

their mouths when they have any particular interest to serve by it.

Notwithstanding the Dutch are extremely ignorant, they are minute observers of natural objects, and exhibit much intelligence on subjects connected with their peculiar mode of life. Though far from being acute, they possess in a high degree a certain solidity of understanding, joined to a patient perseverance, which fits them well for conquering difficulties and improving their circumstances under disadvantages which would discourage people of a more lively and sanguine temperament. No profit is too trifling to be an object of their cupidity, and they spare no pains to obtain it.

The men are almost universally under a slavish subjection to their wives, and dare not make any arrangement with regard to their common property without the consent of the ladies. If a man makes a good bargain according to his wife's judgment, it is all well; but if otherwise, it is instantly annulled, her sanction being always considered indispensable to its completion. If the men are avaricious, the women are doubly so.

The early education of the children is well calculated to create covetous dispositions. As soon as a child is born, two or three breeding cows, or a certain number of sheep, are set apart to form his future stock when he quits the paternal roof. These cattle have a particular mark affixed to distinguish them; and as the child grows up, he is encouraged in making bargains with other boys, and is praised when he gains an advantage over any of them in his dealings. I have often heard a father boasting that his boy was so clever, that "he had cheated a grown-up man."

The children are allowed to play with the young slaves and Hottentots, and are never checked for tyrannizing over them: they are also encouraged in the accomplishment of lying, which seems to be considered necessary to their future success in life. So little do the Dutch think this a vice, that nothing is more common than to give each other the lie direct when they doubt any statement in the course of conversation: this is always taken in good part, the imputation being considered somewhat in the light of a compliment.

Among the neighbours whom we visited in the course of our rides in the vicinity of Groot Vaders Bosch was an old man of the name of Botha. His house stood in a plain, surrounded on all sides by high hills; and in front, towards the mountains, a scene met the eye which for wild and savage magnificence could hardly be exceeded in nature. A river pent up among the mountains had in the lapse of ages worn a perpendicular chasm through the centre of a naked precipice several hundred feet in height. The stream being obstructed in its course by a ledge of rocks at the mouth of this superb portal, formed a pool, which extended some hundred yards between the perpendicular sides of the chasm, overhung by trees and shrubs which had taken root in the crevices of the rocks; but, by climbing along the projecting shelves, access could with difficulty be gained to the source of the river, in a deep and woody amphitheatre among the mountains. The sides of this valley are so high and steep, that the only way the valuable timber it contains can be got out is, by rolling the logs into the bed of the stream, where they remain until they are floated out

when the river is swelled into a torrent after heavy rains.

Never was a man less alive to the enjoyment of such scenery than Martinus Botha ; nor could he conceive what pleasure we experienced in its contemplation. All that he knew or cared for was, that he had a constant run of water for his mill ; but whether it came from a romantic chasm, or from a muddy lake, was to him a matter of the greatest indifference. I am rather inclined to think that he had a secret suspicion that he himself was the object of my frequent visits to his abode. He was one of those monsters of obesity who are so often to be seen in this colony, and of whose appearance we can form but a faint conception from any common instance of the kind in England. He was literally a martyr to corpulence, his prodigious powers of digestion having nearly destroyed the exercise of his mental faculties.

For several years Martinus Botha had not been able to lie down in his bed for fear of suffocation, and the only way he could get any sleep was by leaning his head on the table before him : in this manner he could procure

a little rest, which was only for a few minutes at a time. It is difficult to describe his person, for shape he had hardly any. A huge bag of fat hung below his chin, and the flesh of his ankles hung down till it touched his shoes. Notwithstanding his enormous size, he was a great *gourmand*, and thought little of devouring several pounds of mutton at a meal, after which he could sometimes drink a bottle of brandy without being affected by it. He was at this period beginning to feel some alarm at his increasing dimensions, and took from time to time a journey in his waggon to Swellendam to consult the medical practitioner on his case. On these occasions, he would call on his way at Groot Vaders Bosch; but the doctor, who had killed many men without intending it, could not succeed by any means in checking the growth of his unwieldy patient, who began to fancy that he was afflicted with dropsy; and he was confirmed in the idea by the opinions of his family and neighbours.

In a country where it is found most convenient to bury the dead as speedily as possible, it is common for elderly people to keep a coffin

in their houses ready for their own use, or to lend to any of their neighbours who may chance to die before them. In travelling through this part of the colony, if you cast your eyes upwards in a "boer's" house, this rather melancholy object may be often seen lying across the beams; and so far from exciting any unpleasant feelings, it has often been pointed out to me by the old farmers with great self-complacency, as a proof of their good management in being beforehand with time.

Our bulky friend arrived one day at Groot Vaders Bosch in his waggon, accompanied by two of his sons. After sitting for some time and drinking a glass of brandy, he informed us that he had come to get a coffin made for his own use, as he had the "water," (dropsy,) and did not expect to live long, and had moreover grown to such a size that none of his neighbours had any large enough to hold him. "That's true, father, what you say," replied one of the young men, without altering a muscle of his countenance.

