
From Naboth's Vineyard

sufficed to put forth enough banket rock to give a monthly yield of more than a million and a quarter sterling. In these first eight months of 1899, 91,000 blacks and about 12,000 whites made gold to a total of thirteen millions sterling, more or less. Turn we now to the year 1905. Here we find that 95,000 natives, about 35,000 Chinese, and some 15,000 whites produced practically the same yield.

The inference to be drawn from the disparity between the numbers at work and the return of gold produced in the two periods, goes far to establish the correctness of a statement made to me in conversation in July or early August, 1899, by the late Mr. Seymour—namely, that the reef on the Witwatersrand at certain depths was neither in yield of gold nor in working facilities what it had been. The reef is more difficult to work. The yield of the banket is poorer. There is more labour, less profit. It is not from lack of labour alone, as compared with the pre-war days, that the mines have suffered of late. It is that there must be more drilling with less result.

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Let us now turn for a moment to the social and economic situation which the mines have created above ground at Johannesburg. Professions, trades, shops, hotels, banks, agencies, newspapers, offices of every kind have sprung up on the top of the reef. One hundred thousand white people, of whom 80,000 are men, have to live above, while 150,000 blacks have to toil below. Of 100,000 whites, the majority have lived, up to the present time at least, what might be called "the sporting life." The cost of living was very high. The pound sterling in Johannesburg was not, and is not to-day, worth more than nine shillings in its purchasing capacity as compared with London. But money came easily if it went quickly. Everybody betted or gambled or did both. The white miner who drew £30 or £40 a month in wages spent perhaps half of it on himself or his family, and gambled on the stock exchange with the other half. He, like his masters, had his brokers. So long as things boomed, he made money and had a good time. He lived upon "booms" quite as much as on banket-boring. He

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frequently became a microscopic magnate. He was no longer a miner in any of the old meanings of that term.

How will it all work out? He would be a far-seeing man who would answer that question, but here is a forecast of some interest when we remember the source from which it comes. The *Jewish Chronicle* of Johannesburg, in a leading article, recently wrote as follows :—

“The whole social fabric which surrounds us is changing under our very eyes. We can at once characterize most of the cities of the British Empire as England and Christian. Not so Johannesburg. He who should proceed on the assumption that it was English and Christian would soon find himself confronted with some very puzzling situations. He would soon discover that one, and perhaps the indispensable, factor in the economic life of the town is an element which is neither English nor Christian, and can hardly by any conceivable means become either Anglicized or Christianized. He would find if his own or any other nationality were taken away the town would

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still go on, but that if the Chinese went the town would collapse. . . . Hence we conclude that Johannesburg must in the near future become practically a Chinese town—a town in which Chinese will be the most important language, and where the dominant religion corresponds. The old régime was the share market—*i.e.* drawing money from the European investor to the satisfaction of everybody concerned. This must cease . . . they (the men of the old régime) will now all be glad if they can get out with a whole skin.” And then in the tag comes the best bit: “The Jew is to survive the exodus of all his compeers, because he will be able to adapt himself to the changed order of things.”

No one can complain of the frankness with which this article is written. It may be brutal, but it has the merit of plain speaking. There is no endeavour to prove that the Chinamen will better the position of the white man on the Rand; no attempt to show that the civilization of Europe will erase that of Asia in Johannesburg.

This editor clearly thinks that the ethics

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of Confucius will hold their own in the compounds against the teaching of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Briton and Boer (happily perhaps for themselves) are to have no part in this glowing future. Two Asian cities are to arise on the Ridge of the White Waters and the remainder of the sons of men are to go into the Dead Sea.

JOHANNESBURG,
March, 1906.

V

UNTIL the epoch of the war the labour question in Johannesburg did not become really serious. We have seen how 90,000 or 100,000 black men sufficed to produce gold which 150,000 can only equal to-day. But the war brought two great changes into the question. It made the capitalist masters believe that they would be able to introduce a cheaper form of labour into the mines, and at the same moment it caused the native labourer to think he was entitled to receive a higher rate of wages than had been paid him before the war. Nor could it be said that he was unreasonable in holding this belief. He had been in receipt of four pounds a month and more from the military authorities during the war, given to him for work above ground, which was in every respect much more congenial to his tastes. He had helped the Government to achieve the conquest of the

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Boers, a help which he believed, not without some reason, to have been an essential factor in that conquest, and now when that conquest had been achieved, its first result to him was a proposal to reduce the wages he had been paid in the pre-war days by more than fifty per cent., and to lessen them seventy-five per cent. as compared with the war wage. It was certainly a most unfortunate moment at which to propose such reductions. Whether it had its root in a long-conceived idea on the part of the capitalists to force upon the Imperial Government that acceptance of the principle of yellow labour to which all Governments—the Boers and that of the British—had hitherto always objected, cannot be definitely proved; but it is widely believed that such was the object of the moment, and that the old game of forcing the hand of the Imperial Government in this matter of imported labour was again being resorted to by the cosmopolitan capitalist who had so far worked the lever of British patriotism on all occasions to the advancement of his personal aims.

