

Some time about 1814, Chaka began his career of conquest. Everything went down before him. He changed the mode of fighting in the field—of movement in the campaign. To throw the assagai was forbidden: a shorter-handed weapon was instituted, and it was to be struck into the enemy, not cast at him from a distance. "Wait until you see the whites of the enemy's eyes, and then strike hard," was the order of the Zulu chief. His spirit was caught by his soldiers, and they closed with their enemies only to conquer.

An immense territory soon owned the dominion of the chief of the Zulus, but he conquered only to desolate and to kill. From the far Limpopo to the southern St. John, from the Indian Ocean to where men now dig diamonds by the swift-running Vaal—all that portion of Africa lay prostrate at Chaka's feet. The lower countries were a vast waste; famine, pestilence, and death had swept the land; and only in remote glen, or wooded kloof, or impenetrable fastness could be found a remnant of the desolated tribes.

It was in the year 1828 that the conqueror's career came to a close. He was assassinated by some of his own people at his kraal south of the Lower Tugela. Seeing his end inevitable, he cried out to his murderers, "Ye think when I am gone that ye shall rule this land; but behind ye I see a white man coming from the south, and he and his shall be your masters."

As he spoke they struck him with their assagais, and the greatest conqueror of Zululand was no more.

The scattered tribes that had been unable to oppose the Zulu chief had withdrawn into remote countries. One powerful band, attacked in the open country, had retreated along the Vaal, and by the fastnesses of the Drakensberg, into what is now called Basutoland. They were without cohesion. A dozen chiefs claimed their obedience, and it was only the rugged land and the natural defences of their new home which enabled them to preserve even a shadow of their power.

About the time of Chaka's death there arose, in this Basuto nation, a man differing in every respect from the Zulu conqueror. He was a shrewd observer, apt in council, held peculiar views about the white man's dominion, and had more faith in the power of the tongue than in that of the assagai; yet he was a brave and skilful soldier. The name of this man was Moshesh. From a petty chief he soon became a powerful leader, and ten years after the death of Chaka he was the acknowledged paramount of all Basutoland, and had moulded together into one nation all the tribes which dwelt around the Mont aux Sources, and along the upper waters of the Caledon.

At the period we speak of, this region of Basutoland, the great level now called the Orange Free State, and the meadow of Natal, were all unknown to the white man. A few travellers or hunters had penetrated north of the Orange River, but the great mountain fastness had resisted all attempts to pierce its mysteries; and nothing of Natal, save its half-tropic

shore-line, was known to the outside world. A vast unmeasured solitude was this land beyond all the Orange River. From the rising of the sun until its going down, the traveller beheld an endless plain. At times a flat-topped hill rose abruptly from the level; loose rocks of sand or trap cumbered the base; the sides were scarped, or steep and overhanging near the summit; and upon the top a perfectly level table surface was cut clearly against the sky line. Perchance the hillside held a straggling growth of bush. For the rest—hill and level, plain and precipice—were clothed in a short green grass in summer, a dry brick-coloured clay in winter; but at all times it was a land of life.

Across the endless plain, upon the table-topped hill, in the dry dust-coloured valley, there moved and grazed and galloped innumerable herds of wild animals. Springbok and blessbok, wilderbeeste and hartebeeste, eland and quagga, roamed in countless numbers; and the traveller saw when the sun shone over the land the light reflected upon the glistening sides or striped foreheads of tens of thousands of graceful antelopes, careering in circles round the track, or stopping in their prancing gallop to gaze in wonder at the stranger's presence.

But at length the great wastes north of Orange River began to know a change.

About forty years ago there came in long succession from the south a vast troop of waggons; men rode on horseback by the waggons; twenty coupled oxen

drew each ponderous load; there were fully nine hundred waggons, and across the dusty plains crept the monstrous cavalcade.

It passed slowly on. Some tarried here, some there, others wandered on further into the wilds.

There is a tall mountain which stands out by itself in this great plain. It is rugged and lofty, and can be seen from a great distance; fifty miles away it still seems near at hand. It is called Tha-banchu, or the Hill of Night. Near this dark hill many of the new-comers halted. They were white men, who had long dwelt in the regions to the south, and they now sought this northern waste, not because their own lands were becoming over-peopled, or because fresh arrivals pressed them from without, but from a restless longing to escape from law and civilised restraint, and to establish themselves in a kind of patriarchal freedom in the remote interior. They had but a faint idea of the geography of the earth, and not a few among them looked upon this migration as a counterpart to the exodus of the Israelites of old, and had some dim expectation of finding a Promised Land beyond the deserts of the treeless Karoo.

Some halted within sight of the Hill of Night, others pressed on to the north and east. Moshesh held many parleys with them as their slow lumbering waggons jolted along the plains of what is to-day the Orange Free State; but he did nothing to oppose their progress, and they passed along his rugged frontier to where the ridge of the Drakensberg breaks down from the

Mont aux Sources, and a steep decline leads into the pastures of Natal.

They reached the ridge, and looked down upon the fair land below. It was a sight which woke even in the dull nature of the Dutch onlooker a sense of enthusiasm. Here was their promised land, here was their possession. Slowly the long cavalcade wound down the steep descent, and took possession of Natal.

Moshesh had built his kraal at the base, and upon the summit of one of these innumerable flat-topped hills called table mountains of Basutoland; the hill was named Thaba Bossiou, or the Dark Mountain. It stood some six miles from the Caledon River. Twenty miles to the east, the great range of the Malutis rose in dark blue masses; around them lay a perfect network of table mountains, deep winding valleys, abrupt sandstone precipices, and every variety of intermixed hill and kloof, vale and ridge.

Moshesh's name had widened out over a broad area of fame; many tribes of Griquas, Amonquanis, and Zulus had tried the strength of the Basuto nation, and felt the power of the crafty chief who dwelt in Thaba Bossiou. Once, a large horde of Griquas (Dutch half-breeds), attacked the mountain kraal under a certain Hendrick Hendricks, and of his doughty followers not one escaped. Again, Palarita led the Amathlubi tribe into Basutoland, and left his bones and theirs to whiten the hills of the Caledon.

But Moshesh was crafty in his victories. He kept to his mountain fastnesses; repelled all attacks upon

his territory, and took counsel from a few foreign missionaries who had sought his country.

Time went on. The Dutch were not to have quiet possession of Natal. Chaka was long dead; but a tyrant almost as cruel, though with but half his cleverness, reigned in his stead.

At the base of the Drakensberg, amidst the kloofs and glens of the Upper Tugela and its tributaries, there dwelt a chief named Sikkunellya. This chief had made a foray into Zululand, and carried off cattle from the people of Dingaan, the murderer and successor of Chaka. The Dutch restored the captured cattle to the Zulu chief, and asked in return for a cession of Natal. The request was acceded to. It is easy to give away that which is not ours, and all Natal was given by the tyrant's murderer to the newcomers—all Natal from the Tugela to the Umzimkulu, from the Drakensberg to the Indian Sea.

At the king's kraal by Umkinglové this cession was made. Dingaan placed his sign-manual to the document, and the Dutch leaders Maritz and Retief affixed their signatures in due form. It may be presumed that this later operation was one of no little difficulty to the Dutch commanders; for to these modern Israelites a pen was a stranger weapon than a gun; but somehow or other the names were affixed and the Dutch commanders prepared to withdraw.

