JOHN BUCHAN

THE AFRICAN COLONY: STUDIES IN THE RECONSTRUCTION

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTORY

On the last day of May 1902 the signature at Pretoria of the conditions of peace brought to an end a war which had lasted for nearly three years, and had among other things destroyed a government, dissolved a society, and laid waste a country. In those last months of fighting some progress had been made with the reconstruction – at least with that not unimportant branch of it which is concerned with the machinery of government. A working administration had been put together, new ordinances in the form of proclamations had been issued, departments had been created and the chief appointments made, the gold industry was beginning to set its house in order, refugees were returning, and already political theories were being mooted and future parties foreshadowed. But it is from the conclusion of peace that the work of resettlement may fairly be taken to commence. Before that date the restrictions of war limited all civil activity; not till the shackles were removed and the civil power left in sole possession does a fair field appear either for approval or

criticism.

It is not my purpose to write the history of the reconstruction. The work is still in process, and a decade later it may be formally completed. Fifty years hence it may be possible to look back and discriminate on its success or failure. The history when it is written will be an interesting book. It will among other matters deal with the work of repatriation, one of the most curious and quixotic burdens ever borne by a nation, and one, I believe, to which no real parallel can be found. It will concern itself with the slow and difficult transference from military to civil government, the renascence of the common law, the first revival of trade and industry, the restitution of prisoners, and the return of refugees – all matters of interest and novel precedents in our history. It will recognise more clearly than is at present possible the problems which faced South Africa at the time, and it will be in the happy position of judging from the high standpoint of accomplished fact. But in the meantime, when we have seen barely eighteen months of reconstruction, history is out of the question. Yet even in the stress of work it is often sound policy for a man to halt for a moment and collect his thoughts. There must be some diagnosis of the problem before him, the end to which his work is directed, the conditions under which he labours. While it is useless to tell the story of a task before it is done, it is often politic to re-examine the difficulties and to get the mind clear as to what the object of all this strife and expense of money and energy may be. Ideals are all very well in their way, but they are apt to become

very dim lamps unless often replenished from the world of facts and trimmed and adjusted by wholesome criticism.

Such a modest diagnosis is the aim of the present work. I have tried in the main to state as clearly as I could the outstanding problems of South African politics as they appear to one observer. I say "in the main," because I am aware that I have been frequently led against my intention to express an opinion on more than one such problem, and in several cases to suggest a policy. I can only plead that it is almost impossible to keep a statement of a case uncoloured by one's own view of the solution, and that it is better to give frankly a judgment, however worthless, than to allow a bias to influence insensibly the presentation of facts. For such views, which are my own, I claim no value; for facts, in so far as they are facts, I hope I may beg some little attention. They are the fruit of first-hand, and, I trust, honest observation. Every statement of a case is, indeed, a personal one, representing the writer's own estimate rather than objective truth, but in all likelihood it is several degrees nearer the truth than the same writer's policies or prophecies. South Africa has been in the world's eye for half a century, and in the last few years her problems have been so complex that it has been difficult to separate the permanent from the transitory, or to look beyond the mass of local difficulties to the abiding needs of the sub-continent as a whole. Colonial opinion has been neglected at home; English opinion has been misunderstood in the colonies. It may be of interest to try to estimate her chief needs and to

understand her thoughts, for it is only thus that we can forecast that future which she and she alone must make for herself.

Every one who approaches the consideration of the politics of a country which is not his own, and in which he is at best a stranger, must feel a certain diffidence. On many matters it is impossible that he should judge correctly. What seems to him a simple fact is complicated, it may be, by a thousand unseen local currents which no one can allow for except the old inhabitant. For this reason an outside critic will be wrong in innumerable details, and even, it is probable, in certain broad questions of principle. But aloofness may have the qualities of its defects. A critic on a neighbouring hill-top will be a poor guide to the flora and fauna of the parish below; but he may be a good authority on its contours, on the height of its hills and the number of its rivers, and he may, perhaps, be a better judge of the magnitude of a thunderstorm coming out of the west than the parishioner in his garden. The insistence of certain South African problems, familiar to us all, has made any synthetic survey difficult for the South African and impossible for the newspaper reader at home. We have forgotten that it is a country with a history, that it is a land where men can live as well as wrangle and fight, that it has sport, traditions, charm of scenery and weather; and in its politics we are apt to see the problems under a few popular categories, rather as a war of catchwords than the birth-pangs of a people. I have attempted in the following pages to give this synthesis at the expense, I am afraid, of completeness of detail. It is my

hope that some few readers may find utility even in an imperfect general survey as a corrective and a supplement to the many able expositions of single problems.

The title begs a question which it is the aim of the later chapters to answer. South Africa is in reality one colony, and it can only be a matter of years till this radical truth is formally recognised in a federation. But some explanation is necessary for the fact that most of the book is occupied with a discussion of the new colonies and with problems which, for the present, may seem to exist only for them. At this moment the settlement of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony is the most vital South African problem. On their success or failure depends the whole future of the sub-continent. They show, not in embryo, but in the strongest light and the clearest and most mature form, every South African question. On them depends the future wealth of the country and any marked increase in its population. They will be forced by their position to be in the van of South African progress, and to give the lead in new methods of expansion and development. We are therefore fortunate in possessing in the politics of these colonies an isolated and focussed observation-ground, a page where we can read in large clear type what is elsewhere blurred and written over. I do not suppose that this fact would be denied by any of the neighbouring colonies; indeed the tendency in those states is to manifest an undue interest in the affairs of the Transvaal, and to see often, in matters which are purely local, questions of far-reaching South African interest.

On the ultimate dominance of the Transvaal opinion naturally differs, and indeed it is a point not worth insisting on, save as a further argument for federation. If South African interests are so inextricably intertwined, it is clearly desirable to have a colony, whose future is obscure but whose wealth and power are at least potentially very great, brought formally into a union where each colony will be one unit and no more, rather than allow it to exist in isolation, unamenable to advice from sister states and wholly self-centred and unsympathetic. It is sufficient justification for the method I have employed if it is admitted that the Transvaal question is the South African problem in its most complete and characteristic form.

A word remains to be said on the arrangement of the chapters. I have tried to write what is a kind of guide-book, not to details, but to the constituents of that national life which is now in process of growth. The reader I have had in mind is the average Englishman who, in seeking to be informed about a country, asks for something more than the dry bones of statistics —*l'homme moyen politique*, who wants a *résumé* of the political problem, some guide to the historical influences which have been or are still potent, an idea of landscape and national character and modes of life. He does not ask for a history, nor does he want a disquisition on this or that question, or a brief for this or that policy, but, being perfectly competent to make up his own mind, he wants the materials for judgment. The first part consists of brief historical sketches, dealing with the genesis of the three

populations – native, uitlander, and Boer. The history of South Africa, with all deference to the learned and voluminous works of Dr Theal, can never be adequately written. Her past appears to us in a series of vanishing pictures, without continuity or connection. I have therefore avoided any attempt at a consecutive tale, as I have avoided such topics as the War and the negotiations preceding it, and treated a few historical influences in a brief episodic form. In the second part the configuration of the land has been dealt with in a similar way. A series of short sketches, of the class which the French call "*carnets de voyage*," seemed more suitable than any attempt at the work of a gazetteer. I am so convinced of the beauty and healthfulness of the land that I may have been betrayed into an over-minute description: my one excuse is that in this branch of my task I have had few predecessors.