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Yellow labour promised several advantages to its employer :—

1. It was to be for three years instead of for six months.
2. It was to be cheaper than black labour.
3. It would keep out the white workman.
4. It was a possible lever against black and white.
5. It would cause a boom in shares.

As to the nature of the labour itself, its moral aspect, or its effect on South Africa outside the Rand, these were matters about which the managers or magnates scarcely troubled themselves. They had not asked themselves what a war between the white races in South Africa would really mean to the sub-continent, neither did they question the lesser issues involved in this new departure in labour which was certain to introduce complex conditions into a problem which was already a deeply complicated one. They saw only the policy of the moment—a greater yield of gold more rapidly arrived at, the duplication of share profits, a quicker

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passage from the uncertain seas of South African finance into that haven or heaven of all rapidly acquired riches—the great Fair of Vanity in London. And it is an easy matter now for organized capital acting upon the existing conditions of South African life to produce an artificial situation which renders the particular policy it desires an apparent necessity to the State.

The compound system is nothing new in South Africa. It has existed in Kimberley for twenty years, and under conditions more degrading to human nature than any which obtain in Johannesburg. The extraordinary influence which the late Mr. Rhodes possessed in England probably caused the compound system to remain unquestioned during all these years. It is now only debated because it is associated with the question of Chinese labour. But its essence has always been the same. The best thing that can be said of it is that it is a compromise between free labour and slavery. That it comes nearer the latter system than the former most people who know both systems will admit, even though it does not

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possess the worst adjuncts of the old slave system, the horrors of the middle passage, the barracoon, and the sale-market. From these things the indentured system is exempt, but it has features which the old slavery lacked. The Kaffir who has come to the Witwatersrand on a three or six months' indenture is a less valuable animal to his master than was the black slave in Alabama fifty years ago, for whose possession the cotton planter had paid one thousand dollars. The slave had at least the animal value which he had cost. The indentured "boy" had not even got that selfish hold upon his employer. Hence we have the long lists of maimed and broken beings, the ravages from pneumonia, the heavy death-rates in the mines among men in the prime and fullest vigour of life. What is inconsistent in this compound controversy is that we seem to have swallowed without protest this system for twenty years when it had relation to our own black people, and to have become suddenly alive to its evils when it was applied to Chinese coolies. As a matter of fact, the advent of the coolies to Johannesburg has

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improved the level of *animal* life in the compound.

The rooms are better built, the food is more generous than it used to be. But with all these improvements the compound system is, and must remain, a horrible system. "Tainted with slavery?" Aye, even steeped in some things that formed the most brutalizing features of that once cherished institution which our less fastidious-speaking forefathers called slavery.

You have to live some little time on the Rand before finding out the ramifications of the coolie question. Half a dozen Chinese will be pointed out to you driving in cabs about Johannesburg or smoking cigarettes at a railway station, and you will be asked in ironic tones, "Are these your slaves?" Longer acquaintance with compound life will give other readings. When the coolie emerges from the mine after his eight or ten hours' "shift," he enters the compound, washes, eats, rests, and gambles. He has no other amusement or recreation. All Chinamen are gamblers. Every room has its punters. Money is plentiful from Ah

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Sin's point of view. A clever punter will clear the wages of a dozen men in a few hours. It is usually these successful "bookies" that are to be found in the cabs in the streets of Johannesburg. Sunday is the favourite day for the outings of these experts. The Kaffir looks on in open-mouthed astonishment. Here is his rival, his enemy, disporting himself in a manner which he, the native of the soil, cannot hope to imitate. He cannot take cabs or perambulate the sidewalk like this imported punter with the pigtail. The thing that is certain in all this babel of confused opinion is that the Chinaman has come to add yet another factor of demoralization to that already long list of subjects which "civilization" is teaching to the negro in the school of the Witwatersrand.

So far as I have been able to read this Asiatic problem in South Africa, it is not the slavery of the yellow man or the Indian which is to be feared. It is his eventual mastership of the land. Our modern European pagans are constantly asking their much-to-be-pitied gods to reveal the burden

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that is on their knees. The gods are silent, but Buddha and Brahma and Vishnu have their eyes set wide open on Africa, even though their lips are closed to Europe. "Do what we may," said one of the ablest of the American mine managers on the Rand to me, "we cannot get even with the Chinaman. He always gets the best of us."

A glance is sufficient to show that the managers are not altogether happy with their new labour. The Chinese compounds have many inventions and precautions which the old black compounds do not possess. More barbed-wire lines above the walls, curious-looking hydrants fixed upon rooftops, and parapets with brazen muzzles laid straight on the yards, ready to turn on a jet of water "sufficiently strong to lift a dozen coolies off their legs." When you walk through the yards there is a look in these queer-angled black eyes altogether different in quality and expression from that in the equally black, but quite level-set, eyes of the negro.