At evening there arose a great uproar in the camp; there was a cry of treason through the Dutch laager;

thousands of naked Zulus crowded among the wag-gons ; there were random shots and fierce shouts, and much stabbing and glint of assagais, and when daylight dawned again, Retief and his comrades all lay weltering in their blood.

It would be long to tell of the scenes that followed ; how the Zulus swept down into Natal upon the scattered laagers of the Dutch by the swift-running Tugela and the Bushman Rivers ; how these brave savages rushed the laager by the Bushman River drift, and carried such destruction through the camps, that to-day an immense tract of country bears the name of "Weenan," or the place of weeping ; and then, how the Dutchman rallied and bore back the savage tribe, and in a great battle by the Blood River destroyed the king's kraal, and broke the power of the Zulu tribe.

But while all this wild work went on in the lower country, along the base of the Drakensberg, up aloft in Basutoland the crafty chief Moshesh held quiet possession of his glens and table-topped ridges. Five years earlier a small group of white men from a distant country had come to Basutoland. They came to teach, not to fight ; they were French missionaries. Moshesh received them with favour. He gave them land in many parts of the country. Hard by his own stronghold of Thaba Bossiou they built a mission station of great beauty : it was in a valley between two steep rugged table-hills ; a stream ran below it ; great cliffs of basaltic rock stood like sentinels around

it, and in spring the scent of almond blossoms filled the air and the thatched eaves were white with jessamine flowers.

But Moshesh, though he encouraged the missionaries, and counselled his people to attend their teaching, did not himself adopt their faith. "He was too old to change; the young people might learn; but for him it would not do." So has it been in these times of ours all the world over. The days have passed when savage kings and chiefs adopt the cross at the teaching of the missionary, and with Xavier that power which penetrated the hearts of peoples, and changed kings and nations, seems to have vanished from the earth.

But though Moshesh took small heed of the teachings of the Frenchmen in spiritual matters, in temporal ones he gave full attention to them. Beware of war; resist when attacked; make friends with the white man: these were the chief tenets of the worldly creed they taught him, and under such teaching Moshesh grew in power, and Basutoland became rich and prosperous.

But a great danger soon began to menace Basutoland. The wave of the white man's domination was beginning to surge against the mountain fastness of the Mont aux Sources. South Africa had not a white population equal to a third-rate English town; nevertheless, an area as large as Germany was found too small to hold these fifty thousand white men, and the thin but restless stream was already beating

against the remote regions of the Malutis, and flowing away to the mighty wilderness where the Vaal washed from its gravelly shores in summer floods the yet unknown shining stones called diamonds.

The Dutch Boers who had crossed the Orange River proceeded to establish themselves as an independent community among the wildebeestes and the blesboks; there were no Englishmen in that part of the world, and the establishment of a Dutch republic met with no opposition at our hands. Those of the Dutch, however, who crossed the Berg, and went down into Natal, met with different treatment.

Far away by the Indian Sea, at the port of Natal, a small English settlement had taken root. After defeating the Zulu king and destroying his kraal in the upper country, the Dutch adventurers had drawn nearer to the sea—to Araby or Jerusalem or the Jordan, as they fondly imagined. All at once they found themselves face to face with the English settlement. “Curse these Englishmen!” doubtless cried the Boers; “here they are safely settled in Jerusalem before us.” Still, there was peace between the rival settlers for a time, and, in the face of the common enemy, war would have been dangerous.

But after the victory over the Zulus things changed. The Dutch attacked the English settlement, and for a time had matters their own way. Beaten by superior numbers the English commander shut himself up in a hastily built fort, composed verses to the Southern

Cross, and bid defiance to the Boers. Months passed away; help came to the British camp from Cape Colony; the Dutch were beaten back; they moved into the upper country again, and more than half their number recrossed the Berg to seek for Araby in other lands. Natal was English; but by a fatal error the line of British boundary stopped at the Drakensberg; no claim was made to the great plains north of the Orange River—no claim, at least, for six years after.

In 1847 a man was appointed to the governorship of Cape Colony who, whatever might be his other qualities, knew the true policy of England in the wilds. There was to be no boundary to English possession in South Africa, save such as ocean set. Boers might migrate here or there; but whenever the time should come that English civilisation reached the confines of the country in which they had settled, then, too, had come the time for the establishment of British dominion in that land whether Boer, or Basuto, or Bosjisman reigned or roamed in it. South Africa was British by every right of conquest and privilege of possession. The Dutch, dissatisfied with our abolition of slavery, might "trek" where they pleased, but they must still remain British subjects, by the self-same law which made the Mormons citizens of the United States after they had placed sixteen hundred miles of wilderness between them and the last outpost of Yankeedom.

In 1847 there arrived at the Cape of Good Hope a

new governor; he had been a dashing leader of dashing men. British power, as represented by a few squadrons of British cavalry, was, in his eyes, irresistible. Dutch Boers setting up a republic of their own beyond the Orange River—the thing was absurd to the last degree. “Forward the Cape Corps. March away the Rifle Brigade. We’ll soon see who is to be the ruler in South Africa.”

So across the wilds of the Karoo, and up to the banks of the Orange River, went a small force of regular troops. Some little distance north of the river, a “commando” of Boers had taken its post amidst rocks and stone-covered hills nigh a place called Boomplatz.

The victor of Aliwal, brave to rashness, rides forward in advance of the little army. Shots ring out from the rocks, a few of the staff fall, an escort of Cape mounted men run away; but the brave old chief reins in his charger where he is, and cursing the runaways, calls out to the Rifles to advance. They come up at the double, spread out into the hills, and move straight up against the rocks. Suddenly the puffs of smoke cease. “This is not a proper way to fight,” say the Boers; “we came prepared to lie here quietly for a few hours among the rocks, and here these fellows come running up to us as if they were our friends.”

So, in order to escape being shaken by the hand or perhaps by the throat, the Dutchmen scramble into their saddles in yonder hollow, midst the hills, and

gallop away to northern wilds, their brave leader, one Prætorius by name, never drawing rein until sixty miles lay between him and the Boomplatz.

The Orange Republic was no more. Moshesh heard with joy, up in his mountain, the tidings of Boomplatz, and he marched out from the hills, with his army, to greet the English Governor, and to show his respect for the Queen's authority.

They met at Winburg. It was a novel sight. The Basuto army numbered about five thousand men, mostly mounted on shaggy or wiry ponies. Sir Harry Smith was in high spirits. "Moshesh was his friend and brother," he said. "The Basutos and the English would ever be friends."

The English general called out in his deep voice, whether there was any trooper in the ranks who could perform the sword-exercise in front of the line, for the edification of the Basutos. A trooper rode out and began to cut and thrust about his horse's ears. Sir Harry waved him back with a gesture of disdain. Another essayed the feat; again the old general cried out, "That is not the sword-exercise."

At last, an Irish soldier rode to the front; he cut and thrust, and whirled and slashed, and jerked about in his saddle in such a frantic manner, that the Basutos roared with delight, and Sir Harry Smith declared his satisfaction. Then came some cavalry manœuvres, and finally the review was over.