The third part is highly controversial in character, and is presented with grave hesitation. Many books and pamphlets have informed us on those years of South African history between the Raid and the Ultimatum, and a still greater number have discussed every phase and detail of the war. Another book on so hackneyed a matter may seem hard to justify. It may be urged, however, that the question has taken a wholly different form. Of late years it has been complicated by a division of opinion based not only on political but on moral grounds, an opposition in theories of national duty, of international ethics, of civic integrity. South African policy before the war and during the

actual conduct of hostilities was by a considerable section of the English people not judged on political grounds, but condemned or applauded in the one case on moral pretexts and in the other on the common grounds of patriotism. The danger of making the moral criterion bulk aggressively in politics is that the criticism so desirable for all policies is neglected or perfunctorily performed. Matters which, to be judged truly, must be tried by the canons of the province to which they belong, are hastily approved or as hastily damned on some wholly alien test. But with the end of the war and the beginning of civil government it seems to me that this vice must tend to disappear. Whatever our judgment on the past, there is a living and insistent problem for the present. Whatever the verdict on our efforts to meet the problem, it must be based on political grounds. We are now in a position to criticise, if not adequately, at least fairly and on a logical basis. But the old data require revision. The war has been a chemical process which has so changed the nature of the old constituents that they are unrecognisable in a new analysis. I am encouraged to hope that a sketch of the political problem as it has to be faced in South Africa to-day will not be without a certain value to those who desire to inform themselves on what is the most interesting of modern imperial experiments. It is too often assumed in England that the real difficulties preceded war, and that the course of policy, though not unattended with risks, is now comparatively clear and easy. It would be truer to say that the real difficulty has only now begun. I shall be satisfied if I can convince some of my

readers that the work to be done in South Africa is exceedingly delicate and arduous, requiring a high measure of judgment and tact and patience; that it is South Africa's own problem which she must settle for herself; and above all, that while the result of success will be more far-reaching and vital to the future of the English race than is commonly realised, the consequences of failure will be wholly disastrous to any vision of Empire.

To my friends in South Africa I owe an apology for my audacity in undertaking to pronounce upon a country of which my experience is limited. Had I not always found them ready to welcome outside criticism, however imperfect, when honestly made, and to hear with commendable patience a newcomer's views, however crude, I should have hesitated long before making the attempt. I have endeavoured to give a plain statement of local opinion, which is expert opinion, and therefore worthy of the first consideration, and, though there are phases of it with which I am not in sympathy, I trust I may claim to have given on many matters the colonial view, when such a view has attained consistency and clearness. But my chief excuse is that while local opinion is still in the making, and politics are still in the flux which attends a reconstruction, the outside spectator may in all modesty claim to have a voice. It may be easier for a man coming fresh to a new world to judge it correctly than for those ex-inhabitants of that older world on whose wreckage the new is built.

PART I.
THE EARLIER MASTERS

CHAPTER I.
PRIMITIVE SOUTH AFRICA

There are kinds of history which a modern education ignores, and which a modern mind is hardly trained to understand. We can interest ourselves keenly in the first vagaries of embryo humankind; and for savagery, which is a hunting-ground for the sociologist and the folk-lorist, we have an academic respect. But for savagery naked and not ashamed, fighting its own battles and ruling its own peoples, we reserve an interest only when it reaches literary record in a saga. Otherwise it is for us neither literature nor history – a kind of natural event like a thunderstorm, of possible political importance, but of undoubted practical dulness. Most men have never heard of Vechtkop or Mosega, and know Tchaka and Dingaan and Moshesh only as barbarous names. And yet this is a history of curious interest and far-reaching significance: the chronicle of Tchaka's deeds is an epic, and we still feel the results of his iron arguments. The current attitude is part of a general false conception of South African conditions. To most men she is a country without history, or, if she has a certain

barbarous chronicle, it is without significance. The truth is nearly at the opposite pole. South Africa is bound to the chariot-wheels of her past, and that past is intricately varied – a museum of the wrecks of conquerors and races, joining hands with most quarters of the Old World. More, it is the place where savagery is most intimately linked with latter-day civilisation. Phœnician, Arab, Portuguese, Dutch, and English – that is her Uitlander cycle; and a cynic might say that she has ended as she began, with the Semitic. And meantime there were great native conquests surging in the interior while the adventurer was nibbling at her coasts; and when we were busy in one quarter abolishing slavery and educating the Kaffir, in another there were wars more bloody than Timour's, and annihilation of races more terrible than Attila ever dreamed of. We see, before our faces, "the rudiments of tiger and baboon, and know that the barriers of races are not so firm but that spray can sprinkle us from antediluvian seas."

To realise this intricate history and its modern meaning is the first South African problem. No man can understand the land unless he takes it as it is, a place instinct with tradition, where every problem is based upon the wreckage of old strifes. And to the mere amateur the question is full of interest. The history of South Africa can never be written. The materials are lost, and all we possess are fleeting glimpses, outcrops of fact on the wide plains of tradition, random guesses, stray relics which suggest without enlightening. We see races emerge and vanish, with a place-name or a tomb as their only memorial; but bequeathing

something, we know not what, to the land and their successors. And at the end of the roll come the first white masters of the land, the Dutch, whom it is impossible to understand except in relation to the country which they conquered and the people they superseded. We have unthinkingly set down one of the most curious side-products of the human family as a common race of emigrants, and the result has been one long tale of misapprehension. It is this overlapping of counter-civilisations, this mosaic of the prehistoric and the recent, which gives South African history its piquancy and its character. It is no tale of old populous cities and splendid empires, no story of developing civilisations and conflicting philosophies; only a wild half-heard legend of men who come out of the darkness for a moment, of shapes warring in a mist for centuries, till the curtain lifts and we recognise the faces of to-day.

Two views have been held on the subject of the present native population. One is that it represents the end of a long line of development; the other that it is the nadir of a process of retrogression. The supporters of the second view point to the growing weakness of all Kaffir languages in inflexions and structural forms, while in the Hottentot-Bushman survival they see a degeneration from a more masculine type. It is impossible to dogmatise on such a matter. Degeneration and advance are not fixed processes, but recur in cycles in the history of every nation. The Bushman, one of the lowest of created types, may well be the original creature of the soil, advancing in halting stages from the

palæolithic man; himself practically a being of the Stone Age, and prohibited from further progress by an arid and unfriendly land, and the advent of stronger races. Of the palæolithic man, who 200,000 years ago or thereabout made his home in the river drifts, we have geological records similar to those found in the valleys of the Somme and the Thames. On the banks of the Buffalo at East London, in a gravel deposit 70 feet above the present river-bed, there have been found rude human implements of greenstone, the age of which may be measured by the time the river has taken to wear down 70 feet of hard greenstone dyke.[1] From the palæolithic it is a step of a few millenniums to the neolithic man, who has left his relics in the shell-heaps and kitchen-middens at the mouth of the same stream – who, indeed, till a few generations ago was an inhabitant of the land. The Bushman was a dweller in the Stone Age, for, though he knew a little about metals, stone implements were in daily use, and, with his kinsmen the Pigmies of Central Africa, he represented a savagery compared with which the Kaffir races are civilised. It is his skull which is found in the shell-heaps by the river-sides. He was a miserable fellow, a true troglodyte, small, emaciated, with protruding chest and spindle legs. He lived by hunting of the most primitive kind, killing game with his poisoned arrows. He had no social organisation, no knowledge of husbandry or stock-keeping, and save for his unrivalled skill in following spoor and

[1] An interesting sketch of the palæolithic remains in South Africa is contained in two essays appended to Dr Alfred Hillier's 'Raid and Reform' (1898).

a rude elementary art which is shown in the Bushman pictures on some of the rocks in the western districts, he was scarcely to be distinguished from the beasts he hunted. A genuine neolithic man, and therefore worthy of all attention. In other lands his wild contemporaries have gone; in South Africa the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the buffalo survive to give the background to our picture of his life. He himself has perished, or all but perished. The Dutch farmers hunted him down and shot him at sight, for indeed he was untamable. His blood has probably mixed with the Hottentot and the Koranna; and in some outland parts of the Kalahari and the great wastes along the lower Orange he may survive in twos and threes.