The yellow man has had for centuries the most complete system of secret societyship

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in the world. The Cornish ganger has had some remarkable proofs of the manner in which this system works. He cannot hammer the yellow labourer as he was wont so often to hammer the black one. Curious things sometimes happen. A blow is not forgotten by this new-comer as it was by the old. Retentive memories would seem to temper tempers, even in a South African mine. The Chinamen have a trade union of their own, just as they had gunpowder and the mariner's compass long ages before we knew them. "You can't knock 'em down," said an experienced Cornish ganger to a friend of mine. "You can't hit them as you would a nigger—they remember it, they does." There are some fifty thousand Chinese coolies on the Witwatersrand to-day. The magnates want, I am told, double or treble or four times that number. I have an idea that if the Imperial Government were to accede to that demand, or, let us say, if they put two hundred thousand Chinese coolies on the Rand, there would be after a little while no further trouble in Johannesburg. The development would be complete,

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but it would not be exactly on the lines looked for.

The Chinese do not like the mine work any more than the black man likes it ; but the yellow man has signed for three years, and the black has only signed for six months, hence the attempts at desertion on the part of the longer indentured men. No person who has seen the work and the life in the mines can be astonished at this condition of affairs. "It is devilish work," said a high official in the native department to me, "the men hate it." It is curious to note that all the deserters who have been recaptured have been found to the northward of Johannesburg. None have been traced south of it. They imagine that by heading north they will reach China. About a score of Chinese deserters have been found on farms nearly two hundred miles north of the Witwatersrand. "They are going to China," they say. "It is not so far off. The ship that brought them went round and round to make them think it was a long distance." Probably some of them will be found before very long in Cairo—that

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will be the solution of the Cape to Cairo problem.

What is to be done? That is indeed a difficult question to answer. Johannesburg has been taking leaps in the dark for a long while. To escape from the evil of one jump it has sprung into another. Raid, war, cheap labour, Chinese—where will the next spring be made? There is a favourite mine on the Rand called "The Jumpers' Deep." Will Johannesburg's next jump be into the abyss? And meanwhile? Meanwhile you will have to go on with the Chinese experiment. They speak truly who tell you that rapid removal of the yellow man would mean heart failure and death. The Chinese are at present to the Witwatersrand what the administration of oxygen is to the sick man. Stop it and he sinks. All this accumulated mass of life has its sole root in these mines. They call it an "industry." Let us accept the term and ask in turn—What have you done with this "industry" during those last twenty years if now you require the aid of fifty thousand Chinamen to save it from extinction? You have induced the British

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public to invest untold millions in your schemes. They have given you all you asked of them, even war—and yet the Chinese coolie is to be the last chance of Witwatersrand salvation from ruin. “’Tis true ’tis pity ; and pity ’tis ’tis true.”

“And all this time, while you were laying the blame upon a dozen outside causes or agencies, the one real cause of failure has been kept back—over-capitalization ; enormous, unequalled expansion and inflation. And you who would still rule and still dictate are not to be the sufferers. While you kept Johannesburg jumping in the dark you took care to jump clear into the light—to jump into palaces and pleasant places, the very glow and glamour of your agility only serving to bring into your nets larger catches of innumerable smaller fishes and lesser fry in the waters of speculative finance.” It is impossible not to feel pity for the large class of hard-working men in Johannesburg upon whom, so far as human judgment can foresee, the financial catastrophe, if it occurs, will eventually fall. The oxygen process cannot go on for ever.

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The question that is uppermost in the minds of the average white citizen to-day on the Rand is not the political racial question. It is the economic one. Like the traveller in the old inn where the four-post bed had a top which slowly and silently descended upon the sleeper pressing him to death as he lay, so the ordinary white dweller in Johannesburg begins to see what he believes to be an elaborate and highly organized system of capitalist machinery quietly descending upon him, threatening to crush him out of existence. The fear may be only the nightmare of an imagination overheated or disordered by the fever of life on the Rand, but, as there was a picture on the wall of the old inn which served to warn the traveller of his impending doom, so the modern sojourner in the Golden City has had some very notable disappearing landmarks to awaken his suspicions and arouse his fears. Will the ballot-box save him while there is yet time?

PRETORIA,
26th March, 1906.

VI

THE stream of life runs so swift in Johannesburg that yesterday is almost forgotten before to-morrow has come, a fortunate fact for the man who has to steer the course of his inquiry through the twisting channels of Witwatersrand political life.

He has only to go back six months, a year, or six years, not indeed to get "true bearings," these are difficult to discover; but to find some new pretext eating up an old one, some prophecy made void by the pitiless hand of Time. Pretext is a hard taskmaster. It demands either complete forgetfulness on the part of the audience, or a continuously lengthening chain of "terminological inexactitude" on that of the performer. Let us look back a little. The Raid was undertaken, we were told on the highest authority, for the rescue and salvation of the women and children in Johannesburg.