It was now Moshesh's turn. He attempted a charge; but a great part of his cavalry was suddenly

transformed into infantry by the simple process of being sent flying over their horses' heads. The horse was still a new-comer in Basutoland, and the monkey-like seat which now cannot be shaken, had not then been attained.

A war-dance wound up the day. The whole Basuto army danced like demons, Moshesh capering at their head. At one period the excitement became so intense that it is said the old general caught the infection, and, seizing Moshesh in his arms, danced round and round with him.

Moshesh went back to his mountains. The English governor pursued his way to the Drakensberg. On the ridge overlooking Natal he met the Boers in council. They were flying with their flocks and herds from Natal, to escape from the British government once more: Araby and the Promised Land were to be sought somewhere else.

It would have been better for Natal if the English governor had allowed the Boers to seek fresh fields and pastures new.

To make the earth a waste and to call it a farm is the first rule of Dutch agricultural practice in South Africa. Six thousand acres are still known as "a small farm"—no fence, no tree, no shrub, no sign of agriculture breaks the terrible monotony of an up-country Dutch holding: far as eye can reach there is but a wilderness unmarked by man.

In the council on the top of the Drakensberg, Sir Harry Smith offered to the flying Dutchmen the most

liberal grants of land in Natal. In many cases these grants were accepted, the Boers resumed their former places; the system of vast farms became perpetuated in a country whose conditions of soil and climate were in perfect keeping with a system of small agricultural holdings, and the opportunity was for ever lost of planting on the African continent the germs of the only European settlement which can ever ripen into a prosperous civilisation.

Time went on. A new governor was sent to the Cape; war, fierce war, had broken out among the Kaffir tribes of the Kei river. Moshesh kept to his mountains; but ever and anon the Boers, who had settled in the plains, cut off some slice of Basuto territory, ran the survey lines of farms further towards the Caledon, and set up beacons nearer to the blue Malutis.

Then there came raids upon cattle, horses disappeared from the farms: the Basuto said it was but fair retaliation; the Boers called it unprovoked robbery.

Following the affair of Boomplatz came the establishment of British government north of the Orange River. An English resident dwelt at Bloemfontein, a small garrison occupied the fort. The resident took the views of the farmers, got together some tribes of Barralongs and Bechuans, and moved against Moshesh. The Bechuans and Barralongs made a poor fight: Moshesh was the victor, but he knew better than to push his advantage against the British.

Towards the middle of 1852 the war on the Kei was over, and the English governor, Sir George Cathcart, bethought him of a new move. He ordered the assembly of a field force on the Orange River in the month of November of that year, and, crossing the river early in December, moved along the right bank of the Caledon. He had with him the finest force ever seen in South Africa—a regiment of lancers, a battery of artillery, and four regiments of light infantry.

About mid-December the little army reached Plattberg, on the Caledon; a few miles across the river lay the mountain fastnesses of Thaba Bossiou, and from the ridge of Plattberg could be seen the hills and rocks of Basutoland stretching from the river side to the Malutis.

On the 19th of December Moshesh came to the English camp in considerable alarm. The interview between him and the British commander was a curious one. Cathcart demanded ten thousand head of cattle and a large number of horses as a fine for the misdeeds of the Basutos. Moshesh expostulated, declared the number was out of all reason, begged for time, spoke parable after parable, dealt in metaphor by the hour; but all to little purpose. "Peace is like the rain that makes the grass grow," he said, "war is the hot wind that burns it up."

At last, finding neither metaphor nor entreaty of any avail to prevent the lessening of the fine imposed upon him, he asked the General what would happen

if the whole number were not forthcoming on the third day. "In that case I will go and take them," was the reply. "War is bad," answered Moshesh; "but even a beaten dog will bite." Then he went back to his mountain.

The 20th of December came. At daybreak the army moved from its camp at Plattberg, crossed the flooded Caledon on pontoons, and held its way towards Thaba Bossiou. It was a dull overcast morning: now and again the vapour broke into rifts, and between them could be seen the steep sides of cliffs hanging abruptly over winding valleys, and at times, perched on some craggy point, a Basuto scout was visible, keenly watching from his shaggy pony the moving column beneath; all else was quiet.

From the centre of the valley through which the column marched a large hill rose abruptly before the troops, and stood like a great island in a stream, the valley separating at its base and throwing out arms on either side. The hill that rose between these branching valleys was high and table-topped; its sides, scarping into perpendicular "krances" near the summit, sloped down at a steep angle near the base, where lay piled together a *débris* of crag and boulder, long since ruined and shattered from the rock frontlet above.

The hill was called the Berea. At the spot where the gorge or valley divided into branches, Cathcart divided his little army too. The lancers followed the valley to the left; the infantry took the hill of

the Berea in front ; the artillery, the general and his staff, and half a battalion of foot, kept along the valley to the right.

It was a strange disposal of the little army. The valleys along which the wings moved diverged further and further apart—mist, fog, crag, and precipice intercepted the view ; nothing could be seen of the table-topped hill save its scarped sides and rugged “krances” ; troops in the valley could render no assistance to troops on the hill ; nor was it possible to communicate from one valley to another, except by a long circle round the base of the Berea. It is difficult to climb these table mountains, but it is ten times more difficult to come down them again ; for the rugged path which zig-zags through the cliffs can be traced from beneath, but is altogether lost from above.

On the summit of the Berea Hill Moshesh had collected together a vast number of cattle and horses ; these the cavalry had orders to capture. Through a rough and broken incline, which wound through rocks and shingle, the lancers reached the top of the Berea. On all sides there spread around them a level expanse of sward, upon which Basutos galloped to and fro endeavouring to urge to greater haste huge droves of cattle. The lancers rode in among the cattle ; the Basutos fled into the fog. For a time all went well ; but the work of cattle-driving was not a military manœuvre much in practice among the cavalry, and the troopers riding to and fro soon became detached

into broken parties of a few men lost in a maze of terrified animals.

All at once through the fog there came a dense mass of Basutos riding down upon the scattered troopers. The cattle broke in every direction—in vain the lancers tried to rally; from rock and crevice, from the sharp edge of the precipice where the flat-topped hill dipped all at once out of sight, the shaggy ponies and their naked riders came sweeping through the wreaths of mist—the right, the left, the north, and the south had all become to the English soldier a hopeless puzzle; some fought singly against many foes; others, endeavouring to reach the main body, became only further separated from it; others, pent between their enemies and the wall-like precipice edge, boldly charged into the Basutos. In a few moments a score of the finest cavalry in the world had been killed, their horses taken, their gay trappings torn off, and then was there seen the singular sight of these monkey-like negroes, arrayed in scarlet coat and leather over-all, flourishing bright-pennoned lances aloft as they galloped hither and thither over the table-land of the Berea Hill.

While this wretched scene was being enacted on the left, the centre column of infantry pushed its way up the precipice and gained a footing on the summit. A mounted staff-officer was with them. Riding some distance in advance of the front of the column, he thought he discerned in the fog the helmets and pennons of the lancers. Galloping up to them, he

suddenly found himself surrounded by Basutos dressed in cavalry uniform. Faunce is said to have surrendered his sword, and asked for a few minutes' grace before his death. Some hesitation appears to have been felt by the Basutos at the final moment. There were those among the savages who would have spared the life of the prisoner ; but while some clamoured for his life and others sought to preserve it, news came that the white soldiers had killed Basuto women at the base of the Berea Hill, and these tidings decided the captive's fate. He was killed on the spot.