My brother had two carpenters in an adjoining outhouse employed in making up vari-

ous articles of furniture for sale among the farmers ; and to their workshop I accompanied our visiter. Jamie Learmouth, a little sly drunken body, was hard at work at his bench, and singing one of our favourite Scotch songs, in a manner that showed he was more occupied with the words and the recollections to which they gave rise than the modulation of his notes. He had just come to the words of Burns—

“ We twa hae paidled in the burn  
When simmer days were fine,”

when we entered his shop.

Observing the lusty customer who darkened his door, Jamie quitted his plane, and addressed him, with a sly twinkle, in a jargon in which Dutch and broad Scotch were curiously intermingled. “ Goe’n dag, Mynheer Botha ; hoo faar you the day ? ” — “ I come,” answered Botha in his own language, “ to have a coffin made.” — “ I can shune do that for ye,” replied Jamie ; “ but is ’t for yersel’ ? ” — “ Yes, certainly.” — “ Faith, ye ’ll need a gude big ane,” said the carpenter ; “ but if ye ’ll joost lay yersel’ oot on the bed there, I ’ll shune tak yer measure.”

Jamie cast a sly look at me as he made this proposal; for he knew it was easier said than done. However, with the assistance of his sons, the old farmer, who had seated himself on the side of the bed, was gradually lowered down on his back, to the great danger of the conscious bedstead, which uttered sundry discontented creaks at the unusual weight imposed on it, which seemed to excite Jamie's fears not a little for his hastily-constructed couch.

Poor Botha's sufferings in this position were so great, that if the carpenter had not completed his measurements with expedition, he must infallibly have died of suffocation on the spot. His respiration ceased almost entirely as long as he lay in a horizontal position; and it was not until he was again raised up that the air pent up in his lungs found a passage, when it rushed out like the blowing of a porpoise when he comes to the surface of the water.

When Martinus could collect his thoughts, he again addressed the workman. "Hear, James, you must make my coffin roomy enough, for I'll swell up very much when I am dead." While he was retiring to his wag-



gon, his son took Jamie by the arm and begged him to make the coffin close in the joints; "for," he added, "father will perhaps *run out* after he is dead." The perfect apathy and *sang-froid* with which these serious arrangements were made, were highly characteristic of the people.

This kind of indifference to death is generally to be observed among ignorant people: but, in addition to their extreme ignorance on all subjects unconnected with their peculiar mode of life, the Dutch colonists entertain rather extravagant notions of the privileges of Christians, and are in general firmly persuaded that all who have been sprinkled with a little water go to Heaven when they die, as a matter of course. One thing, however, puzzles them sadly—how the baptized Hottentots and slaves are to be disposed of after death; for they think it quite impossible that an order of beings whom they are accustomed to regard with such contempt should be placed on an equality with themselves.

The more enlightened among them are considerably relieved from their perplexity by the passage of Scripture which tells us that there

are many mansions in the kingdom of Heaven, in which case they trust that the black and white Christians will be kept separate.

The Dutch settlers, if they are without many of the enjoyments of a more refined state of existence, are in a great measure exempted from its passions and sufferings. Love—that passion to which in the more refined acceptation of the word we owe some of our most generous and delightful sensations—is almost an entire stranger to their breasts. This passion cannot exist without a certain degree of sensibility of constitution and purity of manners; but these concomitant circumstances are not to be found in the colony at the Cape. Marriage is considered in the light of a matter of convenience, or a merely mercantile transaction; and matrimonial alliances are proposed and broken off again as it may suit the views of the parties, without occasioning any pain or disagreement on either side.

In the course of my antelope shooting excursions towards the sea-coast, I had often stopped at the house of a poor farmer, who sometimes accompanied me with his long

gun. One day, on entering his dwelling, I found him looking more serious than usual, and was surprised at not finding his wife sitting with her teapot before her at her little table, which a Dutchwoman never quits except during sickness. "How fares your frow?" I inquired in the Cape-Dutch dialect. "She is dead," answered Jan Niewkerk, shrugging his shoulders and heaving a sigh which seemed to come as much from his stomach as from his heart. "Ya, Mynheer M——, she has been dead for two weeks," he resumed, holding up two fingers of his right hand to assist my comprehension; "and left me here with a whole houseful of young children." Then, holding up two fingers again, "Two fine riding-horses too are dead. Oh! yea, ya! so it always goes in the world: one day you have a thing, and another day it is gone; and you have all your trouble for nothing."

About a week afterwards Jan Niewkerk was seen galloping along the valley towards our house; and, as he flung the bridle over his horse's head, and stalked into the hall where we were sitting, I observed that he was dressed

out in his best clothes, consisting of a new velveteen jacket and trousers with mother-of-pearl buttons, and a broad-brimmed white hat, with a pipe stuck through the band.

