afterwards—worn, but safe.

In the meanwhile, Von Schlieckmann, remembering that he had friends on the Diamond Fields, wrote to the author to recruit a hundred men for him, and he at the same time sent an agent to pick up any Germans that might be found there. The Foreign Enlistment Act presented a few difficulties, but these were overcome by a little ingenuity, and a body of ninety men—very decent fellows—were soon got together at Christiana, the nearest town in the Transvaal to the British Territory of Griqualand West.

There a most extraordinary incident occurred, showing the wonderful speed and accuracy with which news is circulated amongst the Kafir races. On the 2d of October, Mr Best, the resident magistrate, was informed by Kafirs coming from the Harts River that, on the previous Friday, an attack had been made on Fort Burgers; that two great white chiefs had been killed, many cattle taken, and that the place was not only surrounded but in danger. This news was treated as an exaggerated rumour; but on the Saturday night following, the down mail from Pretoria brought tidings of its almost literal accuracy. An express had reached Pretoria—300 miles nearer to Steelpoort than we were—telling of an assault on Friday, September 29th, on Fort Burgers, in which Lieutenants Knapp and George Robus had been slain, and no less than forty-three head of cattle captured by a Kafir Commando under Umsoet. This express was ridden by Mr Thomas Crane, of the firm of

Paul Henwood & Co., in the sharpest time on record. He rode with the despatches, on one horse, from Lydenberg to Pretoria—a distance of 180 miles' measurement—in twenty-four hours; but, through *Kafir sources*, the information had headed him and the mail by hundreds of miles. The story of the attack of the 29th and its repulse—for it was bravely repulsed by the little garrison—may be very properly given here in the order of dates.

From the fort to the foot of Moronè stretches a sandy plain, dotted with trees, containing about 2500 acres. This, as it gets narrowed into the gorge between the river and the mountains, becomes broken, being intruded upon in every direction by foot-hills and water-courses. The fort cattle were grazing on this plain, just out of rifle-range, on the morning of the 29th, in charge of some Dutch volunteers. Suddenly sprang out from gully and kloof hundreds of swarthy warriors, who set to work, shouting and firing, whilst others drove the cattle up over the steep hills between the river and the mountain. The guard, surprised and outnumbered, fled at once. Reidel, a German artillery officer, who had been left in temporary charge of the garrison, at once ordered men in pursuit. He, however, it must be remarked, had a force of but thirty-seven in all. Of these a few misbehaved; but Knapp, Robus, Kuhneisen, and a so-called infantry officer, whose name in mercy I will not mention, with sixteen men, sallied out on foot. Their object was to intercept the cattle now being run off at a prodigious rate, and to secure the horses which had broken away from the Kafirs, and were stampeding about in all directions. After a run of a mile, Knapp, Robus, and Kuhneisen—Europeans—found themselves amongst the enemy near the cattle, and involved in the broken water-worn foot-hills of the beginning of the pass; but on looking back, Knapp saw that he was no longer followed by the cautious infantry lieutenant, who had taken himself to safer ground instead of following the brave men who rushed so fiercely into danger. Undauntedly Knapp pushed on, fired at from all sides, his gaze fixed on the cattle—his whole demeanour, as the Kafirs afterwards described it, like that of a man possessed—his eyes glaring with fury and excitement. He was still closely



followed by Robus, firing from a Winchester, and the gallant Kuhneisen. Suddenly the low banks of the ravine, up which they were rushing, swarmed on both sides with the enemy; others were in front. These quailing before the fiery aspect of Knapp, opened out, and let him pass through, while a shower of bullets and a forest of spears hurtled and plunged after him. He was never again seen alive. The natives say he rushed forward for a dozen yards, bristling with spears like a porcupine. Robus fell at this moment, shot through the stomach, and calling to Kuhneisen not to desert him. Now ensued an episode worthy of all honour. Alone, amongst a thousand enemies, Adolph Kuhneisen fought on, till the Kafirs, believing him to be a demon, shrank from his horrid vicinity. Then—still watched and occasionally fired at—he bore his comrade's body back to the foot of a rock by the river, brought him water, and stubbornly awaited death. But although the Kafirs often threatened him, they molested him no more.

Whether they feared that lonely grimy European, clad only in shirt and trousers, kneeling, rifle in hand, over the fallen man's body, or whether some gleam of mercy crossed their savage hearts, I know not; but they let him alone. Had they attacked him again, they would have had an easy triumph. He had come to his last cartridge, and his grim resolve was, on firing it, to stab his comrade through the heart and then slay himself, that they might both escape the fiendish tortures and mutilations that Kafirs delight to deal out to a foeman taken alive. He was spared this dreadful necessity,—the sounds of the fight died away, and an hour afterwards he bore the nearly lifeless body of poor Robus to the gate of the fort. Another young German<sup>1</sup> also distinguished himself on this occasion. About an hour after the first alarm he was seen returning with two muskets and a bundle of spears taken from the enemy, driving before him a cow which he had recaptured, having, in fact, made a sally on his own account.

While these events were in progress, from the other side, down from the krantz (precipices) of Dwarsberg, and up from the valley of Secocoeni, rushed at least 2000 Kafirs,

<sup>1</sup> Haagman, now in the "Jagers," Prussia.