The day wore to a close. Cathcart spent many an anxious moment. Dark clouds of Basuto horsemen hovered around the English army. At length the infantry descended from the hill ; the clouds of horsemen seemed to increase. For a moment, it is said, the English general deemed himself lost. "Let us die like English soldiers," he exclaimed to some of his staff.

"Die!" exclaimed the fiery-spirited Eyre, who had just arrived, maddened by the result of the day. "Give me leave, sir, and I will soon answer for this black rabble."

But night was already closing ; and as the daylight darkened over Thaba Bossiou, the Basutos drew off into the mountains.

Next morning Cathcart withdrew his forces to his original camp on the Caledon. The troops were wild to avenge the disasters of the Berea. Such an army foiled by such a foe ! They must advance again and

storm Thaba Bossiou. But ere the morning wore away, messengers came from Moshesh. That crafty chief knew well what would be the result of his transient victory. His soldiers might deck themselves with the lancer trophies, but the triumph would be short-lived if he did not at once make peace; so, with many protestations of submission, the old chief offered cattle and horses to the General he had beaten but the previous day, and besought the clemency and forbearance of the vanquished.

It was a sagacious move. Moshesh blazoned forth his triumph far and near to Kaffir, Zulu, and Bechuana; for many a day the lancers' pennons flew gaily above some Basuto kraal, tokens of Basuto victory over the white man. But by his crafty submission Moshesh saved his kingdom from destruction; and if to-day there is a native state called Basutoland in South Africa, it is because the old chief knew how to build a bridge for a baffled foe and to pay him handsomely for crossing it.

This battle on the Berea Hill was fought in December, 1852. Ere a second December had passed the old English general had fallen on a far-off Crimean field, and the hill named "Cathcart's," in memory of him, was furrowed deep with the graves of England's bravest sons who had died "like English soldiers."

II.

AN evil day was drawing nigh for British interests in South Africa. The Orange River sovereignty was to be given up. British troops, flag, and government were to withdraw from it, and a boundary was to be set to a dominion in whose possible future might even then have been read, in legible letters, a realisation of that old name given two hundred years before by the Portuguese discoverer, the "Good Hope" of a great empire set in the lonely ocean beneath the Southern Cross.

It is easy to be wise after the event, to say what should have been, to picture what might have been, to point where empire has been lost and chance misused; but in this case of Orange sovereignty abandonment, such wisdom could have been gathered then quite as easily as it can be gleaned now. Nay, even nature taught the lesson better than she does to-day. At that time, far as the eye could reach, the vast plain of the Free State was a shifting scene of light-limbed antelopes, and millions of wild animals drew rich sustenance from that grass so green in summer, so brown and sere under the winter's sun.

“It is a desert,” writes one English governor in 1852 or 1853. “It is richer than any part of Australia,” writes another, just four years later. Yes, it was a desert in the sense that man was a stranger there, that no fence crossed the land, no homestead was to be seen. It was a desert such as the rover poet Pringle loved to sing of as he wandered at will through its solitudes. Here is a picture of this desert as he painted it :—

Afar in the desert I love to ride,
 With the silent bush-boy alone by my side.
 Away, away, from the dwellings of men,
 By the wild deers' haunt, and the buffaloes' glen ;
 By valleys remote, where the oribi plays,
 Where the gnoo, the gazelle, and the hartebeeste graze,
 And the gemsbok and eland unheeded recline,
 By the skirts of grey forest o'ergrown with wild vine,
 And the elephant browses at peace in his wood,
 And the river-horse gambols unscared by the flood,
 And the mighty rhinoceros wallows at will
 In the “vley” where the wild ass is drinking his fill.

True, there was one real desert in it, a region where water was scarce and grass was scant, a spot looking over which the traveller might exclaim, “This is worthless.” Yet even there, in the centre of that waste of red, brick-dust plain, one day a herd-boy caught the gleam of a pebble that sparkled like a star, and now on that spot twelve thousand men are digging deep into the earth in the richest diamond mine the world has seen.

There is nothing worthless under the sun ; if the

wealth of nature lies not on the surface, it is only because she has hidden it in her bosom.

In 1854 the abandonment of the Orange River sovereignty was consummated. The story of that abandonment, as it is told to-day in the Orange Free State, is pitiable enough. It is said that the majority of the inhabitants were hostile to the change. Many settlers had established themselves in the territory, and British power had taken root. The more turbulent Boer had fled into wilds more remote. Settlements were springing up.

All at once the scene was changed. A commission arrived from England to surrender the sovereignty to the Dutch. For a long time no one would accept the surrender. Meetings opposing it were held; resolutions were adopted declaring the unalterable attachment of the inhabitants to the English flag; petitions were presented, but they all mattered little; the act had been already decided on, and it was to be done one way or another.

At last a party was got together willing to receive over the territory. They were obscure individuals; but on paper their names, when finally inscribed, looked formidable enough. It is widely asserted to-day in the Free State that this risky feat of penmanship was only achieved by the Boers after a liberal offer of English gold, "to defray the expenses of the transfer," had been made to them by the British authorities.

At length the deed was ratified. The birthright of

Britain in this southern world was signed away, and a document was launched into life which, as time goes on, becomes more vividly injurious to English interests, and year by year grows into a more fatal instrument against British power in South Africa, following out but too truly the law which gives to political error no final resting-place. Let us run rapidly over the succeeding twenty years.

The Free State grew. Another large republic arose still farther off to the north. Where the Free State ended at the south shore of the Vaal River, the Transvaal Dutch Republic began on the north shore, and ended no man could tell where. One ambitious President fixed the northern boundary at the Crocodile River, another said it must be at the Limpopo, another would claim the Zambesi, the tropic of Capricorn, or the Equator. If the natives objected, a "commando" soon settled matters. A commando was merely a new name for an old thing. It was war without any of the usages or restraints which civilisation has imposed on war. It meant night surprise, destruction of crops and cattle, no prisoners, cave-smoking, killing of women, &c.

Here is Lord Stanley's opinion of "commandoes": "They are frequently undertaken," he writes, "as a means of gratifying the cupidity or vengeance of the Dutch or English farmers; and further, they are marked by the most atrocious disregard of human life."

But further off, towards the remote north, they

meant more than this. There was in the Transvaal an institution called "apprenticeship." Young negro children, without parents, could be apprenticed to farmers for a term of years. Orphans are not more numerous in the neighbourhood of the Limpopo than they are in other parts of the world; but when orphans are at a premium, it becomes possible to improve upon nature, and to make them to order. It rests upon authority not to be disputed that women were butchered at their kraals in the north of the Transvaal Republic but a few years ago, for the sole purpose of enabling their murderers to carry away orphans to Prætoria, the capital of the republic.

All this is very horrible, and many men reading it in South Africa will perhaps exclaim against the writer for here placing it on record; but it is better that these dark things should be brought face to face with the light of day—better for us in England, as well as for our cousins in South Africa; for, strong as we imagine to be our sense of justice, of honour, or of courage, it is well for us to know that it all rests upon a frail foundation, and for those in savage lands to realise that, no matter how remote may be the region wherein these dark deeds are done, there will come a time when, even to the short-seeing eye of man, they will be laid bare.