His gloomy manner had disappeared, and he looked as fresh as if he was bound on his first matrimonial expedition. After the first salutations, he became exceedingly loquacious, and said to us, "One frow is dead, I'm now looking for another; I've been to ask two, but they won't have me; now I don't know where I'll try next: perhaps, Mynheer M——," addressing my brother, "can give me some advice?" "What do you think of the young widow La Rue?" answered my brother: "won't she suit you?"—"O ya, that's true, Mynheer; she had slipped clean out of my mind; but it is not too late yet."—"That is just as you ride," answered my brother; "for she intended to start for the Cape this morning in her waggon, and if you would catch her you have not much time to lose."—"Then I cannot stay any longer," quoth Niewkerk, jumping on his feet and shaking hands with us; and in a minute he was in his saddle and off as fast as he came.

We saw no more of him till the sun was sinking behind the mountains, when he returned, fatigued and somewhat dejected. While he was taking the saddle from his jaded beast, he said to us, "It was too late; the widow was off in her waggon, and I followed her as far as the Buffel Jaagt's river; but my horse was tired, and I was sorry for him, and so I have come back again to Mynheer M——." Notwithstanding this first disappointment, our friend Niewkerk persevered, and as "every Jockie has his Jennie," according to the Scotch proverb, he soon matched himself to his taste; and, for aught I know to the contrary, is still living very contentedly with his new wife and a fresh brood of young Africans, eating fat messes and hunting antelopes and ostriches, as formerly.

It is probably for the same reason that they think little of death in their own cases, that the Dutch seem to have so little feeling for others. They do not scruple to tell a sick person that they think he will die, or to discuss his case before him without the smallest reserve, or regarding the effect their conversation might have on the patient. At the same time,

they are by no means remiss in affording every necessary assistance in their power.

It is particularly amusing to observe the manners of different countries and classes contrasted with each other, and, as it were, brought into actual contact—each person jealously contending for the superiority of his own particular customs and character.

The Scotch—particularly the lower orders of them—have a large share of national pride and self-conceit; but though, like the thistle of their country, their prejudices are stiff and unbending, they do not, like those of the English, show themselves in a manner to give offence to foreigners, unless they receive a direct insult. When this is the case, no people feel the outrage more keenly.

We had several of the labourers on the farm whom my brother had brought out from Scotland, (and some of them were excellent farm-servants,) who, imbued with the natural prejudices in favour of their own mode of agriculture, and intent on showing its superiority over that of the Dutch by the large crops they expected to raise, were extremely mortified by the ridicule

of our neighbours when they would not take their advice. They often found out their errors in this respect when it was too late to save their pride ; and a snappish animosity grew up between the new and the old colonists, half in earnest, half in joke. As generally happens in such cases, the prejudices and peculiarities of each were rendered more obstinate and intractable.

Unfortunately for our countrymen, their vices were of that description which usually attract most attention ; and gave rise to great scandal among the Dutch, who, demoralized as they generally are to a certain extent, are strict observers of decorum in matters which are likely to affect their reputation, according to the false and perverted standard of morality established among them. While the Dutch reproached our countrymen,—who made no secret of their partiality to the Hottentot women, and occasionally sat up for half the night drinking, and giving way to those wild freaks which their extravagant animal spirits suggested,—they themselves were, to a still greater extent, and with less excuse for their conduct, guilty

of the same improprieties ; but, from the higher grade they held in society as to external circumstances, they felt the necessity and had the power of concealing them more effectually.

Though extreme poverty often leads men to the commission of the most atrocious offences, I believe, if we can divest ourselves of our prejudices, we shall find that the vices of the different grades in society are more equally balanced than many people are inclined to imagine. It is thus, that while certain among the great in our own country are habitually indulging in every luxury of the table even to excess, they can moralize and descant on the occasional though coarse excesses of the poor and ignorant, without considering that their knowledge of such vices is principally owing to the different mode of life of the lower orders. As long as the Dutch colonists keep such irregularities out of sight, they may lie, cheat, or commit murder, without materially suffering in the estimation of their neighbours.

A glaring instance of depravity occurred at the village of Swellendam during my residence in the neighbourhood, which shows in a strong



light the oppressions to which a despised class are subjected from their more powerful superiors. The daughter of an inhabitant who held a very respectable situation in that village had been discovered by her father, a Dutchman, to have formed a very intimate attachment to a Hottentot man in his service. The culprit was immediately sent, together with a private note explaining the affair, to the Landdrost, or magistrate, who ordered him to receive a severe flogging in the prison. After undergoing this punishment, the father preferred taking the Hottentot again into his family, rather than lose his future services.

Some months afterwards, a party of hunters, in returning home, were attracted to a particular spot by one of the dogs scraping up the ground, and discovered the remains of an infant which had been buried near the surface. The circumstance having reached the ears of the Landdrost, an inquiry was immediately set on foot, and the daughter of the Dutchman already mentioned was lodged in prison on suspicion. An English surgeon, who had lately settled in the village, had attended the lady in question,

but, on finding her actual condition, declined continuing his visits. The Hottentot, when examined, as is usual with his nation on such occasions, told everything without equivocation. He stated that the Dutch lady had one day called him up into the loft of the house, showed him a bundle and told him to bury it. He asked what was in it, and she said it was his child: he therefore took the parcel, and buried it where it was found by the hunters.