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The war was for the heritage of the British workman, free labour, free press, free speech, free emigration, free everything. This all-embracing thirst for freedom finally resolved itself into a geographical expression; everything was to be free up to the Zambesi. One was never able to understand why the line of freedom was drawn at that river. Were we afraid that if Freedom went north of the Zambesi it might get into the Nile Valley and carry from the Cape to Cairo an undesirable commodity?

The geographical expression solved difficulties and silenced doubts. Zambesi became another "Mesopotamia." People looked for it in the map, and they who found it equally with those who were unable to do so, were more than ever convinced that it was the place where the flag of an ideal freedom was to be displayed to an admiring world.

Then came the war; other rivers intervened; the Tugela, the Orange, the Modder, forced themselves into public recognition, and the Zambesi was forgotten. The war

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which was to have been a three months' picnic took so many years that its origin and pretext had been lost sight of ere it was half over. But the prophets were soon at work again. Progress and development were now the watchwords; the new white settler was to come in, the old Boer was to go out. Irrigation, railways, lunatic asylums, departments, expansions and extensions, all these were to rapidly raise the land to a pitch of prosperity such as it had never known; millions of white men were to make their homes on the Rand. "The land of the Republic is now being cleansed by fire and sword," wrote one prophet, whose name, I think, rhymed with or resembled Moloch. "The changes which will ensue through enlightened government in the Transvaal will be so great, that they will affect the other colonies as well; all will share in the coming progress; there will be a new South Africa. . . . Besides supporting a prosperous population, and repaying tenfold any capital judiciously invested, they (the mines) can easily supply sufficient revenue to pay for their own government, and provide a

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surplus to repay any reasonable part of the great sum that has now been spent upon them."

The great alchemists to whose gaberdines or frock-coats we had pinned our faith, assured us that if we only continued to put our money into the "slots" and "stopes" of Johannesburg we would be richer than the dreams of an East-End costermonger when he is about to set out for South Africa. Again the money went in, the handle turned, and nothing came; indeed something worse than nothing came. Things ran exactly in the other direction; men were wanting food in Johannesburg; notices had to be published stopping intending emigrants. No person was to be allowed to land in South Africa without a special permit; relief societies and unemployed agencies were everywhere at work.

For once South Africa was consistent, and it was somewhat tardily discovered that you could not destroy from eighty to one hundred millions' worth of cattle, sheep, hogs, houses, and household goods throughout a vast region, and immediately begin a boom in

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stocks, shares, buildings, lands and mines upon the same ground.

If man did not live on bread alone, much less could he subsist on gold, when that metal was produced in a land upon which every vestige of life, food sustenance, and shelter had been destroyed. Still the sooth-sayers were not dismayed, they did not unsay what they had said, they only ignored it, and went on again at promise and prophecy. It was cheap labour they now asked for, cheap and nasty; the last didn't matter if they got the first. Moloch was getting desperate; he had to lift a corner of the prophet's veil. It was not white labour he wanted, not even black; it was yellow.

Here, then, was the final outcome of the war; this was the freedom, this the progress, this the development. Short as were memories in England and in Johannesburg, men remembered the promises of the pre-war period. Zambesi, birthright, free labour, "cleansing by fire and sword," all bartered and battered down for a mess of Chinese rice porridge.

Men remembered, too, that old Paul

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Kruger had told them this would be the end of it. He had said to the English workmen, "When they have driven me out they will drive you out." This was the beginning of that last phase.

But the prophets had another pretext ready. "Give us," they said, "enough yellow men and we will employ more white men." This was that particular form of half-truth which philosophers have told us was the worst falsehood.

And now a notable exhibition was to be given of the freedom of opinion enjoyed upon the Rand under the new dispensation. During the earlier pre-war days, when the British workman was being exploited as the lever for upsetting the Boer Government, three gentlemen had been imported from England by the inner Rand circle as editors of newspapers wholly devoted to mining politics and interests. These gentlemen were not prepared to eat their words at the bidding of their masters, and to advocate against their convictions the introduction of Chinese. They had to go—forced to resign or dismissed; their places were quietly filled

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by more complacent scribes, and the secret service was again victorious.

Still the pitiless logic of fact remained obdurate ; shares fell and still fell, all values decreased to less than half what they had been before the war. The enemy, Truth, seemed to be drawing near the inner citadel itself. It was rumoured that men whose names in the financial world have been towers of strength for years, even they were said to be in monetary difficulties. Many stars of the first magnitude which had withdrawn their light from the southern hemisphere and fixed themselves in the northern constellations (those of Taurus and the Great Bear, for preference), resought the scenes of their earlier activities, and again appeared in Scorpio and Capricorn. But the worst blow had still to come. The much-vaunted cheap labour was following the old rule of South Africa—it was proving itself to be dear labour, while it still retained all the characteristics of nastiness which had been so readily condoned in the days of its supposed economy.