Originally he covered all the south-west corner of Africa, but in time he had to retire from the richer coast lands in favour of a people a little higher in the scale of civilisation. The origin of the Hottentots is shrouded in utter mystery, but we find them in possession when the first Portuguese and Dutch explorers reached the coast. They, too, were an insignificant race, but so far an advance upon their predecessors that they were shepherds, owning large herds of sheep and horned cattle, and roaming over wide tracts in search of pasture. They had a tribal organisation, and a certain domesticity of nature which, while it made them an easy prey to warrior tribes, enabled them to live side by side with the Dutch immigrants as herdsmen and house-servants. The pure breed disappeared, but their blood remains in the Cape boy, that curious mixed race part white, part Malay, part Hottentot. Both

Bushman and Hottentot, having within them no real vitality, have perished utterly as peoples: in Emerson's words, they "had guano in their destiny," and were fated only to prepare the way for their successors.

For the rest the history of primitive South Africa is a history of the Bantu tribes but for one curious exception. In the districts now included in the general name of Rhodesia, stretching from the Zambesi to the Limpopo, we find authentic record of an old and mysterious civilisation compared with which all African empires, save Egypt, are things of yesterday. Over five hundred ruins, showing in the main one type, though a type which can be differentiated in stages, are hidden among the hollows and stony hills of that curious country. Livingstone and Baines first called the world's attention to those monuments, and Mr Bent, in his 'Ruined Cities of Mashonaland,' provided the first working theory of their origin. Since that date many savants, from Dr Schlichter to Professor Keane, have elaborated the hypothesis, for in the present state of our knowledge a hypothesis it remains. In those ruins, or Zimbabwes, to use the generic Bantu name, three distinct periods have been traced, and a fourth period, when it is supposed that local tribes began to imitate the Zimbabwe style of architecture. The features of this architecture are simple, and consist chiefly of immense thickness of wall ornamented with a herring-bone, a chess-board, and in a few instances a diaper pattern, enclosures entered by narrow winding passages, and in some cases conical towers similar to

the Sardinian *nauraghes*. The discoveries by excavation have not been many, mainly fragments of gold and gold-dust, certain bowls of soapstone and wood ornamented with geometrical patterns and figures which may represent the signs of the zodiac, some curious figures of birds, stone objects which may be *phalli*, and rude stones which may be the sacred *betyli*. It is difficult to judge of the purpose of the buildings. Some suggest forts, some temples, some factories, some palaces: perhaps they may be all combined, such as we know the early Ionian and Phœnician adventurers built in a new land.

From the remains themselves little light comes, but we have a certain assistance from known history. In early days, before the Phœnicians came to the Mediterranean seaboard, their precursors, the Sabæo-Arabians or Himyarites of South Arabia, were the great commercial people of the East. There was undoubtedly a large trade in gold and ivory with Africa, and all records point to somewhere on the Mozambique coast as the port from which the precious metal was shipped. The only place whence gold in great quantities could have come is the central tableland of Rhodesia, from which it has been estimated that the ancient output was of the value of at least 75 millions. The temple of Haram of Bilkis, near Marib, as described by Müller, has an extraordinary resemblance both in architecture and the relics found in it to the Great Zimbabwe. According to Professor Keane, the Sabæans reached Rhodesia by way of Madagascar, and he finds in the Malagasy language

traces of their presence. Ophir he places in the south of Arabia, the emporium to which the gold was brought for distribution; Tarshish, the port of embarkation, he identifies with Sofala; and he finds in Rhodesia the ancient Havilah. Others place Ophir in Rhodesia itself. According to the Portuguese writer Conto, Mount Fura in Rhodesia was called by the Arabs Afur, and some see in the names of Sofala and the Sabi river a reference to Ophir and Sheba. Etymological proofs are always suspicious, save in cases like this where they are merely supplementary to a vast quantity of collateral evidence. When the Phœnicians succeeded to the commercial empire of the Sabæans, they took over the land of Ophir, and to them the bulk of the Zimbabwes are to be attributed. Those later Zimbabwes and the Sardinian *nauraghes*, which are almost certainly Phœnician in origin, have many points of resemblance. The traces of litholatry and phallic worship are Phœnician, the soapstone birds may be the vultures of Astarte, and the rosette decorations on the stone cylinders are found in the Phœnician temple of Paphos and the great temple of the Sun at Emesa.

Such are a few of the proofs advanced on behalf of a hypothesis which is in itself highly probable.[2] It is not a

[2] The chief authorities on this curious subject are Mr Bent's 'Ruined Cities of Mashonaland,' Dr Schlichter's papers in the 'Geographical Journal,' Professor Keane's 'Gold of Ophir,' and Dr Carl Peters' 'Eldorado of the Ancients.' Mr Wilmot's 'Monomotapa' contains an interesting collection of historical references from Phœnician, Arabian, and Portuguese sources; and in 'The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia,' by Messrs Hall and Neal, there is a very complete description of the ruins examined

history of generations but of æons, and we cannot tell what were the fortunes of that mysterious land from the days when the Phœnician power dwindled away to the time when the Portuguese discovered the gold mines and framed wild legends about Monomotapa. The most probable theory is that the old Semitic settlers mingled their blood with the people of the land, and as the trade outlets became closed a native tribe took the place of the proud Phœnician merchants. In the words of Mr Selous, "the blood of the ancient builders of Zimbabwe still runs, in a very diluted form, in the veins of the Bantu races, and more especially among the remnants of the tribes still living in Mashonaland and the Barotsi of the Upper Zambesi." The Makalanga, or Children of the Sun, whom Barreto fought, were in the line of succession from the Phœnicians, as the Mashonas are their representatives to-day. In Mashona pottery we can still trace the decorations, which are found on the walls of the Zimbabwes: the people have something Semitic in their features, as compared with other Bantu tribes; they know something of gold-working, a little of astronomy, and in their industries and beliefs have a higher culture than their neighbours. Their chiefs have dynastic names; each tribe has a form of totemism in which some have seen Arabian influences; and in certain matters of religion, such as the sacrifice of black bulls and the observation of days of rest, they suggest Semitic customs. So, if this hypothesis be true, we are presented with a survival of

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up to date (1902), and a valuable digest of the various theories on the subject.

the oldest of civilisations in the heart of modern barbarism. The traveller, who sees in the wilds of Manicaland a sacrifice of oxen to the Manes of the tribe, sees in a crude imitation the rites which the hook-nosed, dark-eyed adventurers brought from the old splendid cities of the Mediterranean, where with wild music and unspeakable cruelties and lusts the votaries of Baal and Astarte celebrated the cycle of the seasons and the mysteries of the natural world —

> "Imperishable fire under the boughs
> Of chrysoberyl and beryl and chrysolite
> And chrysoprase and ruby and sardonyx."