In consequence of the facts elicited, both the lady and her paramour were sent to Cape Town to stand their trial for child-murder. The former was found guilty of the concealment of the birth by the court of justice, and sentenced to a few months imprisonment, there not being sufficient evidence to convict her of murder. The unfortunate Hottentot, who had acted with the most perfect candour, was at the same time sentenced to confinement in Roben Island for (I believe) fourteen years.

During the whole period of this female's imprisonment she was visited by her acquaintances, who pretended not to believe the circumstances on which even the old Dutch court of

justice (which, fortunately for the colony, has since been abolished) could not help convicting her. When the time of her imprisonment had expired, she was again received into society as if nothing had happened, and has since been married to a Scotch labourer, who was tempted by her money.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Dutch Manners.—Indolence of the Women.—Comparison between the Savage and the Civilized Man.—Characteristics of the Dutch at the Cape.—Remarks on the Condition of Slaves.—Punishment of disobedient Servants.—On the Repression of Crime in South Africa.—Inefficiency of the new Slave Laws.—Character of a Nation.—Progress of Government.—Roman Conquests.—Modern Prejudices.—Slaves and Serfs.—Negro Oppression.—Hints on the Emancipation of the Slaves.—Plan for ameliorating their Condition.

OF all people I have ever seen, the Cape-Dutch are the coarsest and least polished in their manners. The conversation of both sexes is marked by an almost total absence of common decency: the most disgusting oaths are used on all occasions by the men; and the women do not even feel ashamed to talk on the most indelicate subjects, hardly condescending to use any circumlocution. In this respect, indeed, they are even less refined than the

Hottentots. Wherever they have had much intercourse with the English, however, a gradual improvement is observable. The females, though often handsome when very young, are from this coarseness of manners exceedingly distasteful to the English, and few even of the lower classes of our countrymen can bring themselves to marry into a Dutch family. The moment a Dutchwoman enters into the conjugal state, she takes her seat by a little table in the hall, from which she never stirs if she can help it; and they often laugh at the folly of the Englishwomen, in going about the house to attend to their domestic concerns, when they might have everything done by calling to their servants, without quitting their places. When the Dutch ladies marry, they become exceedingly torpid and phlegmatic in their manners and habits, dirty and slovenly in their dress; and, from their cold constitution and freedom from care, like the men, they generally at an early age grow to an unwieldy size.

If we observe mankind in their progressive stages of improvement, from the untutored savage to the civilized being man, we shall

find that the manners of these opposite extremes more nearly resemble each other in externals than we might at first be led to imagine.

The savage, in his intercourse with his fellows, is generally kind and benevolent, and possesses a degree of natural politeness and refinement for which we may look in vain in the intermediate barbarous stages, when they have made some advances in industry and the arts of life. The equality of condition that prevails among savages as to wealth, and the common dangers they are constantly exposed to from their neighbouring tribes, promote a friendly and unceremonious intercourse between them, and soften down those asperities of character which constitute so large a portion of the unhappiness arising from envy and conflicting interests in the more advanced state of society. Depending on their flocks and the chase for their subsistence, and holding their lands in common, they are freed from a hundred sources of contention, and are forced to consider the good of the individual inseparable from that of the community.

As population increases, men are compelled

to have recourse to agriculture as a further means of support, and lands are appropriated by individuals: new and more complicated interests arise, which, being little understood, occasion distrust and disunion; until, ceasing to consider themselves as forming a part of a large family bound together by the common ties of interest, the affections of men gradually become restricted to their immediate relatives and the different members of their household.

The consequence of this state of things is, that from the intercourse of the different families in their more isolated situations becoming less frequent and cordial, the original simplicity and kindness of feeling towards their neighbours in some measure yields to selfishness, and the manners of the people are infected with brutality or deceit, one or the other predominating as they may happen to be actuated by self-interest or other motives. Fortunately, however, for this stage, Government has gathered sufficient strength and consistency to restrain the savage and sordid passions of men within due bounds, so as to prevent them from being carried to such a height as to endanger

the fabric of society and occasion a dissolution of its connecting links.

Did not society contain the germs of further improvement through the influence of religious and civil institutions, and education disseminate among men clearer views of their mutual interest and dependance, the condition of savages, with all their dangers and privations, would be far happier than this intermediate state of existence.

But it is only in external usages that the manners of the savage and civilized man, as we are pleased to call the latter, may be said to resemble each other; for if we look below the surface, we shall perceive a wide difference. The savage is habitually sincere and unsuspecting—benevolent, and complaisant in his demeanour. His vices are those of violence under powerful excitement, not of depravity of heart. If he is cruel to his enemies, he is actuated by revenge unrestrained by discipline or laws. The civilized man, as civilization at present exists in the world, is sometimes but a compound of vicious and degrading propensities, restrained by laws and concealed under a smooth and



specious exterior. Interest and Reputation are the idols he worships: his politeness is but refined selfishness under the mask of sincerity.

If these reflections are just, we are irresistibly led to seek for purer and higher motives of action in the cultivation of a spiritual religion. To this source alone can we look for the highest perfectibility of civilization to which mankind can attain.