But to return to the Orange Free State and our mountain Basutoland.

Some years after the withdrawal of British power from the north of the Orange River, war broke out

between the Boers and the Basutos. The conflict ended favourably for the natives. The Dutch farmers could with difficulty be held together; as yet the infant republic lacked the spirit of nationality or of cohesion, and Moshesh proved fully a match for his white enemies.

Peace was made, leaving matters much as they had been before the struggle.

In 1866 war broke out afresh. A new President had assumed the direction of the Free State Government. He was a man trained under the influence of British institutions, although a thorough representative of Dutch traditions. His energy and determination soon made themselves apparent. The Basuto war was carried on with vigour. Hitherto the table-topped fastnesses south of the Caledon had been deemed impregnable. In 1867 Makwai's mountain was attacked and taken, and soon after Tandtgiesberg was carried and the chief Pushili killed.

The following year saw the Boers in possession of Qumi, the mountain stronghold of Letsia, Moshesh's favourite son; and the same year beheld the celebrated Thaba Bossiou, Moshesh's mountain, invested by his enemy. The fight around this rugged hill was long and varied. Several times the Dutch attempted to storm the steep stronghold, and as often were they forced to relinquish the assault. Englishmen mustered strong in the Dutch army, and English breechloading rifles, and Armstrong and Whitworth guns, were plentiful too.

The Free State complained bitterly that we aided the Basutos with arms and ammunition, and sympathy; but every rifle fired at Thaba Bossiou, and every shell flung on the rocky ledge where old Moshesh battled bravely against his foes, came from an English arsenal or an English factory; and when, once, a Boer column did make a temporary landing on the scarped ledge by the summit of the beleaguered rock, it was an English officer who led them on, fighting for hours alone upon the ledge from which his followers had retreated. If our sympathy went with the Basutos, something more practical than sympathy was given to the Dutch.

Thaba Bossiou was never taken. Reduced to direst famine, shelled and shot at, the rocky ledge still held out; and before famine could complete its work, British intervention saved the mountain State. Basutoland was declared British territory, Moshesh was taken under the protection of the English flag, and the Free State was told to stay its hands. It was full time for our intervention. More than two thousand Basutos had fallen; all the cattle, horses, waggons, ploughs, even clothes belonging to the natives, had been destroyed; the kraals had been utterly demolished; the wretched women and children and old men had crowded into dark and loathsome caverns in the rocky hills, where, bereft of food and covering, they perished miserably from fever, cold, and famine.

Of course there were loud denunciations from the Dutch for this saving from utter annihilation of the

remnant of their foes. They had already annexed the greater portion of the fertile valleys north of the Caledon; they hungered still for the rugged hills and steep glens which lay between the Caledon and the blue Maluti Mountains; and to-day, through the Free State, one often hears, heading the catalogue of crimes recounted against England in South Africa, her merciful preservation of old Moshesh and his mountaineers from the rapacious destruction of the Dutch Boers.

In the foregoing pages we have sketched the history of this native mountain State, not because of any importance to-day attaching to its existence, or of any influence which it exercises upon the communities surrounding it, but because it is, geographically speaking, the keystone of the South African structure, the fountain-head of its water system, the summit of its surface; and as from the Alps one looks down upon France, Italy, and Germany, and by a single turn of the head takes mental grasp of half Europe, so this rugged land of peaks has beneath and around it a sweep of horizon which embodies almost at a glance the entire topography of South Africa.

To catch from mere description the outline of a continent, to see mountains and rivers, plains and valleys, as they lie in the vast inanity of nature—to behold that wonderful view over the outspread earth which the eagle sees when he is a speck in heaven, that “bird’s-eye view” which we so often speak of

but so seldom realise—this, perhaps, is the most difficult task the reader has to learn from the writer; for it is a lesson hard enough for the man who has himself looked upon the land which he would fain portray; and it is also a lesson without knowledge of which all other knowledge of the people or policy of distant lands is unfinished and incomplete.

In the preceding pages we have looked, as it were, from a lofty height, upon that part of South Africa which contains to a greater extent than any other portion what may be called the future of the continent.

Coal, iron, gold, diamonds—these are great treasures; and these lie locked beneath the lands we have just surveyed, to an extent the knowledge of which is still in its crude commencement.

There is an angle of the meadow which we call Natal, where four States all meet together at one point. Through a vast rolling plain many streams and rivers run eastward from the Drakensberg; a few ostriches still stretch their long necks above the hill horizon to watch the passing traveller on his way; the oribi bounds from the yellow grass before the horse's gallop; a herd of hartebeeste watch warily from afar at waggon or rider. The place is called the Newcastle Flat. It is well named, for frequently one sees, when the yellow clay has been washed and cut into deep channels by summer floods, huge dark seams of rock-like coal thrust up between layers of trap and sandstone lying but a few feet from the surface. It is a curious sight. Here, unworked, un-

headed, unborn, lies a mighty future ; this is the great coal-bed of South Africa. As the rider now draws bridle by one of these breaks in the yellow clay, he sees only the great stretch of plain, the wild deer on the hilltop, the sun going down blood-red through the smoke of distant grass-fires ; he hears nothing but the rustle of wind through waving grass, and the drip of water down the sandstone channel ; and, as he looks upon the quiet wilderness, there crosses his mind a vision of great factories ; of tall chimneys pouring forth dark streams of smoke, blurring the sunlight and blotting the sky ; of men and women, and children, from whose faces the light of heaven has also been blotted out and blurred ; of the flare of gas on pallid cheek, and the roll of steam along iron road, when, in the fulness of time, this dark deep seam shall be followed into the bowels of the earth, and flung forth to feed the furnaces of the world's toil.

We have already spoken of the diamonds of the Vaal River. We will now endeavour to place before the reader an image of the gigantic pit in whose depths ten thousand men are delving deeper year by year.

We have said before that the Vaal and Orange Rivers, both springing from the range of the Drakensberg, approach each other some three hundred miles from their sources, and joining their waters in the midst of a vast plain of brick-coloured clay, on which the thorny mimosa grows, gnarled and stunted, in

scattered clumps, pours westward a constantly decreasing volume through the sands of Damara and the arid plains of the Kalaharri Desert.

In the angle formed by the two rivers, at about eighty miles from their point of junction, a strange scene rises suddenly before the traveller's eye.

In the middle of a great plain—a plain so vast that its hills and undulations, its trap eruptions, "kopjes," and salt-pans are all merged by distance into a uniform sense of level—there is seen an immense assemblage of huts and houses, tents and flag-staffs. High above roof or flag-pole a huge, irregular mound of earth rises from the centre of this city on the plain, and as the traveller approaches the city he sees that it is built around the base of this great mound, which shelves down at that steep angle which is formed by the labour of the navvy-mound builder working from a higher level.