When the Portuguese first landed in East Africa the chief tribe with which they came in contact was the Makalanga in Mashonaland, ruled by the Monomotapa. But before their power waned they had seen that nation vanquished and scattered by the attacks of fiercer tribes from the north, particularly the Mazimba, in whose name there may lurk a trace of the Agizymba, a country to which, according to Ptolemy, the Romans penetrated. For the last four centuries native South Africa has been the theatre of a continuous *völkerwanderung*, immigrations from the north, and in consequence a general displacement, so that no tribe can claim an ancient possession of its territory. We may detect, apart from the Mashonas, three chief race families among the Bantus – the Ovampas and people of German South Africa; the Bechuanas and Basutos;

and the great mixed race of which the Zulus and the Kaffirs of Eastern Cape Colony are the chief representatives. All the groups show a strong family likeness in customs, worship, and physical character. As a rule the men are tall and well-formed, and their features are more shapely than the ordinary negro of West Africa or the far interior. They have a knowledge of husbandry and some skill in metal-working; they have often shown remarkable courage in the field and a kind of rude discipline; and they dwell in a society which is rigidly, if crudely, organised. The Custom of the Ancients is the main rule in their lives, and such law as they possess owes its sanction to this authority. The family is the social unit; and families are combined into clans, and clans into tribes, with one paramount chief at the head, whose power in most instances is despotic, as becomes a military chief. In some of the tribes, notably the Bechuana-Basuto, we find rudiments of popular government, where the chief has to take the advice of the assembled people, as in the Basuto *pitso*, or, in a few cases, of a council of the chief indunas. The chief's authority as lawgiver is absolute, but his judgments are supposed to be only declaratory of ancient custom. Socially the tribes are polygamous, and sexual morality is low, though certain crimes are reprobated and severely punished. The prevailing religion is ancestor-worship, joined with a rude form of natural dæmonism. The ordinary Bantu is not an idolater like the Makalanga, but he walks in terror of unseen spirits which dwell in the woods and rivers, – the ghost of his father it may be, or some unattached

devils. Ghost feasts are made at stated times on the graves of the dead; and if the ghost has been whimsical enough to enter the body of an animal, that animal must be jealously respected. Each tribe has its totem – the lion, or the antelope, or the crocodile – from which they derive their descent, one of the commonest features of all primitive societies. There seem traces of a vague belief in a superior deity, who makes rain and thunder and controls the itinerant bands of ghosts – a great ghost, who, if properly supplicated, may intercede with the smaller and more troublesome herd. But abstractions are essentially foreign to the Bantu mind, and his modest Pantheon is filled with the simplest of deities.

No priesthood exists, but it is possible for a clever man to learn some of the tricks of disembodied spirits and frustrate them by his own skill. In this way a class of sorcerers arose, who dealt in big medicine and strong magic. They profess to make rain and receive communications from the unseen, to cure diseases and give increase to the flocks, to expound the past and foretell the future. This powerful class is jealous of amateurs, and does its best to remove inferior wizards; but they are always liable to be annihilated themselves by a powerful chief, who is more bloodthirsty than superstitious. Undoubtedly some of these sorcerers acquire a knowledge of certain natural secrets; they become skilled meteorologists, and seem to possess a crude knowledge of hypnotism. They are also physicians of considerable attainments, and certain native remedies, notably a

distillation of herbs, which is used for dysentery in Swaziland, have a claim to a place in a civilised pharmacopœia. This rough science is the only serious intellectual attainment of the Bantu, outside of warfare. They have a kind of music which is extremely doleful and monotonous; they have a rude art, chiefly employed in the decoration of their weapons; but they have no poetry worthy of the name; and their only literature is found in certain simple folk-tales, chiefly of animals, but in a few cases of human escapades and feats of sorcery. The lion is generally the butt of such stories, and the quick wit of the hare and the knavery of the jackal are held up to the admiration of the listeners.[3]

Such are the chief features of Bantu life, and so lived the natives of South Africa up to the early years of last century. But about that time a certain Dingiswayo, being in exile at Cape Town, saw a company of British soldiers at drill, and, being an intelligent man, acquired a new idea of the art of war. When he returned to his home and the chieftainship of the little Zulu tribe, the memory of the soldiers in shakos, who moved as one man, remained with him, and he began to experiment with his army. He died, and his lieutenant Tchaka succeeded to the command of a small but well-disciplined force. This Tchaka was one of

[3] There is an account of Bantu life in Dr Theal's 'Portuguese in South Africa.' The same author's 'Kaffir Folk-lore' and M. Casalis' 'Les Bassoutos' contain much information on their customs and folk-lore; while Bishop Callaway's 'Nursery Tales of the Zulus,' M. Jacottet's 'Contes Populaires des Bassoutos,' and M. Junod's 'Chants et Contes des Baronga' and 'Nouveaux Contes Ronga' are interesting collections of folk-tales.

those born leaders of men in battle who appear on the stage of history every century or so. He perfected the discipline of his army, armed it with short stabbing spears for close-quarter fighting, and then proceeded to use it as a wedge to split the large loose masses which surrounded him. It was a war of the eagle and the crows. Neighbouring tribes awoke one morning to find the enemy at their gates, and by the evening they had ceased to exist. A wild flight to the north began, and for years the wastes north and east of the Drakensberg were littered with flying remnants of broken clans. All the great deeds of savage warfare – the killing of the Suitors, the fight in the Great Hall of Worms, Cuchulain's doings in the war of the Bull of Cuailgne – pale before the barbaric splendours of Tchaka's slaughterings, the Zulus became the imperial power of South-East Africa, and their monarch's authority was limited only by the length of his impis' reach. By-and-by his career of storm ceases. We find him ruling as a severe and much-venerated king, arbitrary and bloodthirsty but comparatively honest; a huge man, with many large vices and a few glimmerings of virtue. He was succeeded by his brother, the monstrous Dingaan, who was soundly beaten by the Boers in one of the most heroic battles in history; he in turn gave way to his brother Panda, a figure of small note; and the dynasty ended with Cetewayo and the blood and terror of Isandhlwana and Ulundi.

After Tchaka the man who looms largest in the tale of those wars is Mosilikatse, the founder of the Matabele. The Zulu conquests placed terrible autocrats on the throne, and the marshal

who incurred the king's displeasure had to flee or perish. To this circumstance we owe the Angoni in Nyassaland and the empire of Lobengula. About 1817 Mosilikatse with his impi burst into what is now the Orange River Colony, driving before him the feeble Barolong and Bechuana tribes, and established his court at a place on the Crocodile River north of the Magaliesberg, where a pass still bears his name. He began a career of wholesale rapine and slaughter, till, as Fate would have it, he came in contact with the pioneers of the Great Trek. Some hideous massacres were the result, but he had to deal with an enemy against whom his race could never hope to stand. The Boers, under Uys and Potgieter, drove him from his kraal, impounded his ill-gotten cattle, and finally, in a great battle on the Marico River, defeated him so thoroughly that he fled north of the Limpopo and left the country for ever. From the little we know of him he was a cruel and treacherous chief, inferior in strength to Tchaka, as he was utterly inferior to Moshesh in statesmanship. But the men he led had the true Zulu fighting spirit, and in the Matabele, under his son Lobengula, we have learned something of the warriors of Mosilikatse.

A throne which, as with the Zulus and their offshoots, had no strong religious sanction, must subsist either by continued success in battle or a studious statesmanship. Tchaka is an instance of the first; Moshesh, the founder of the Basuto power, is a signal example of the second. The Basutos were driven down from the north by the Zulu advance, and found shelter in the wild

tangle of mountains which cradle the infant Orange and Caledon rivers. Moshesh, who had no hereditary claim to a throne, won his power by his own abilities, and on the mountain of Thaba Bosigo established his royal kraal. The name of the "Chief of the Mountain" is written larger even than Tchaka's over South African history, and to-day his people are the only tribe who have any substantive independence. Alone among native chiefs he showed the intellect of a trained statesman, and a tireless patience which is only too rare in the annals of statesmanship. The presence of French missionaries at his court gave him the means of instruction in European ways, and he was far too clever to have any prejudice against so startling a departure from the habits of his race. He watched the dissensions of the rival white peoples, and quietly and cautiously profited by their blunders. He made war against them as a tactical measure, and after an undoubted victory increased his power by making a diplomatic peace. He left his tribe riches and security, and the history of Basutoland since his day is one long commentary on the surprising talents of its founder. How far the credit is his and how far it belongs to his advisers we cannot tell; but we can admire a character so liberal as to accept advice, and a mind so shrewd that it saw unerringly its own advantage. There is none of the wild glamour of conquest about him, but there is a more abiding reputation for a far more intricate work; for, like another statesman, he could make a small town a great city – and with the minimum of expense.