In making these remarks, to which I have been led by long and attentive observation of the characteristics of different races of men, in their several stages of moral and civil improvement, my principal object is to convey to the reader a more precise idea of the manners of the different inhabitants of the Cape colony, and the adjoining parts of the continent of Africa. These general characteristics of man in his progressive stages of civilization are, however, liable to considerable modifications in many instances, from intercourse with other portions of his species, in a more or less advanced state of improvement. The savage may thus become civilized in his manners,

which is, however, generally at the expense of his morals; and the civilized man may sometimes remain stationary, or relapse in some degree into barbarism, from the neglect of education or intercourse with a less improved race.

European society may be said, in its present state, to be made up of men in all the different stages of improvement, from absolute barbarism to civilization in the most extended signification of the term. What is the thoughtless and improvident labourer, or mechanic, who spends in two or three days the money which should last him for a week, and form a fund to support him in his old age, but an European savage—with the addition of many vices with which the savage is unacquainted?

The Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope afford an instance of a people partially relapsed into barbarism from want of education, and from their intercourse with a race of savages whom they have subjected and demoralized; retaining most of the vices of Europeans, with the cruelty of the slave-holder and savage. Had this nation constituted the sole population of the colony, and their govern-

ment been formed on more liberal principles, we should, in all probability, have found the colonists of the present day a very superior specimen of the rude and unpolished, but independent barbarian ; with much of the honesty of the savage united to the industry and intelligence of the civilized being.

Nothing can exercise a more baneful influence on the character of men, more particularly of the uneducated, than the possession of unlimited power over other races whom they are in the habit of considering naturally inferior to themselves. Like neighbouring nations, men generally hate and despise in the greatest degree those whose characters or conditions approach nearest to their own.

The possession of slaves, and the subjection of the Hottentots, as I have already observed, have been the source of the greatest demoralization to all classes in this colony ; and I have often remarked, that the contempt and hatred in which these unhappy classes are held by the colonists, whether Dutch or English, is always in exact proportion to the ignorance or poverty of their masters.

The condition of the slaves in our different colonies has of late become a subject of considerable interest, and, I believe, of much exaggeration, in England, as might be expected from the violent party spirit which has been enlisted on both sides of the question. What stronger argument can the abolitionists urge against slavery than its general injustice and cruelty? Does it add one iota to the strength of their reasoning, to prove that instances of glaring inhumanity are to be found among men entrusted with such a dangerous power over their dependants? Such instances can only operate against the individuals who perpetrate them, and should not be extended to the whole class of slave-holders.

It is sufficiently evident that an unjust and arbitrary system can only be supported by coercive measures. The same objections which are urged against the punishments inflicted on disobedient slaves, would be equally applicable to those inflicted on other servants in countries where there is a scarcity of labour. In European countries, where there is generally a superabundance of labourers, the disobedient servant is sufficiently punished by the employer, by

being dismissed from his service. In our colonies it is otherwise; for if a master should discharge his servant for a breach of the contract he enters into with him, he would only injure himself by the loss of his labour.

It is therefore a difficult matter, under such circumstances, to devise a mode of punishment unobjectionable in its nature with regard to the servant, which will not operate to the disadvantage of the master, and, in its secondary consequences, against the interest and morals of the servant himself. For this reason, at the Cape, it seldom happens that any crime except one of the most atrocious character is ever brought under the cognizance of the competent magistrates, unless it is committed in the immediate neighbourhood of the seat of magistracy:—for who will take the trouble of conveying the culprit fifty or eighty miles to the district prison, and with the certainty, if he be his servant (which is generally the case), of being deprived of his labour for a longer or shorter period, which circumstance might often be attended with great loss?

This observation is peculiarly applicable to

South Africa, on account of the necessarily scattered state of the population in an arid and thinly-inhabited country, and is well deserving of the attention of its legislators.

From the natural causes already mentioned, the people of South Africa must ever, or at least for a very long period, remain widely dispersed over its surface; and unless the number as well as the powers of the local magistrates be very much augmented, crime must increase to an extent which will in time render the condition of the landholders intolerable. Different countries and states of society, it must be obvious, require different institutions and laws.

While on this subject, I cannot forbear extracting a passage from a private letter I have lately received from an intelligent friend residing at Grahamstown, to show how inapplicable the new slave-laws, established by an order in Council issued on the 3rd of February 1830, are to the Cape; and how inefficient the legal institutions are to repress crime, which has lately increased to an immense extent, particularly on the frontiers of the colony.

“Some portions of the new law,” says the

writer, "are so inapplicable, that I fear much mischief will be the result. Read the Punishment Registry part, and say how a man, two hundred miles from a protector, with perhaps only one slave, is to act? How could ——, in the Anti-Slavery Reporter, on that Order, omit to notice the *impossibility* of complying with the law here? But I fancy the object of the anti-folks is to plague the slave-owners until they incline them to any terms. The industrious Hottentots are doing well; (they had lately been liberated from the species of slavery under which they laboured;) but as you know how few are so, you will not wonder at hearing that the majority live as vagabonds. At Graaf Reynet there were one hundred and twenty convict Hottentots, mostly found guilty of cattle stealing — here (at Grahamstown) about ninety — Somerset sixty — and so on. The worst is, that they come out of prison greater rogues than they went in. Of four sheep-stealers whom I got pardoned part of their sentence, three have come in again, two for house-breaking."