Without design or order, the huts and tents rise confusedly on every side; corrugated iron and canvas are the materials from which dwelling-house, church, drinking-saloon, store, and shed have been built. The city of Kimberley, or Colesberg, or New Rush, as it is variously named, is a city of tin and tent. But if the materials with which man has built this town in the desert be simple, the builder-man has been compound enough. Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australasia have all sent their representatives to Kimberley. The African delves in the mine; the representatives from the rest of the world buy, sell, and

drink in the town. When the water deepens in the great pit the two first avocations are considerably curtailed, and in their places are substituted politics. Two great factions then appear in the city of diamonds; they are "loyal men" and "rebels."

On the latter side one finds the usual curious combination; there is the German malcontent, there is the English malcontent, there is the Irish malcontent, and, in addition to these units of European disaffection, there is also found here the malcontent of Natal.

First take the Teutonic upholder of liberty. He has two prefixes to his name—Captain and Von. It is needless to say that he possesses only that claim to either title that arises from almost unlimited capability of consuming beer and tobacco. He has a popular reputation, however, for having seen service, and there are certain hints thrown out by his immediate friends of his being closely connected with Von Moltke, whose portrait (taken from an illustrated paper) is hung conspicuously in his tin house.

Captain Von Drinckhishfils commands a following of about forty men; they are all Germans, and have, like their leader, acquired, rightly or wrongly, a reputation for arms; some are Bavarians, some are Saxons, some are pure Prussians; all are imbued with a high spirit of independence, discordant wind instruments, strong waters, and tobacco. They do not wash much, and whether in the mine or in the glass, hold water in low estimation.

Von Drinckhishfils and his company are reported

to have shown considerable military knowledge at a recent rescue of a "rebel" storekeeper from the hands of four constables who were conveying him to jail, on which occasion they took up a strategic position in an extinct diamond pit, a position which was as menacing to the four representatives of tyrannical oppression as it was secure from any stray bullet which might happen to be abroad.

The English malcontent is quite another kind of being; his antagonism to the government at the fields is based chiefly on opposition to the principle of universal equality of black and white men. He is of that type peculiar to the middle and lower class Anglo-Saxon, whose ideas of universal equality have reference only to a set of beings *above* them in the social scale, and who would substitute repressive superiority whenever the sentiment affects a lower or a differently coloured race of men.

He takes his stand, he will tell you, upon the inalienable right of every born Briton to make, frame, and adjust his own law, and as he individually has not made, framed, or adjusted the law by which native Africans are graciously permitted to dig on African soil for African diamonds on their own account, he is determined to resist to the utmost such a manifest injustice.

And now, having glanced at some of the human dwellers at the base of the great mound of Colesberg, let us ascend the steep bank itself, and gaze at the curious scene which opens before us.

A big pit! at top twelve acres of superficial size,

two hundred feet deep at its deepest, its floor cut into innumerable squares, its sides falling steep from a clear cut edge. Around that edge rise, tier over tier, three rows of wooden platforms, from which wheels and pulleys, and iron ropes run downwards into the yawning abyss below. Thick as black men can swarm, on these wooden platforms stand nearly naked negroes, working wheel and pulley, bucket and rope. Looking down into the pit one sees thousands of wire ropes crossing and recrossing each other, stretched "taut" from "the claim" beneath to the platform above. There are six hundred whole claims in this mighty pit; but claims have been split into halves, quarters, eighths, and even sixteenths.

Down below black figures, dwarfed by distance, are digging, picking, and filling into leather buckets a dark bluish clay, half stone, half marl; when the bucket fills, a signal to the men on the platform above is given from beneath, the wheels fly round, and along the wire rope runs the load of "diamondiferous" clay to the pit edge aloft.

Beyond all attempt at number are these ropes and lines of wire; buckets come and go along them with puzzling rapidity. A mighty whirr of wheels fills the immense arena; a vast human hum floats up from ten thousand throats. Such a sight must the great tower by the Babylonian stream have presented; but assuredly nowhere else could the eye have taken at a single glance such an accumulation of labour, all tending to one toil and one effort.

Let the man be who he may; let him have seen all

the world holds best worth seeing in the work of man, old or new; let him have grown tired of wonders by land and sea; still we will venture to assert that, as he climbs the side of this clay mound, and looks from the edge of the bordering rock into the Colesberg "kopje," he will stand for a moment riveted to the spot, in the first impulse of a new astonishment.

But there are many questions which the reader will require answered, ere he can see even faintly the pit and its mode of work. How is the dividing line kept between claim and claim? Where is the clay put that is taken out of the pit? How are the diamonds extracted from the clay? Is the clay all of this bluish marl-like description? How are the sides of the pit kept from falling in? These, and many more questions, will arise to the reader's mind as he scans what we have written.

The pit sides are cut steeply down. Nature has faced them for the most part with a lining of rock. This lining, called "the reef," forms the boundary of the diamond mine: one foot outside that boundary reef there are no diamonds. At times the reef hangs dangerously over the pit, and then it has to be taken down, and the edge sloped off at a greater angle.

For a great depth now the work has been carried through nothing but this blue marl-like clay, but it was not always so. At first the soil was a reddish gravel; it was rich in diamonds. All at once the red gravel gave place to yellow clay. Men said, "There will be no more precious stones, the red gravel is all

gone;" but men, as they often are, were wrong, and the diamonds went on as before. At last the bluish soft rock was reached; again the wise people said, "Now there is an end to diamond digging." But diamond digging went on in the bluish marl rock, as it had gone on in the other clays and gravels.

When this clay, or rock, or gravel is brought to the surface, it can no longer be piled, as of yore, around the edge of the great pit; there is no room now, and already the heap is high and vast enough. So hundreds of horses are employed in carting away the diamondiferous soil, and placing it in various parts of the great surrounding plain. Here the action of sun, and air, and cold night soon causes the half-solid mass to disintegrate, and then, when it has softened, begins the work of washing.

To pick out the precious stones was for years no easy matter; the apparatus was rude and incomplete, and many a valuable gem slipped through and was lost in the *débris* clay. Now all that is changed, a closer scrutiny is possible; and so perfect has become the means of sifting, that the old *débris* of former years is being worked over again, and many a rich gem taken from its vast accumulation.

People will naturally ask, "Must there not be great robberies practised in this immense pit?" The answer is unquestionably "Yes"; but let us not run away with the matter all at once. These frequent pilferings of stones are the chief causes of the white man's antipathy to his black labourer at the fields; but when-

ever we have heard the negro denounced for his diamond-stealing, it has always occurred to us to ask our righteous white friend, "How do you think you would fare if you employed twenty white men instead of these twenty Zulus or Bechuanas? Do you think the pilfering would cease? Not a bit of it; it would be ten times greater." We unhesitatingly state our opinion that if the present system of diamond-digging were attempted with the ordinary white labour of the world, be that labour British, German, or American, it would be simply impossible to continue it, so wholesale would be the stealing. It is only with the black man that there is left sufficient honesty, to permit the continuance of profitable digging.

The term "digger," as it is frequently used at Kimberley, is a delusive one. In the papers, over the doors of shops, in political placards, one sees the "digger" prominently put forward. There are "digger associations," "digger saloons," "digger meetings," even "digger drinks," but the real digger is the negro. The proprietor of the claim is no more a digger, in the American or Australian sense of the term, than an English railroad contractor is a navy.