With the death of Moshesh the history of South Africa becomes almost exclusively the history of its white masters. It is an old country, as old as time, the prey of many conquerors, but with it all a patient and mysterious land. Civilisations come and go, and after a millennium or two come others who speculate wildly on the relics of the old. In some future century (who knows?), when the Rand is covered with thick bush and once more the haunt of game, some enlightened sportsman, hunting in his shirt after the bush-veld manner, may clear the undergrowth from the workings of the Main Reef and write a chapter such as this on the doings of earlier adventurers.

CHAPTER II.
THE GENTLEMEN-ADVENTURERS

The world's changes, so philosophers have observed, spring from small origins, though their reason and their justification may be ample enough, and exercise the learned for a thousand years. A sailor's tale, a book in an old library, may set the adventurer off on his voyages, and presently empires arise, and his fatherland alters its history. The world moves to no measured tune; everywhere there are sudden breaks, paradoxes, high enterprises which end in smoke, and pedestrian beginnings which issue in the imperial purple. All things have their ground in theory, and by-and-by a dismal post-mortem science will discover impulses which the adventurer never dreamed of. Few lands, even the most remote, are without this variegated history, and the crudest commercial power is built up on the *débris* of romance. South Africa, which is to-day, and to most men, a parvenu country, founded on the Stock Exchange, has odd incidents in her pedigree. Eliminate all the prehistoric guesses, strike out the Dutch, and the Old World has still had its share in her fashioning. Europe may seem only yesterday to have finally sealed her conquest, but she has been trying her hand at it for five hundred years. And the result of the oldest struggle has been a curious story of failure – often heroic, seldom wise, but always fascinating, as such stories must be. It is associated with one

of the smallest, and to-day the least enterprising, of European peoples; and it has issued in Portugal's most notable over-sea possession. Every nation has its holy land of endeavour – England in India, France in Algiers, Russia in Turkestan. Such was South Africa to Portugal; much what Sicily was to the Athenians, the place linked with all her hopes and with her direst misfortunes.

Happily the adventure was not without its chroniclers. The Dominican friar, dos Santos,[4] has sketched for us the empire at its zenith, and de Barros, the Portuguese Secretary for the Indies, has piously narrated its beginnings. But the matter-of-fact histories disguise the real daring of the exploit. The chivalry of Europe in its most characteristic form was carried 8000 miles from home to an unknown land; civilisation of a kind, a Christian church, a code of honour, the rudiments of law and commerce, and the amenities of life, were planted on a narrow malarial seaboard by men who had taken years in the voyage, and had scarcely a hope of return. It is said that a great part of courage lies in having done the thing before, but there was no such ingredient in the valour of those adventurers. Risking all on a dream, they set off on their ten-year excursions, holding an almost certain death as a fair stake in the game. The tenth who survived set themselves cheerfully to transform their discoveries into a national asset. They colonised as wholeheartedly, if not as wisely, as any nation in the world. And in spite

[4] There is an English abbreviation of dos Santos in Pinkerton's 'General Collection of Voyages and Travels.' The original work was printed at Evora in 1609.

of the narrowest and most pragmatic of cultures, they proved themselves singularly adaptable. The Portuguese gentlemen, for whom the Cancioneiros were sung, became Africans in everything but blood, adopting a new land under their old flag, and doing their best to Christianise and colonise it. It was not their fault that the unalterable laws of trade and the destinies of races shattered in time the fabric at which they had laboured.

In 1445, the year in which Diniz Dias is reported to have rounded Cape Verd, the Portuguese were the most daring seamen in Europe. Dwelling on a promontory, they naturally turned their eyes southward and westward, when peace and a moderate wealth gave them leisure for fancies. Those were the days of the foreglow of the Renaissance. Constantinople had not yet fallen, but the spirit of inquiry was abroad, and a fresh wind had blown among scholastic cobwebs. The Church had her share in the revival. A belated missionary, or, as it may be, commercial, zeal stirred the ecclesiastical powers. Fresh lands might be won for the Cross, and fresh moneys to build new abbeys and endow new bishoprics. The merchants of Lisbon and Oporto saw gold in every traveller's tale, and gladly risked a bark on a promising undertaking. There lived, too, at the time a sagacious prince, Henry the Navigator, the son of João I. and Philippa of Lancaster, himself an amateur of colonisation, who set the fashion for courtiers and citizens. So the young Portuguese squire, trained in the pride of his caste, his mind nurtured on chivalrous tales, fired readily at the strange rumours, and found a

peaceful life among his vineyards no satisfying career for a man. To him the white sea-wall of the harbour was the boundary of the unknown. Out in the west lay the Purple Islands of King Juba, the forgotten Atlantis, the lost Hesperides, and dim classical recollections from the monastery school gave authority to his fancies. There were but two careers for a gentleman, arms and adventure, and the latter was for the moment the true magnet. To him it might be given to find the Golden City, the Ophir of King Solomon, or to penetrate beyond the deserts to where Prester John[5] ruled his wild empire in the fear of God. And all the while in Europe men were wrangling over creeds and syllogisms, questioning the powers of the Church, grumbling over dogmas, dying for a few square miles of territory. What wonder if to high-bred, high-spirited youth Europe seemed all too narrow – especially to youth in that south-west corner cut off by the sierras from the world? What mattered desperate peril so long as it had daylight and honour in it? So with hope at his prow and a clear conscience the adventurer set out on his travels.

The first object of Portuguese enterprise was Bilad Ghana, the modern Senegal, which they knew of from Arab geographers. The land route across the Sahara was closed to them, so they

[5] The Portuguese geographers divided Central Africa into Angola in the west, the kingdom of Prester John in the north (Abyssinia), and the empire of Monomotapa (Mashonaland) in the south. The real Prester John was a Nestorian Christian in Central Asia, whose khanate was destroyed by Genghis Khan about the end of the twelfth century; but the name became a generic one for any supposed Christian monarch in unknown countries.

were compelled to reach it by sea. It was Henry's dream to make the country a Portuguese dependency, and Christianise it under the iron rule of the Order of the Knights of Jesus Christ, – one of those schemes in which the crusading spirit and a hunger for new territory are subtly blended in the common fashion of the Age of the Adventurers. It was currently believed that the Senegal River rose from a lake near the source of the Nile, and would thus enable the Portuguese to join hands with the Christian monarch of Abyssinia. A special indulgence was obtained from the Pope for all who fought under the banner of the Order of Christ. And so, blessed by the Church, a series of slave-raids began, which were slowly pushed farther south till Cape Verd was reached, and the great turn of the coast to the east began to puzzle the sea-captains. Henry died in 1460, having added, as he believed, a vast territory to the Portuguese Crown, called by the name of Guinea, which is Bilad Ghana corrupted. That the future interests of its discoverer might be properly cared for the new land was divided into parishes, whose chaplains were bound to say one weekly mass for the Iffante's soul. By the time of the death of Affonso V. in 1481 the Portuguese had passed the Niger Delta, discovered the island of Fernando Po, and reached a point two degrees south of the equator. In 1484 Diego Cam reached the mouth of the Congo, and next year set up a marble pillar at Cape Cross to mark his occupation. Another year and Bartolomeo Diaz touched at Angra Pequena, pushed round the Cape, keeping far out to sea, to Algoa Bay; and on returning discovered that Cabo Tormentoso

which his king christened Cabo da Boa Esperanza, the first earnest of the hope of the new road to the Indies. Portugal had taken rank as the first of seafaring powers, and, in Politian's words, stood forth as "the trustee of a second world, holding in the hollow of her hand a vast series of lands, ports, seas, and islands revealed by the industry of her sons and the enterprise of her kings." Politian asked that the great story might be written while the materials were yet fresh, but unfortunately Portugal was richer at that time in sea-captains than in men of letters.