At this supreme moment chance or design

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threw a last straw to the prophets. The old Government resigned, new ministers came into office. The soothsayers were quick to catch their chance, and the cry of "Say it's the new boy," rang long and loud through all the various channels and press organs which were still theirs to command. Nothing more insolently untrue had ever been uttered before, even on that great mount of mendaciousness, the corner-stone of Johannesburg.

These things deceive few people in South Africa, but they are meant more for home consumption than for the Transvaal. It is a last attempt to confuse the issue, to delay the discovery. Before the war the game used to be called "forcing the hand of the Government." It has been tried once too often. It won't do this time. Government by bogey is now at a discount. The plan won many victories for the inner circle. They won on the war and on the peace, for they captured even the capturers. It is that long succession of success that makes the new position so galling.

They who for twelve years have "run" South Africa as they pleased, and who for

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half that time have gone a long way towards running the Empire, now find themselves told to mind their own business.

It is almost too much to bear. They are busy at the old devices. They have so many weapons in their armoury that they know not which to use. One moment they flag-wag, the next they threaten "to cut the painter," the next they open negotiations with Het Volk. Again it is an appeal to the victims of the war, who are adjured "to turn in their graves" rather than submit to so terrible a disaster as dictation at the hands of a Liberal Government in England. But it will not do. Philip was very drunk in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early ones of the twentieth. He is sober now. He was drunk, poor fellow, as many a well-meaning man from Macedon to Monmouth has been drunk before, and many an honest fellow even in wider geographical limits will be drunk after him. But it is with those who made him drunk that we have to reckon; they are with us still. The point of their argument (which might indeed be called the "Imperial pint") is ever the

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same. If Philip drinks that draught again, he will deserve his fate.

I don't think the working-man of England will be deceived a second time; he knows "Jew-burg," his corner-stone, better than his betters know it. Even if that multitudinous-chambered establishment were suddenly to start an anti-Chinese antechamber, it would not deceive the working-man. It is he who has the future of England in his hands. That is what gives the inner circle of the Rand its day dread and its nightmare.

So long as it had only the good old Tory investor to deal with, the game was easy. The circle fed him with alternate booms and bogies, and while he was gravely loading his old flint gun at home under alternate hallucinations of greed and fear, they in their agile Syrian way were hilariously unloading their paper shares and ventures upon him.

The last great "flutter" occurred only a few months ago. It was called "Sallies." "Sallies" were eight or nine pounds a year since; they are eight or nine shillings to-day. "Coronations" which four years back were £3000, are now at £40. The gas is slowly

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getting out of the monstrous balloon, and when it is all out the government of the Rand will be easy enough.

In the earlier nineties there was a "slump" in Johannesburg. A deputation from the Rand went to interview Oom Paul in Pretoria; they were received by the President. "Times were bad," they said. They had lost their money, and it was everybody's fault except theirs. The State must do something for them. The old man listened in silence, smoking. At last he took his pipe from his lips and spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you remind me of a pet monkey I had once. He was very fond of me; he would never leave me alone. When anything happened that he did not like, he always ran to me. One winter's night he was at my feet by the fire. Monkeys never sit quiet for long, and he kept twisting himself round about until at last he got his tail into the fire. He did it himself. Gentlemen, I didn't even know he was doing it, but all the same he turned and bit me in the leg."

That is still the game with the gentlemen

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of the inner circle. When anything goes wrong, they have a pleasant habit of biting the Government in the leg. This time it is Mr. Winston Churchill's leg to which they have particularly attached their teeth; but they are equally ready to go for "the painter," which of course means the flag. When a boom is on, they wag it, drag it, and brag about it; but when a slump threatens, or they burn their fingers in the Stock Exchange fire, they are quick to put their teeth into the "old painter." It is only a little way they have, and no one, not even the man with the bitten leg, need take it too seriously; least of all need "the painter" mind it.

JOHANNESBURG,
March, 1906.

VII

TO attempt an exhaustive treatise on the native question in South Africa in the limits of a letter would be absurd. One can only indicate its boundaries, name its salient points, and try to show where its greatest difficulties lie. The native African has always been the Old World's chiefest puzzle. He has played the same part in the New World; but it is on his own ground—Africa—that he and his question have reached almost insoluble proportions. The native is everywhere in South Africa. He is indigenous, strong, active. He can do scores of things which the white man cannot, or will not, do. He has all Africa behind him and all the future before him. He possesses qualities of courage, loyalty, power of discipline, honesty, and obedience which are not exceeded by any race of men in any part of the world. We are in the habit of speaking of him as

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though he formed a single stock from Table Mountain to the Equator. In reality he varies as much in character, and is as different in race, as the Laplander differs from the Spaniard. He watches, waits. He is still a child in many things, but he possesses powers of comparison that are daily growing, and he is expanding that faculty of testing what he is told by what he sees which we call criticism.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing about him is the fact that while we need him very much he does not need us; he could do without us, and under the present conditions of life in South Africa nothing is more certain than that we could not do without him. If it be only remotely true that the withdrawal of 40,000 Chinese from the mines of the Witwatersrand would cause the industry of that region to collapse, what would happen if the 200,000 black men who are at work in Johannesburg in mines and other occupations were to leave their employments?