Some years ago, when the diamond excitement was at its highest point, an English illustrated journal published a view of the fields. In the background of this picture many negroes were at work, picking and grubbing in the earth; in the foreground there stood the figure of a white man with an umbrella over his

head; he was busily engaged in kicking a large negro; both parties seem dissatisfied with the occupation. Matters have changed since then. The competition for negro work is now very great, and masters have to be more careful how they kick.

“Give a dog a bad name and hang him,” says the proverb. Give a master a bad name and his work hangs, is a patent truth in South Africa.

It is curious to note what a strange variety of opinions one hears throughout the country relative to black labour. “He [the negro] is the laziest brute on earth,” one man will tell you. “I can get as much labour as I want,” will confide to you the next comer.

To-day, in the Free State, it is almost impossible to obtain labour on a Dutch farm. Go a few miles off, to an English holding, and you will find labour sufficient and to spare.

We do not mean to assert that the negro works for the sake of work. Who does, the wide world over? But we do say that in Natal, in the Orange Free State, and at the diamond fields, labour can be obtained by those who go about it in the right spirit.

In South Africa no white man works. There are white artisans and skilled workmen, it is true, but they are at enormous wage. They make more in a week than many London office men make in a month. At the diamond fields they obtain £2 per diem, and in Natal £1 or more; but the white labourer, pure and simple—the man with the shovel, the stone-

breaker, Hodge in a smock and with a hedge-clipper—does not exist. There is no hiding the fact that labour is at a discount; some will tell you it is because of the climate, but in America we have seen white labour carried on unceasingly, under conditions of heat and exposure more trying than those of South Africa. The real cause is to be found in the fact that black labour is possible to obtain.

What the black man does in this matter his white cousin must not do. "The nobility of labour" ceases to bear patent when the African has to be raised to the peerage through it, and the "long pedigree of toil" becomes considerably shortened when its tree has its root in the "midriff" of the negro.

III.

TO revert to the question of diamond-stealing at the fields.

Let us think for a moment how facile is the theft. Peter, good Christian Kaffir, Nehemiah, excellent Basuto, Manyougootoosoo, pure original Kaffir, or Whatdooyocoolum, admirable Corrana, are at work, individually and collectively, in claim No. 555, belonging to the firm of White, Mann, & Co. All at once a small bright stone sparkles in the clay, close to the great outspread foot of Whatdooyocoolum or Nehemiah. The respected members of the firm of White, Mann, & Co. are absent. White is lurching at the Craven Club, Mann has gone to look for Namaqua partridges towards the Vaal River, the Co. is at his usual post in black letters in the mining register. Well, then, what happens? Only this. Whatdooyocoolum places for a moment his great toe upon the little gem, and a moment later quietly transfers the brilliant pebble into his mouth, or under his wool, where it rests safe and sound until the evening has come, and up from the vast pit stream countless negroes to scatter for the night over the dusky plain.

And now for the market where this stolen diamond finds sale—that is white. The black man does the stealing, but it is the white man who generally gets the stolen gem. Sometimes the stolen stones are not disposed of at the fields, but are taken back into the interior by the returning negro. The chief Lo-Benguela dwells far away by the water of the Limpopo. When he gave permission to fifty of his young men to visit the diamond fields as labourers, he stipulated that, in addition to every man bringing back a rifle and twelve pounds of ammunition, they were also to give him one diamond each man.

Six or eight months later forty-eight men trudge homeward along the weary road which leads to the Limpopo; a bucket falling from the reef edge of the pit settled for this world the account of No. 49; 50 had his thick head split in a row with the Amakosae Kaffirs, so forty-eight go back to their northern kraals, carrying forty-eight muskets, a goodly store of ammunition, some red rugs, and forty-eight bright little stones carefully hidden away.

When they arrive at their destination they hand over the forty-eight diamonds to the chief Lo-Benguela, who drops them into a little earthen vessel in which many others already lie snugly; and every now and again he takes the earthen cup between his hands, and shakes it until the stones rattle and glisten, and then he says, "See! this is easy to carry. In a day I can walk a long way with this. Not so with lands or rivers. I cannot carry them away, and when the

white man comes to take my land, as come he will, he will get my land; but then I take up this little earthen bowl, which will by that time be full of shining stones, and I will walk away with more in my hands than land, or river, or cattle." And the chief grins as he thus develops his little programme, and rattles his treasure-bowl again and again. All this showing clearly enough that Lo-Benguela is wise in his generation with the wisdom of the white man.

Diamond-stealing is on the increase. The negroes are yearly becoming more dishonest. It is a sad fact, but a true one. What produces this result? Unquestionably it is contact with civilisation. It is one thing to tell this black man that it is wrong to steal; it is another thing to let him see, day after day, white men buying stolen stones; Jews and Christians, and men who are neither Jews nor Christians, prowling round the pit, offering money at random for the morning's find. But the negro learns other secrets than diamond-stealing at the great pit of Colesberg. Kaffir from the Kei, Amaponda from the St. John's, Zulu from the Umfolosi, Swasi from the Maputa, Matabilli from the Limpopo, Basuto, Bechuana, Corana, or Bushman, all learn here the great fact that they are brothers in labour, confederates in servitude; the old jealousies of race begin to disappear before this bond of a common sympathy, and at last before the black races of South Africa stands out the patent truth that they are opposite in interest, object, desire, in every line of life and thought, to the white man

who has come among them, and that the old dream of a time drawing near, in which the black and white races would share together their rival inheritances of possession and knowledge, is only destined to develop a reality in which knowledge and possession rest with one race.

And in this we touch the real obstacle to what is called the civilisation of wild or savage races. We often marvel why the conversion of the heathen becomes more difficult as time goes on, and yet a moment's reflection will suffice to show us that the reason of the thing is patent enough.

When the wild man or the negro gives up his Great Spirit, his fetish, or his idol, and adopts the teaching of Christianity, he also adopts the social customs and the social standards of what we call civilisation. Where does he find himself in that new scale? At the very lowest point, somewhere between the beggar and the pauper.

In nine cases out of ten we have taken, or bought, or tricked his land from him; we have killed or chased away the wild animals that roamed over it; we have shouldered him out into the remote mountains or regions unfitted for our present wants. He learns our knowledge after a time; but that is only as a light held out to show him how miserable is the position he has accepted—the position of a Christian pariah.

He has been told a hundred times that this new religion meant brotherly love; that before God colour

vanished and race was not known ; and if he has believed the teaching, how bitter must be the sense of disappointment with which he learns the real nature of the *rôle* he has accepted in the new creed and social state ; how startling the discovery that this beautiful theory of the white man's love and brotherhood and charity to all men means, in the hard logic of fact, the refusal of a night's shelter under the same roof to him ; means the actual existence of a barrier between him and the white race more fatally opposed to fusion, more hostile to reciprocity of thought, mutual friendship, or commonest tie of fellowship, than that which lies between civilised man and the dumb dog that follows him.

Long years ago the red man of North America realised this fact, that civilisation meant to him servitude or death. He chose the latter. America, said to contain at the period of its discovery fourteen million Indians, to-day does not hold four hundred thousand.