On July 8, 1497, Vasco da Gama, the greatest of the world's sailors, left Lisbon on the greatest of all voyages. The circumnavigation of Africa was imposed upon the Archemenid Sataspes as a "penalty worse than death," but to those adventurers death itself was an inconsiderable accident. Five years before Columbus had made his first journey, an enterprise not to be named in the same breath as da Gama's. On Christmas day, having safely passed the Cape, he came to a land of green, tree-clad shores, which he piously christened Natal. He pushed on past the Limpopo and the Zambesi delta to Mozambique, where he found an Arab colony, and to Mombasa, where the chief street still bears his name. He reached Calicut safely on May 20, 1498, ten months and twelve days after leaving Lisbon; and two years later he returned home with one-third of the crew he had sailed with. The Grand Road was now defined; thenceforth it was a trade-route to which commerce naturally turned. No more romantic voyages were ever undertaken, for in those forlorn

latitudes Christian and Muslim, East and West, met in war and peace, and creeds and ideas clashed in the strangest disorder. In the expedition of 1500 under Pedro Alvarez Cabral two men were set ashore at Melinda, north of Mozambique, to look for Prester John, and history is silent on the fate of the unfortunate gentlemen. In da Gama's second voyage Nilwa was captured and the Portuguese East African empire began. A fierce enthusiast was this same da Gama, for, meeting with a great ship of the Sultan of Egypt, filled with Muslim pilgrims, he looted it from stem to stern, and sent every pilgrim to Paradise.

After da Gama came Affonso d'Albuquerque, who seized Goa, and established his country's hold on the Malabar coast, and pushing on captured Malacca, the richest of the Portuguese trading stations. He swept all alien navies from the Eastern seas, and established on a sound basis of naval supremacy a great commercial empire. Nothing less than the conquest of Turkey would satisfy him. He dreamed of allying himself with Prester John, and establishing himself on the Upper Nile; and again of raiding Medina, carrying off Muhammad's coffin, and exchanging it for the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. He captured Hormuz on the Persian Gulf, and with it the enormous trade between India and Asia Minor; and he was on the eve of leading an expedition against Aden, which he saw to be the key of the Red Sea, when he was struck down at Goa, and died, like the great seigneur he was, clothed in the robes of his knightly order. Against his expressed wish he was buried at Goa, for the

Portuguese believed that, as long as the bones of their intrepid leader lay there, their Empire of the East would stand. So died the foremost of his countrymen, one who may rank with Olive as the greatest of Christian viceroys.

Meantime the East African power had been fully established. Sofala and Mozambique, the chief cities of the coast, had fallen to the Portuguese, and their eyes turned to what they believed to be the fabulously rich hinterlands, where Solomon had won his gold and ivory, and Arab traders had for centuries found their hunting-ground. The Monomotapa, the chief or emperor of the Makalanga, whose Zimbabwe was situated somewhere in what we now know as Mashonaland, took the place of Prester John in their imagination. They pushed up the Zambesi, founding trading stations on the way, which still survive. They found Ophir in every Bantu name, and began that long series of meaningless wars of conquest which in the end shattered their dream of empire. Gold-seeking has never been an enterprise blessed of Heaven; and the Portuguese were more unlucky than most adventurers. They found themselves involved in desperate wars; fever and poison carried off their leaders; and the grandees, like Barreto and Homem, who in cuirasses and velvets held indabas with Makalanga chiefs, got little reward for their diplomacy. Soon the horizon narrowed, boundaries were defined, and the colonist sat down in the coast towns to make a living by legitimate trade.

The chief commercial importance of South-East Africa to the

Portuguese was as a port of call on the great trade-route to the Indies. The skins, ivory, and gold, which the country produced, could never vie with the organised exports of Goa and Calicut. So Mozambique and Sofala became rather depots than supply-grounds, at which the great ships anchored and refitted; points of vantage, too, in the endless bickerings with Arab traders. There was a modest commerce with the interior, with Tete as the chief depot, and Masapa, Luanze, and Bukoto as the up-country stations. Each inland Portuguese trader was also a diplomat. Through him the presents passed from the Portuguese king to the savage "emperors," and, situated as he might be at Masapa, on the very edge of the mountain Fura and the forbidden Makalanga country, his duties were often most delicate and hazardous. The trade as a whole was neither productive nor well managed. The whole empire was undermanned. Portugal was colonising Brazil and West Africa at the time she was sending out her adventurers to the East, and the little kingdom in Europe could not long endure the strain. The sons she sent forth rarely returned; and the estates at home fell out of cultivation for lack of men. Meantime stronger and more fortunate races were appearing in the Eastern waters. The Englishmen Newbery, Candish, and Raymond began the rivalry, and the formidable Dutch followed next, with their northern vigour and commercial aptitudes. In 1595 the first of Linschoten's books was published, and opened up a new world for Dutch enterprise. The Dutch East India Company soon wrested from Portugal her Indian possessions, and in a little her

East African ports were mere isolated stations, much harassed by the Netherland fleets, and the Grand Road had become a thing of the past.

But, as commerce declined, a new epoch in the Portuguese history began. The disappearance of trade was followed by the advent of one of the most heroic missionary brotherhoods in history. The Jesuit Gonsalvo de Silveira was the pioneer, and a year after he landed in Africa he was murdered by the Makalanga chief. Some fifty years later the Dominicans joined the Jesuits, and till the beginning of the eighteenth century laboured at their quixotic task. Now and then a chief's son was baptised and attained to some degree of civilisation, but the mass of the people, living among fierce tribal wars, cared little for curious tales of peace. There was no ostentation with those Bishops of This or That *in partibus infidelium*. No churches remain to tell of their work. They lived simply in huts, and died a thousand miles away from their kin, so that their very names are forgotten. In our own day travellers in the Zambesi valley have come to kraals where the people called themselves Christians, and showed a few perverted rites in evidence, the one relic of those forgotten heroes. A few incidents, however, have remained in men's minds. Luiz do Espirito Santa, a prior of Mozambique, on being taken into the presence of the Monomotapa and ordered to make obeisance, stiffened his back, and replied that he did such homage to God alone; for which noble saying he was duly murdered. The Shining Cross, which Constantine saw,

appeared also to the friar Manoel Sardinha when he led his forces against the Makalanga. In 1652 the Monomotapa Manuza was received into the Church, an event which was the occasion for a great thanksgiving service at Lisbon, at which the king João IV. attended in state. His son, Miguel, entered the Dominican order, was given the diploma of Master of Theology, and died a vicar of the convent of Santa Barbara in Goa. This barbarian Charles V., the greatest South African chief of his time, may well be remembered among the few mortals who have voluntarily renounced a crown.