I confess I am at a loss to conceive how crime is to be effectually prevented in this colony,

among slaves and other servants (who rarely possess property of any kind) without some species of corporal chastisement; for it is obvious that a man can only be punished in his person or in his property. If he is without the latter, must he therefore escape with impunity? As I have already shown, imprisonment is ineffectual, as it only injures the master. It is, besides, scarcely any punishment to the coloured population of the colony, and generally returns them to society more accomplished malefactors than they were before.

There can be no doubt that the character of a nation is in some measure the result of its institutions and laws; but it is still more certain—and I believe I am supported by the history of all nations when I assert—that the laws and institutions of a people are rather the consequences than the causes of its national character.

Nations, like individuals, have their stages of infancy and maturity; and they must both in some degree be treated according to the development of the reasoning faculties. But the first indications of intellect should be carefully observed, and cherished to the utmost by giving



scope to their energies and supplying the best motives of action.

It is certain that man in his natural and primitive state is free; but as families are for mutual protection united into small societies or tribes, the necessity of some government and laws is felt by all, to repress the violence which is characteristic of the infant state of nations, and which would endanger the internal peace of the community. As in civilized countries men appeal to the feelings and good sense of their peers against private injuries of which the law takes no cognizance, so in like manner the savage, in the outset of civil government, appeals to the united sense of his race for protection, and councils of the whole tribe or of certain divisions of it are formed, over which some individual more intelligent or influential than the others gains somewhat of the authority of a judge.

As judges owe their origin to internal dissensions, so do kings owe their origin to the external wars of the tribe. The power of the leader of an army is shortly transferred to civil matters, and his soldiers in time of war

soon become his subjects during peace. The first germs of despotism are thus sown, and continue to grow and flourish during the barbarous ages which succeed.

In the mean time, civil government gathers strength and consistency by the establishment of hereditary rights in the person of the king and his subjects. Conquests unite several wandering tribes under the monarch; their chieftains become his counsellors, and moderate his tyranny; the people are fixed to the soil, and have recourse to agriculture to support an increasing population, for whom their flocks and the chase would afford but an insufficient and precarious subsistence. Manufactures, finding a permanent abode, next succeed; individual wealth follows, which in time leads the way to more liberal institutions, by operating as a counterpoise to despotic power. This is the usual progress of improvement in society and government, which often seem to retrograde, when, in fact, they are advancing towards perfection and stability.

As violent bodily diseases are usually the efforts of nature to throw off lingering maladies

which paralyse the vital functions, so often do great changes, though attended with present evils and misery, lead to salutary and permanent results on the body politic. These reflections are made in reference to nations which have improved themselves through the gradual operations of time and circumstances; and are necessary to be borne in mind, to enable us to understand the consequences resulting from the subjection of barbarous tribes to civilized nations.

It is a melancholy fact, that the conquests achieved by modern nations over the coloured and savage races of the European settlements have tended rather to depress than to raise them higher in the scale of existence.

The Romans do not appear to have drawn that broad line of demarcation between themselves and the aboriginal inhabitants of their colonies, who were, after a time, admitted to the enjoyment of the rights of citizenship: they do not seem to have been actuated by the unhappy prejudices against the subjected races which at the present day prevent inter-marriages between the conquerors and the conquered. It was by these means that their

governments gained stability and consistency. Their religion was too similar to the heathenism of the inhabitants of the provinces, to give them any great superiority in this respect; and there was no difference of complexion or feature to occasion any natural repugnance to their persons and prevent alliances.

In modern times, on the contrary, all these circumstances operate powerfully in preventing this desirable amalgamation of the white and coloured races of our colonies: Religion itself is enlisted in aid of our other prejudices, and the prohibitions of the Old Testament, with respect to the idolatrous inhabitants of the promised land, are more attended to than the conciliatory spirit of the Christian dispensation. Until this union of blood and interest be effected, the coloured people of our colonies, it is much to be feared, will virtually continue to be oppressed, notwithstanding all the laws which can be made for their protection.

To pursue the analogy that exists between the progress of nations and individuals to maturity, I cannot help thinking that there is a period during their infancy when their own

interest is not sufficient to stimulate them to exertion and improvement, and when a certain degree of compulsion is necessary. Who blames a parent for insisting on his children going to school, or for punishing their misdemeanors? The condition of the serfs in a barbarous country is very similar; and the restraint that is put on their natural liberty is not at this period attended with the degrading effects incidental to a more advanced state of society.