But with the African it is different ; he does not die out before us. Nay, if we give him the common condition of room he multiplies amazingly ; he multiplies, but he does not come to the surface. He is always beneath, deeper, thicker, denser, it may be, but always below. It is a curious problem this of the African, and the more we study it the more difficult it grows. He will not die, he will not disappear. We will not have him as an equal ; we cannot have him as a slave. What then is to be the outcome ? Time will answer,

as he always answers ; and, meanwhile, this big pit at Kimberley promises to hasten the answer.

We said before that the black toilers in the pit carried away with them when they returned to their homes arms and ammunition, in addition to a certain amount of dangerous knowledge. We will now give a significant fact. More than three hundred thousand stand of arms, chiefly rifles, have passed from the hands of white traders, at the diamond fields, into possession of South African negroes during the last seven years. "A man has worked for me," a trader has said to us, "until he has had money enough to get a rifle, and the regulated amount of ammunition, six pounds or thereabouts ; he has then gone away to take home his rifle and powder, and after a lapse of a couple of months he has come back again to work for more ammunition." It is not too much to suppose that more than three hundred thousand natives have been armed and equipped for war at the diamond fields.

What is it all for ? Ah ! that is the question. Some will tell you that it is for the chase ; others for war between tribe and tribe ; others, again, see in it what it is, in all human probability, a preparation for war against the common enemy, the white man. The struggle will be as hopeless as it ever has been. Snider and Martini-Henry and Whitworth have quadrupled the weight with which the white man "crushes" these efforts of the savage to keep him out ; but all the same, there will be much bloodshed and misery

yet experienced ere the white line of conquest is pushed home to the Limpopo.

Now let us say one word about the diamond itself, ere we quit the "field" on which it is found. We cannot believe for a moment that this pit at Kimberley, or the two or three other spots at Du Toit's Pan and De Beer's, are the only diamond mines in this great plateau of South Africa; many others must exist.

Nothing marked these rich places of the earth; the mimosas grew their thorny stems there as elsewhere; sheep grazed on the stunted "karoo" bush; spring-bok filed in long peaceful lines across the plain. All at once the glistening stones are found, and in seven years ten millions' worth of diamonds are unearthed.

It is not yet twenty years since the first diamonds were found on the banks of the Vaal River. They were water-washed stones of a lustre far surpassing those now discovered in the big pits at Kimberley; but they were few and far between, and the river banks where they were found were soon worked out. It was evident that they had been washed in bygone times from some spot higher up the river, and deposited on the outer slopes of gravel banks formed by eddies in some vast volume of running water. This brings us naturally to the question of what was originally the aspect of this plateau. It was, without doubt, a mighty lake. At some age in the earth's history all this red plain, this grass-covered rolling table-land, now so dry and at times so arid, lay deep beneath an inland sea.

If a traveller lands on any portion of the coast of South Africa, from the tropic to the Cape of Good Hope, and journeys inland from the sea, he soon comes to a range of mountains. These mountains run nearly parallel to the coast, and are at varying distances from it; sometimes thirty, sometimes one hundred and thirty miles from it.

Ascending this mountain range, and gaining the top, one stands on the rim of the extinct lake; the ground falls again, but only falls to a third of the original extent. This inner plateau is, in fact, the lake-bed of South Africa. What has become of the enormous volume of water that must once have filled this vast basin? The lower lands, between the rim and the sea, tell that plainly enough; the dry bed of the lake tells it too. The waters rolled away in mighty floods. The lake bottom was raised from beneath, or the rim was worn down; but at any rate the great flood poured forth and swept before it, not the mere rock and *débris* of earth, but the surface of the earth itself—the hills and plains that lay before it.

South Africa is a land of table-topped hills. These curious flat wall-like mountains, with hard sandstone sides, are the wrecks left by this mighty flood; they are the island fortresses that resisted the rush of water; around them the softer rock and looser earth was carried away; their iron sides stood the fierce rush of the waves, and at last, when the era of erosion had passed, they remained to still carry on their smooth summits, sometimes set three thousand feet above

what is to-day the surface of the country, the level of the land in bygone ages. But before the waters were pushed over the rim of the vast lake mighty changes had taken place beneath its waves. The fires of the earth had broken forth, and through the soft silts of cycles, and through the layers of sand, and mud, and submarine vegetation, the molten trap had forced its way in many fiery fissures.

In all human probability it was during these struggles between water above and fire beneath that the diamonds were formed in the funnel-shaped bed, where they are found to-day, at Kimberley. That they came floating from beneath is evident enough. Here and there, scattered through the pit, are found detached masses of rock. These boulders are called in the language of the mine "floating reefs"; on the tops of such rocks diamonds are scarcely ever found; at the sides, sometimes; beneath, they often lie. As bubbles seek the surface, so in bygone ages might these carbonic bubbles have floated from the furnace raging beneath through the funnel opening under the lake, where, kept down by the weight above, they crystallised under conditions we cannot define.

This explanation of that curious question, "How are diamonds formed?" was first put forth by one who has long watched with observant eye in South Africa the story told by the rocks to man.*

That these three or four earth-openings, under the

* Sir T. Shepstone, K.C.M.G.

bed of the extinct lake, were not the only ones is evident enough, and it is impossible to believe that there are not many other such mines scattered over the plateau, which, as time goes on, will be found as rich, perhaps richer in these bright carbon crystals than even the big pit of New Rush. Karoo and mimosa cover them to-day.

A word now as to the quality of stones found in South Africa.

The diamonds first found along the Vaal River were of exceeding brilliancy, fully equal in lustre to the finest stones of Golconda or Brazil; but in the pits of Kimberley, De Beer's, and Du Toit's Pan they are nearly all "off-coloured," or yellow. In the one case they have been washed by the river, and exposed to the action of air at some period of the world. In the other, they lie deep in the bowels of the earth, and first see light when the digger's pick disturbs their rest. Many of them crack and flaw when the light first comes to them.

And now as to the value of the diamond, and its probable future.

It is scarcely possible that the gem can retain the place which it has so long held, if these South African diggings are to continue. Large brilliants must become common. Fifty, eighty, one hundred, even two and three hundred carat stones have been unearthed in these dry diggings. We have already stated our opinion that many other pits will be found in the vast dry bed of this extinct lake; and then fashion,

easily frightened at profusion, will take alarm, and the emerald of Central Asia or the ruby of Upper Burmah will perhaps supplant the long-throned supremacy of the easier found diamond.

Turning from the diamond field itself to the effects of such discoveries upon the social and political aspect of South Africa, we find much food for reflection.

Every branch of trade, commerce, and agriculture has derived fresh life and new impulse from these fields. The land deemed a desert twenty years ago has become of great value. A farm in the Orange Free State means a great tract of land of not less than six thousand acres in extent. It is not too much to say that land in this Dutch Republic is worth to-day as many pounds per acre as it was worth pence five and twenty years ago. Six thousand acres form a single farm; but some men are in possession of five and six such farms in the State, and once it was our lot to ride over a Free State farm of two hundred and sixty thousand acres. What a possession! It lies on the top of the lower range of the Drakensberg, over the plains of Newcastle, some six or seven thousand feet above the sea-level.

Grand beyond description is such a possession. Hill, vale, plain, and river, all lie within its limits; and from the rising of the sun to his setting the traveller canters his tireless Cape horse between the beacons of this single ownership.

If we in England would wish to realise the effect of this increase in the value of estate in the Orange Free