Roughly speaking, it would be correct to say that at least eighteen-twentieths of all

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manual labour in South Africa is performed by black or coloured people. As we know labour in England, they are the only labourers. From infancy to age the white man has his labour done by the black "brother" (?). The white baby is rocked in the cradle or wheeled in the perambulator by a black. A native digs the dead man's grave. A coloured coachman drives the white bride and her white husband from the white man's church. It is absolutely and entirely true of this black man to say that he is equally at home in minding the baby or mining the mine.

And yet we are constantly being told that the black man won't work. 'Tis a sermon which our white brethren are never tired of preaching. They were preaching it when I was here more than thirty years ago. They are at it still. Turning back the leaves into the time of that dead generation, I find this is what I then wrote about it at Kimberley: "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

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buy, sell, and drink in the town." If Johannesburg be substituted for Kimberley the description will stand fairly well to-day. Indeed, a philosopher might possibly derive some comfort from the marked devotion to parental example which, in this respect at least, the present white generation shows to that which went before it. Despite Mr. Kipling's pessimism, we do not forget.

Still there is a labour distinction in South Africa. The work of the carpenter, saddler, tailor, mason, is still largely at least done by white men, but that is because we have reserved these trades for ourselves. We are very chary about allowing our black brother to acquire knowledge of the crafts which would fit him to become an artisan. You will see in the hotel a white housemaid directing a black "boy" how to perform the bedroom duties for her. You will also see in every town a white carpenter or bricklayer having his tools or his bricks reverentially handed to him by his black assistant, who, if he had been taught, could do the work quite as well. The white artisan is getting seventeen shillings or a

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pound a day ; the black acolyte receives two shillings or less. Hence you will be able to trace some singular anomalies in this South African labour question. You will find, for instance, an effort to keep up or increase the cost of white labour, and a similar effort to keep down or decrease the cost of black labour. Every white man, of every degree, has an interest more or less active in reducing the black man's wage ; but he has not a similar interest in lessening the wage of his own caste.

And, following this fact to its results, we reach the reason why the cost of living in South Africa is so high—higher, indeed, than in any other part of the world I have been in. When you enter a native reserve the difference becomes at once apparent. The egg which is threepence or fourpence in the town is here a halfpenny. The fowl—equally tough, unfortunately, in both places—is eighty per cent. less in the kraal than in the capital. If South Africa had been a little India in the matter of the black man's possession of the land, his apprenticeship to trades, etc., and if the white man was an

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official or governing caste, the cost of living would be what it is in India. If, again, there had been no black labour in South Africa, the white immigrant would long ago have settled down to the conditions of work which obtain in all our other Colonies, and another New Zealand or Australia would have arisen here.

To understand this black and white labour question we must go back a little. Seventy years ago South Africa was a slave country, both predial and domestic. The white races grew up in the idea that the sole duty of the black race was labour, and labour for the white man. When slavery was abolished this prevailing conception of the whole duty of the black man still lived on, and it still lives on in some shape or form. In the old-time conditions of life in the sub-continent there was no particular reason why the idea should assume formidable shape. Grape-growing, wine-pressing, or sheep-shearing were predial labours which did not call for labour on a large scale. Products and wages were alike small, and from 1840 to 1870 the conditions of life in the

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sub-continent were easily met in the matter of labour. Then a great change occurred. Minerals and precious stones began to be discovered. An immediate demand for labour arose. Wages increased.

The natives longed for guns. The employers found that the possession of a gun, with a little powder and ball, was a greater inducement to a Basuto or a Zulu to come to the mines than a mere rate of money wage would have been. So they at once offered guns in remuneration for labour. It was vastly cheaper too. A gun which cost ten shillings would be given to a black man in payment for a month's labour at a nominal rate of two or three pounds a month. It was good business for the white man—"shent. per shent." twice over. If the governing authorities objected on the ground of danger to the State through the arming of the natives, their fears were allayed by the assurance—quite truthfully given, I believe—that the weapon was only dangerous to its user. So the trade was not only permitted, but war was even threatened in its behalf.

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The Government of the Orange Free State of that time, wisely foreseeing what this trade in gun-running, as it was called, would lead to, attempted to stop the practice within their territory. They detained a consignment of firearms passing through the Free State. An ultimatum from the High Commissioner at Cape Town immediately followed. A fine of six hundred pounds was to be paid and an apology given, otherwise there was to be war. The little Free State paid the money and wrote the apology; and for five or six years things went merrily at Kimberley. Then the crash came. It was war with the natives from the Kie River to the Pongola. The guns burst as it was said they would; but all the same the assegai did much mischief, and Great Britain had to foot a little bill on account of Kaffir wars, which ran into over ten millions sterling. No matter who wins, the English taxpayer always pays.