Here I cannot but advert to the want of candour on the part of some of the friends of negro-slavery, who would justify the system by comparing it with European serfship. There is a great difference between the condition of the domestic slave, who works under the immediate inspection of the master or his overseers, and is every moment of his life subjected to the effects of their avarice, and exposed to every burst of passions inflamed by the possession of arbitrary power and caprice, and that of the serf, who, so long as he punctually delivers a certain share of the produce of the land he occupies into the granary of his lord, may remain for years undisturbed in the enjoyment of the remainder,

It may even be a question, whether the serfs of the North of Europe, after making due allowance for early feelings and habits, are not virtually in a happier condition than a large proportion of the agricultural population of Great Britain :—for what does theoretical freedom avail the latter, if the farmer, from excessive competition, is obliged to take his land at a higher rent than will leave him a fair remuneration, and the labourer, from a similar cause, is compelled to accept lower wages than his services are worth? By these observations I must not be understood to assert, that serfship, in the present state of Great Britain, would better the depressed condition of the agricultural labourer, which, being principally occasioned by over-population, could not be improved by increasing the power that inevitable circumstances have placed in the hands of the landholder.

My principal object is, to apply these remarks to the case of the slaves in our colonies, and to show how their hard lot might be alleviated without doing violence to the natural order of improvement, and without resorting to precipi-

tate measures, which would be injurious to the slaves themselves, by producing great present misery and by retarding their civilization; while they would be ruinous to their masters, and by reflection prejudicial to the commerce of the mother country.

It is much to be lamented that a question of such importance in all its bearings should, like so many others in Great Britain, have become a subject of violent party feeling; so that it is hard to say whether the interest of the slaves will be most injured by the injudicious zeal of their friends, or the prejudices of their opponents.

When a party of any kind is once formed in this country, they are extremely unwilling to separate. People so seldom concur in opinion in private life, that there is a certain magical charm in meeting with a large assemblage of their countrymen all agreeing on one subject and zealous in the propagation of their ideas.

Anti-slavery has thus become the watchword of a faction composed of the most discordant materials. This, however, if it was necessary, is another argument for the justice of their de-

mands: but it has the injurious effect of arraying a powerful party against them, who are probably more influenced by opposition to their other real or supposed tenets than inimical to the claims of the oppressed negroes; and it has the further bad effect of offering a field for the extravagant declamations of furious demagogues, who by exaggerated and partial statements work upon the excited passions of those who cannot reason or think for themselves.

At a late anti-slavery meeting, the most zealous advocates for the cause would have been satisfied with the gradual abolition of slavery, by emancipating the children born after a certain period; but at a more recent one held in May 1831, encouraged by the aspect of the times, nothing less than the total, immediate, and unconditional emancipation of the slaves would satisfy the demands of the assembly. I do not mean to contend that the interest of one set of men can be put in competition with the justice due to others; but it is certainly only fair to select the *time* and *means* in such a manner as may be the least injurious to the interests of all.



It is probable that the plan I have to offer will please neither party ; but I shall not therefore shrink from stating the conclusions to which I have been led by my reflections on the subject in its various aspects, and from suggesting a mode of alleviating the miseries inseparable from the condition of the slaves, by proposing a species of mitigated servitude, which would still secure the benefit of their services to the proprietors, and would obviate the dangerous consequences of a sudden and complete emancipation.

Daily observation proves the evil and uncertain results of any abrupt change in the condition of men from one extreme to another—whether it be from poverty to wealth, or from the yoke of despotism to unlimited freedom—before the mind is prepared for it in some measure by education or the general diffusion of intelligence.

I am enabled to state from personal observation at the Cape, where it is generally admitted that slavery is found in its mildest form, that in point of intellect the slaves are generally—I of course except the Malays, who are only a semi-

barbarous people—very inferior to the Hottentots, the Kaffres, and other free coloured inhabitants of the colony and its neighbourhood. The oppressive government which formerly existed at the Cape, joined to the prejudices and tyrannical conduct of the colonists, has had the effect of sinking the slaves, and even the Hottentots, who always enjoyed some degree of liberty, still lower than their former place in the scale of improvement previously to their subjection. The slaves, in particular, have been reduced to mere machines, and have become incapable of just reasoning.

Though extending the benefit of entire freedom to a people in this state might not, at the Cape, from their small numbers in proportion to the white population, be attended with any great positive danger to the colony; yet we cannot but suppose that it would be a most perilous experiment in our West India colonies, where the slaves constitute so overwhelming a proportion of the population, aggravated as is their condition by many instances of cruelty which spread like wild-fire among an injured people.

From what I have already said, it must be obvious that my proposition is, *gradually* to ameliorate the condition of the slaves, wherever it may be found practicable. This might be effected by substituting serfship, or villanage, in a somewhat milder form than it exists in Europe at the present day, for slavery ; or, in other words, that the planters shall be allowed to retain their claims on the produce of the labour of their slaves and their children ; and that, instead of being under the immediate superintendence of the master or his agents, the serfs shall simply be bound to deliver to their masters a certain share of the produce of the lots of land on which they may be located, in the manner of small farmers on the estate of the proprietor.

The only difference between the condition of the serfs thus situated, and that of small farmers in our own country, would consist in the former being still considered as in a certain degree the property of the landholder, without whose consent they could not leave the estate.

To further the important object of ensuring the gradual emancipation of the slaves, or serfs,

a number of regulations should be adopted to prevent oppression, to hold out encouragements to industry, and to prepare their minds for the enjoyment of entire liberty. With this view, I would suggest the following :—

I. That, as at present, the slave shall be allowed to purchase his own freedom, or that of his children.

II. That in case of his failing to pay the master's proportion of the produce of the land, he shall not suffer any arbitrary punishment on the part of the proprietor or his overseers, but only be subject to such as the laws may direct in the case of a similar failure on the part of a free labourer, after due investigation before the competent magistrate.