And so the empire, having shipwrecked on a dream of gold and a land where men could not live,[6] dwindled down to isolated forts and stations, and the strenuous creed of the pioneers was softened into the bastard contentment of the disheartened. Miserably and corruptly governed, forgotten by Europe, they forgot Europe in turn, and a strange somnolent life began of half-barbaric, wholly oriental seigneurs, ruling as petty monarchs over natives from whom they were not wholly distinct.[7] Instead of holding the outposts of European culture, they sank themselves into the ways of the soil which their forefathers had conquered. Round Tete and Inhambane and Sofala there grew up great country estates, held on a kind of feudal tenure, where the

[6] Purchas wrote, "Barreto was discomfited not by the Negro but by the Ayre, the malignity whereof is the same sauce of all their golden countries in Africa."

[7] One missionary wrote, "They have already lost the knowledge of Christians and thrown away the obligations of Faith" (Wilmot, 'Monomotapa,' p. 215).

slack-mouthed grandee idled away his days. Set among acres of orchards and gardens, those dwellings were often noble and sumptuous. Thither came belated travellers, gold-seekers, shipwrecked seamen, wandering friars, men of every nationality and trade, and in the prazo of a de Mattos or a de Mira found something better than the mealie-pap they had been living on in native kraals. Sitting on soft couches, drinking good Madeira, and looking at a copy of a Murillo or a Velasquez on the walls, they may well have extolled those oases in the desert. The grandee had his harem, like any Arab sheikh; he dispensed death cruelly and casually among his subjects; but as a rule he seems to have had the virtue of hospitality, and welcomed gladly any traveller with tales of the forgotten world. Fierce Bantu wars have left few traces of those pleasant demesnes; but to the new-comer the land where they once existed has still a quaint air of decadent civilisation. Coming down from the high tableland of the interior, which is the most strenuous land on earth, through the mountain glens which, but for vegetation, might be Norway, one enters a country of bush and full muddy rivers, a country of dull lifeless green and a pestilent climate. But as one draws nearer the coast, where glimpses of gardens appear and white-walled estancias, and rivers spread into lagoons with spits of yellow sand and Arab boatmen, and, last of all, the pale blue Indian Ocean stretches its sleepy leagues to the horizon, there comes a new feeling into the scene, as of something old, not new, decaying rather than undeveloped, which, joined with the moist heat, makes the place

"A land
In which it seemèd always afternoon,
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream."

The tale of this empire, crude and melancholy as it is, provides an instructive commentary on current theories of colonisation. From Tyre and Sidon down to the last Teutonic performance, there is surely sufficient basis to generalise on; but no two theorists are agreed upon the laws which govern those racial adventures. The only approach to a dogma is the theory that to colonise is to decentralise – that before a vigorous life can begin over-sea the runners must be cut which bind the colony to the homeland. France fails, we say, because a Frenchman away from home cannot keep his mind off the boulevards; he is for ever an exile, not a settler. Britain succeeds because her sons find a land of their adoption. But the converse is equally important, though too rare in its application to be often remembered. No race can colonise which cannot decentralise its energy; but equally no race can colonise which can wholly decentralise its sentiment and memory. Portugal failed for this reason chiefly, that the Portuguese forgot Portugal. Few peoples have been so adaptable. The white man's pride died in their hearts. They were ready to mix with natives on equal terms.[8] Now concubinage is bad,

[8] Among the Baronga, the Bantu tribe who live around Delagoa Bay, there are some ancient folk-tales, derived from Portuguese sources, in which the heroes have

but legitimate marriage with half-castes is infinitely worse for the *morale* of a people. And since Nature to the end of time has a care of races but not of hybrids, this tolerant, foolish, unstable folk dropped out of the battle-line of life, and sank from conquerors to resident aliens, while their country passed from an empire to a vague seaboard. "A people scattered by their wars and affairs over the whole earth, and home-sick to a man," wrote Emerson of the English, and it is the trait of the true colonist. It is as important to remember "sweet Argos" as it is to avoid a womanish *heimweh*. For a colony is a sapling, bound by the law of nature to follow the development of the parent tree. A parcel of Englishmen on the Australian coast have no significance without England at their back, to give them a tradition of manners and government, to be their recruiting-ground, to hold out at once a memory of home and an ideal of polity. Wars of separation may come, but a colony is still a colony: it may have a different colour on the map, but its moral complexion is the same; politically it may be a rival, spiritually it remains a daughter.

The country, too, was wretchedly governed. The Portuguese viceroy, often some impoverished noble, was in the same position as the Roman proconsul, and had to restore his fortunes at the expense of the provincials. Local administration was farmed out to local magnates, another part of the crazy

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Portuguese names, such as João, Boniface, Antonio. One tale about the king's daughter, who was saved from witchcraft by the courage of a young adventurer called João, is a form of the story of Jack and the ugly Princess, which appears throughout European folk-lore. Cf. M. Junod's 'Chants et Contes des Baronga,' pp. 274-322.

decentralisation which led to catastrophe. There is more in bad government than hardship for the private citizen. It means the weakening of the intellectual and moral nerve of the race which tolerates it. Sound government is not, as revolutionary doctrinaires used to think, the outcome of the grace of God and a flawless code of abstractions. It means a perpetual effort, a keen sense of reality, a constant facing and adjusting of problems. And it is one of the laws of life that this high faculty is inconsistent with extreme luxury and ease. A great governor may be one-fourth voluptuary, but he must be three-parts politician. "Je n'aime pas beaucoup les femmes," was one of Napoleon's self-criticisms, "ni le jeu – enfin rien; je suis tout à fait un être politique." The thin strain of old-world tradition was useless in men who were sheikhs, adventurers, grandees, but never statesmen.

But the ultimate source of weakness was economic. The settlements were unproductive in any real sense. The empire was a chain of forts and depots, and on no side was the ruling power organically connected with the soil. A colony should be built up of farmers and miners and manufacturers, having for its basis the productive energy of the land. To exploit is not to colonise, and on this side there is the most urgent need for decentralisation. The Portuguese lost their European culture, but they remained adventurers and aliens. Their traders bargained for produce, but they never went to the root of the matter and organised production. They had no ranches or plantations, only

their trading-booths. Like the Carthaginians, they carried their commerce to the ends of the earth, and left the ends of the earth radically unaffected by their presence. People repeat glibly that trade follows the flag, and that commerce is the basis of empire. And in a sense it is true, for an empire without commercial inter-relations and a solid basis of material prosperity is a house built on the sand. But if the maxim be taken in the sense that commerce is in itself a sufficient imperial bond, it is the most fatal of heresies. The Dutch, in their heyday, had an empire chiefly of forts and factories; and what part has the Dutch empire played in the destinies of mankind? No race or kingdom can endure which is not rooted in the soil, drawing sustenance from natural forces, increasing by tillage and forestry, pasturage and mining and manufacture, the aggregate of the world's production. And the need is as much moral as economic. The trader pure and simple – Tyrian, Greek, Venetian, Dutch, or Portuguese – is too cosmopolitan and adventitious to be the staple of a strong race. He has not the common local affections; he is not knit close enough to nature in his toil. To wrest a living from the avarice of the earth is to form character with the salt and iron of power in it. India, it is true, is a partial exception; but India is a unique case of a long-settled subject people ruled wisely by a race which has sufficient breadth and vitality in its culture to spare time for the experiment. It is to colonies, which must always form the major part of an empire, that the maxim applies; for the former is a native power under tutelage, while

the latter is the expansion of the parent country beyond the seas. And this expansion must be more than commercial. The colony must be founded in the soil, its people with each generation becoming more indigenous, and its wealth based on its own toil and enterprise; otherwise it is but such a chain of factories as the Portuguese established, which the proverbial whiff of grape-shot may scatter to-morrow.