This cycle of Kaffir wars had only just ceased when gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand. The demand for native labour became greater than it had ever been.

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Good wages had to be offered in order to induce the "boys" to descend into these underground caverns. The black man loves the surface of the earth, and the sun and sky above it. But life was becoming harder to him day by day; taxes had to be paid and clothes bought. When I first went to Natal in 1875, the order for putting the black man into trousers was a recent one. It was good for trade, and necessarily good for morality. A little later the interests of morality were further advanced by orders that the Zulu ladies were to wear blankets, and to wear them high—a proviso, however, which may have been only a matter of averages, for about the same period it is to be noted that while the tide of blanket fashion was at shoulder height in Zululand, its counterpart in silk or velvet was not much above waist depth in Europe.

But it has not always been in the cut of his clothes alone that we have shown our solicitude for the black man in matters of morality and labour. I have had in my hand the copy of a letter in which the statement was made that an expedition had been

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sent against a friendly chief and tribe in Rhodesia, with orders to cut down the unripe crops of mealies and Kaffir corn, with the avowed object of obliging the "boys" to go into the mines. When I turn to the death-rate among the natives working two of those mines in 1899, I find that two hundred and forty "boys" died or were killed in two years out of an average of sixteen hundred at work.

These are but straws. Nevertheless, they show the set of a current which has been steadily gaining strength and direction in the minds of many in South Africa—the idea that what it is the fashion to call the inherent love of idleness in the black races should be cured or set right by measures of constructive coercion. If trousers-and-blanket legislation, increased taxes, the raising of hut rents, new grass lands, and licences fail to induce the natives to develop the mineral resources of South Africa—for the benefit, in the first instance, of the capitalist, the European shareholder, and the mine managers—then other means must be found to make them do it. This, scream

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at it as some people will, is the oft-spoken, sometimes written, and still more extensively held silent opinion of large numbers of people at the present moment in South Africa. Now it is essential to note that all these methods of constructive coercion are neither, in their later development at least, the work of Boers nor of the old-time British. They are mainly, if not entirely, the product of the over-sea immigrant, the Uitlander of the pre-war days, and the new-comer into South Africa.

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VIII

IN what I have said so far about this native question I have dealt only with three distinct human factors—"British, Boers, and Blacks." But there is a fourth factor hitherto unnamed, and one of enormous importance. I have run over in my mind many appellations by which this fourth factor might be designated, but it is not easy to find a fitting one. There is no particular country—no exclusive class or caste—no religion and no ritual observance—by which he could be entirely and adequately designated. But there is one name—a new dictionary one, I believe—which seems to fit him with entire exactitude. It is the name of Bounder. In a recent debate in the British Parliament a rather happy definition of two political parties was given by a Minister. He spoke about those who believed it possible to stand on one leg in South African government, and those who

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like himself preferred to rest the idea of civil and political administration upon two legs. It will be observed that in placing a fourth factor—the Bounder—in the political edifice, in addition to the three already enumerated—British, Boers, and Blacks—I am giving a still more substantial foundation, as well as a new designation, which I believe to be as apposite to reality as it is certainly alliterative. But there is one point which I would wish to make quite clear in connection with the name I have used to characterize this great “fourth estate” factor in the political life of South Africa. I attach to the name no social distinction whatever—no particular rank, hierarchy, or order. I look into the dictionary and find “Bounder” thus defined: “A boisterous or overbearing person.” That will do. I have known people of that description in every degree and profession of life, and it exactly fits the particular point in the native question which I desire to press—and to press with all seriousness and strength.

The native African is essentially a subject, subject to the rule and law of his kraal, his

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chief, his king, but his chief and his king must have brain as well as blood. Here is an estimate of native character drawn by the hand of one who at this moment, and probably since the death of that master of all native knowledge, the late Sir T. Shipstone, knows more about the black man than any person now living in South Africa—Mr. William Grant: "Owing to the iron rule to which for centuries he (the native) has been subjected he is naturally law-abiding. He assents to and complies with the law under which he now lives. He pays willingly and peacefully all legal taxation. He provides for himself and family all necessary requirements. He never solicits or receives charity at the hands of Europeans, and as concerns his debts, he never pleads the 'Statute of Limitations.' These at all events rank among some of the qualities which attach to the gratuitously abused native." And again the same hand writes: "The iron rule to which natives for centuries have been subjected has stamped in their mind obedience to law, and though in many cases the process has been inhuman and brutal, the results

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obtained are far too valuable to be lightly disregarded." Yet again : "An indispensable condition for the successful treatment of the natives is that the responsible heads of the several native departments should be men possessing the necessary qualifications to command their complete confidence, for only under such circumstances will natives accept the white man's guidance and direction." These extracts could be multiplied indefinitely. The thing is the same as it is in India, in China, everywhere in the world where black and white come into relationship. It is a lesson so old that we are in danger of forgetting it. Thackeray preached it for us in fiction, for he knew it in fact, and when he drew Josh, or Joe, Sedley, and Colonel Newcome, he put the bounder and the anti-bounder into opposite panel portraits that will last for long. Which think you of the two men was it who won and kept India for us? The Collector of Bogglywallah, or the old gentleman who died in the Charter House?