III. That, as an encouragement to industry, the proportion of produce or rent to be paid annually by the slave shall be fixed for a series of years by competent persons at a rate afterwards to be determined, according to the nature of the soil, &c.—so that the slave shall reap the full benefit of his improvements. Habits of industry would thus be acquired by the operation of the only useful stimulus to exertion;

and it is probable that before any very distant period a large proportion of the slaves would be enabled to purchase their entire freedom, and become valuable tenants on the estates of their original proprietors.

I am aware that many objections would be urged against the practicability of these general suggestions; but I feel persuaded that the principle on which they are founded might be carried into effect, with the aid of such modifications and additions as the experience of individuals interested in its success located in the different colonies might enable them to offer.

## CHAPTER IX.

Characteristics of the Slave.—Reputed Arts of the Malays.—Anecdote.—Jealousy of the Malay Girls.—Slaves from Mozambique.—Gradual Amelioration of the Condition of Slaves.—Conduct of the Missionaries.—Degraded State of the Hottentots.—Curious Experiment.—Oppressions of the Dutch.—Character of the Hottentots.—Their Vices.—Amiable Traits.—Brutality of the Men.—Effects of Intemperance.—Polygamy.—A mixed Race.—Attractions of the Women.—Corpulence of the Hottentots.

To attempt to describe the character of the slaves at the Cape, would be to give a picture of the manners and state of improvement of the different races from whom they are sprung; modified by subjection to the arbitrary power of their masters.

There are, however, certain characteristics in which all slaves are distinguished from freemen. As the mental faculties are improved by their full exercise; so people, who are habitually restrained in action, and consequently in thought,

must necessarily become degraded in mind. The slaves are peculiarly lowered in the scale of existence, from the evils of absolute control in all their actions being, in their case, super-added to original barbarism. The free savage has his energies and mental faculties constantly brought into action by the necessary cares of providing for his daily wants ; but the slave is reduced to the state of a child, or rather of a mere machine, in the hands of his master. His work is assigned to him, and all his wants are provided for without requiring any effort of mind or foresight on his own part. To restore a man in this state to immediate and entire freedom, would be like abandoning a child in a desert, or the wide world, without experience to guide him in finding a subsistence, and without arms to protect him against his enemies.

Notwithstanding the *general* similarity in the character of slaves, those of South Africa differ much according to the people from whom they have sprung. By far the highest in point of intellect, as I have already observed, are the Malays. They are descended from a people

among whom civilization has made great advances, and are an industrious, sober, persevering, and energetic race. They are susceptible of strong attachment to their masters when well used, but never forgive injustice or injuries. From their vindictive character, joined to a great mental superiority and power of concealing their violent passions, they are held in a kind of superstitious dread by the colonists; and a hundred stories are told by the vulgar of the deadly effects of their anger when they are excited by jealousy or revenge. They possess a great knowledge of the natural qualities of plants, and a great deal more faith is placed in their medical skill than in that of the European surgeons. It is also very generally believed among the Dutch, and the lower classes of the English in the colony, that they can administer poison in such a manner as to destroy the health, without occasioning death for many months, or even years.

Though we may regard such stories in a great measure as vulgar superstitions, yet it is not easy entirely to discredit them; and be-



cause such practices may be uncommon or unknown in European countries, it would not be quite philosophical to conclude that they are therefore unknown in other parts of the world. After making due allowance for the ignorance and exaggeration of the lower classes, who are incapable of investigating causes and effects, I cannot believe that so general a fear of the art of the Malays could exist without some reason for it; nor can I resist the evidence of the numerous instances of it which have been related to me.

While residing in the district of Swellendam, I observed a Malay slave, herding his master's cattle, who had a very large tumour exactly over the stomach, and was exceedingly lean and unhealthy in his appearance. Having never observed anything of the kind before, I was curious to know the cause of it. He told me that while at Cape Town he had had an intrigue with the wife of another Malay, who revenged himself by poisoning him in the manner I saw him. On questioning him more particularly, he said that the swelling came on gradually, without any previous ailment of any kind, until

it increased to its present size. He now began to suspect whence the injury proceeded, and succeeded in appeasing the wrath of his comrade, who gave him some medicine which prevented the further increase of the tumour, and it had continued in the same state ever since.

Many of the English labourers at Cape Town live in habits of intimacy with the Malay girls, who are often very handsome, but so exceedingly jealous that it is considered dangerous to incur their resentment; indeed, I have been told many instances of their being treated like the poor Malay I have mentioned. In this case they find it most prudent to make their peace with them as soon as possible, to save their lives. These girls are generally faithful, but readily form new alliances when the object of their attachment leaves them for any considerable time. The same observation holds good, however, in an equal degree with regard to the other female slaves and Hottentots. This shows us sufficiently that the conduct of a certain class of females in more civilized countries is rather the effect of necessity than choice.