Here, then, is the source of our present trouble, and the fruitful seed of our coming

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trouble with the black man in South Africa. The Bounder is abroad—what does he know or care about native character or native custom or native law? “Boisterous and overbearing,” he rushes in where the older men of longer experience fear to tread. He has his own methods of solving every difficulty. It is at these times that you will hear him, as I have heard him, enunciate solutions in broken bits of thought such as the following: “Why not give 'em the measles? They would run into the water then and die.” Or this: “I'd like to see four-foot (*sic*) of snow over the whole country—that would clear 'em out, that would.” It would be quite a mistake to suppose that the tall, lanky individual who gave utterance to this last expression of desire for Siberian conditions of climate in South Africa was of an unnatural or diabolical disposition. I saw him a few minutes later taking leave of an aged mother with the greatest appearance of filial affection.

A recent writer upon South Africa, who appears to have studied the land and its peoples with close attention, has said that

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among the numerous attractions to emigrants which the newer Colonies present there was the somewhat unusual one of the possibility of becoming a Prime Minister. How magnificent would it have been had there been no black or subject races to deal with! But alas! all the difference comes in there. If you cannot minister to the diseased mind of a white man, it is no less certain that you cannot "Prime Minister" on such terms to the healthy body of a black man. He will fight first. He will not die out before the incoming Bounder. He persists in increasing. Nature comes to his aid, and—Africa. Emerson knew it all. His seer-sight saw it sixty years ago—saw it, perhaps, because it was in his country that the true Bounder was born, even if he was bred on some other less expansive soil. This is what he wrote about it: "Nothing is more marked than the power by which individuals are guarded from individuals in a world where every benefactor becomes so easily a malefactor only by continuation of his activity into places where it is not due."

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Certainly Nature has had many ways of limiting the Bounder's "activity" in Africa. She thins him out by his weaknesses and her own strength. For the last twenty years events have been pouring the Bounder into South Africa. The mines and the wars that arose through them have left strange after-maths behind them. Arnold said that Asia bowed her head as the Western waves swept over her, and raised it again when they had passed. But Africa goes one better. She does not bow her head. There was a doctor on board the ship I came from England in, and he had a strange theory about mosquitoes and the spread of malarial fever. The mosquito, he said, was harmless or uninoculated until it had first bitten a black baby; it then became malarially affected—the mosquito, not the baby. The mosquito next bites a white man; he gets fever—"black water," it is called—and dies. That is the whole process. Is this, then, the great secret of the sphinx which Africa has kept hidden for thousands of years? She—or the mosquito—has wiped out or absorbed successive waves of Uitlanders

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one after the other—Assyrian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, Turk. Only those races which became African have continued. Asian Mohammedanism battered at the Eastern Empire and at Constantinople for eight hundred years before it took it; but when Asian Islam reinforced itself with Moor and Berber blood, it overran the best part of Western Europe in a century. Stranger even is it what this Africa did for that northern race from the Vistula or the Volga which we call Vandals. They who skirted along the frontiers of the Roman Empire for a hundred and more years, casting sidelong looks towards the great city, got at last into Africa, and within the limits of a lifetime they took Rome by the throat and carried her plunder of a thousand years back with them to Carthage. How quickly the three hundred bishoprics of Augustine's age disappear from Africa never to rise again! And to think that it was the black baby and this little swamp-gnat that did it all!

I once came upon an odd volume of Coleridge's poems in a far-away Hudson's Bay

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post in North America. It was a season when mosquitoes were unusually active. I turned to an ode, an invocation to the mosquitoes. It began with the words, "Sweet insect." I closed the book in the belief that the poet had entirely mistaken the pest. But now? Did he not know all about the mosquito even as he knew all about the albatross? "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings!" If this Bulawayo doctor is right, then the babe and the suckling—for surely the mosquito is a suckling—are doing giants' work in Africa. They will either slay or Africanize the Bounder.

Thus far I had written when I received a letter from one of the Natal Ministers—a gentleman to whom I am personally indebted for assistance kindly rendered in the matter of a recent visit to Zululand. There is a paragraph in the letter which is of so much interest at the present moment that I take the liberty of quoting it here: "I think the Zulus are behaving very well in the present trouble. . . . It seems to me a thousand pities that such a splendid race as the Zulus ever came into contact with