CHAPTER III.
THE GREAT TREK

Every race has its Marathon into which the historian does not inquire too closely who has a reverence for holy places and a fear of sacrilege. It may be a battle or a crusade, a creed, or perhaps only a poem, but whatever it is, it is part and parcel of the national life, and it is impossible to reach the naked truth through the rose-coloured mists of pious tradition. A Sempach or a Bannockburn cannot be explained by a bare technical history. The spirit of a nation was in arms, the national spirit was the conqueror, and the combatants appear more than mere flesh and blood, walking "larger than human" on the hills of story. This phenomenon has merits which it is hard to exaggerate. It is the basis for the rhetorical self-confidence which is essential to a strong race. It is a fountain from which generous youth can draw inspiration, an old watchword to call the inert to battle. If the race has a literature, it helps to determine its character; if the race has none, it provides a basis for fireside tales. The feeblest Greek at the court of Artaxerxes must have now and then straightened himself when he remembered Salamis. Without such a retrospect a people will live in a crude present, and, having no buttress from the past, will fare badly from the rough winds of life.

To the Boer the Great Trek is the unrecorded but ever-remembered Odyssey of his people. He has a long memory,

perhaps because of his very slowness and meagreness of fancy. His life was so monotonous that the tale of how his fathers first came into the land inspired him by its unlikeness to his own somnolent traditions. Besides, he had a Scriptural parallel. The persecuted children of Israel, in spite of the opposition of Pharaoh, had fled across the desert from Egypt and found a Promised Land. The Boer sense of analogy is extremely vivid and extremely inexact. Here he saw a perfect precedent. A God-fearing people, leaving their homes doubtless at the call of the Most High, had fled into the wilds of Amalek and Edom, conquered and dispossessed the Canaanites, and occupied a land which, if not flowing with milk and honey, was at least well grassed and plentifully watered. How keen the sense of Scriptural example was, and how constantly present to the Boer mind was the thought that he was following in the footsteps of Israel, is shown by one curious story. The voortrekkers, pushing out from Pretoria, struck a stream which flowed due north, the first large north-running water they had met. Moreover, it was liable to droughts and floods recurring at fixed seasons. What could it be but the great river of Egypt? So with immense pious satisfaction they recognised it as the Nile, and the Nyl it remains to this day.

The thought of a national exodus comes easily to the Aryan mind, – an inheritance from primeval Asian wanderings. And in itself it is something peculiarly bold and romantic, requiring a renunciation of old ties and sentiments impossible to an over-domesticated race. It requires courage of a high order

and a confident faith in destiny. Perhaps the courage needed in the case of the Great Trek was less than in most similar undertakings, because of the cheering Scriptural precedent and the lack of that imagination which can vividly forecast the future. The past history of the Boer, too, prepared him for desperate enterprises. Made up originally of doubtful adventurers from Holland, hardihood grew up in their blood as they pushed northwards from the seacoast. The people of the littoral might be, as Lady Anne Barnard found them, sluggish and spiritless; but the farmers of Colesberg and Graaff-Reinet were in the nature of things a different breed. The true Dutch blood does not readily produce an adventurer, but it was leavened and sublimated by a French Huguenot strain, scions of good families exiled for the most heroic of causes. The coarse strong Dutch stock swallowed them up; the language disappeared, the Colberts became Grobelaars, the Villons Viljoens, the Pinards Pienaars; but something remained of *élan* and spiritual exaltation. Harassed from the north by Griqua and Hottentot bandits, and from the east by Kaffir incursions, they became a hardy border race, keeping their own by dint of a strong arm. The quiet of the great sun-washed spaces entered into their souls. They grew taciturn, ungraceful, profoundly attached to certain sombre dogmas, impatient of argument or restraint, bad citizens for any modern State, but not without a gnarled magnificence of their own. They were out of line with the whole world, far nearer in kinship to an Old Testament patriarch than to the townsfolk

with whom they shared the country. All angles and corners, they presented an admirable front to savage nature; but they were hard to dovetail into a complex modern society. They would have made good Ironsides, and would have formed a stubborn left wing at Armageddon, but they did ill with franchises and taxes and paternal legislation.

I will take two savage tales from their history to show what manner of men they were in extremity. A certain Frederick Bezuidenhout, a farmer in the Bruintje Hoogte, and by all accounts a dabbler in less reputable trades, was summoned on some charge before the landdrost of the district, and declined to appear. A warrant was issued for his apprehension, and a party of soldiers sent out to enforce it, whereupon Bezuidenhout took refuge in a cave, and was shot dead in its defence. The fiery cross went round among his relatives; overtures, which were refused, were made to the Kaffir chiefs, and Jan Bezuidenhout, the brother of the dead man, swore to fealty a band of as pretty outlaws as ever dwelt on a border. The insurrection failed; thirty-nine of the insurgents were captured, and five were hanged, and Jan Bezuidenhout himself was shot in the Kaffir country by an advance party of the pursuit. Such is the too famous story of Slachter's Nek. The tale of Conrad de Buys[9] and his doings is wilder but more obscure. A man of great physical strength and the worst character, he was the leader of the sterner desperadoes

[9] In Lichtenstein's 'Travels in South Africa' (1803-6) there is an interesting and comparatively favourable account of Buys in his Cape Colony days.

on the Kaffir border. Through living much in native kraals he had become little better than a savage. He was mixed up in Van Jaarsveld's insurrection, and by-and-by his private crimes exceeded his political by so much that he was compelled to flee into the northern wilds. This first of the voortrekkers is next heard of on the banks of the Limpopo, living in pure barbarism, with a harem of Kaffir wives and an immense prestige among his neighbours. The emigrant party under Potgieter, on their return from Delagoa Bay, found somewhere in the Lydenburg hills two half-breeds who called this ruffian father and acted as interpreters. Conrad peopled the Transvaal with his children, whom he seems to have ruled in a patriarchal fashion, forming a real Buys clan, who still hang together at Marah, in Zoutpansberg. In the Pietersburg Burgher camp during the war there was a Buys location, who strenuously urged their claim to be considered a white people and burghers of the republic.

Such was one element in the race of border farmers – a substratum of desperate lawlessness. But there were other elements, many of them noble and worthy. Their morals were less bad than peculiar; their lawlessness rather an inability to understand restrictions than an impulse to disorder. They had their own staunch loyalties, their own strict code of honour. They had the self-confidence of a people whose dogmatic foundations are unshaken, and who are in habitual intercourse with an inferior race. In a rude way they were kindly and hospitable. They had a courage so unwavering that it may be called an instinct, and

the bodily strength which comes from bare living and constant exertion. “Simple” and “pastoral” used to be words of praise. During the late war they became a sneer; but it is well to recognise that while they may comprise the gravest faults they must denote a few sterling virtues.

When Pieter Retief left Graaff-Reinet in 1837, he issued an ingenious proclamation which contains his justification of the Great Trek. He complains of the unnecessary hardships attending the emancipation of the slaves, the insecurity of life and property caused by the absence of proper vagrancy laws, and the disaster certain to attend Lord Glenelg’s reversal of British policy on the Kaffir border. Retief was a man of high and conscientious character, and his profession of faith is valuable as showing the view of current politics held by the better class of the voortrekkers. They did not defend slavery – Retief expressly repudiates it; but they objected to the method of its abolition, and the lack of precautions for future public safety which the event demanded. Lord Glenelg’s withdrawal from the eastern border to the boundary of the Keiskama and Tyumie rivers, as fixed by Lord Charles Somerset in 1819, appeared to them a flagrant piece of weakness which sooner or later must make life on that border impossible. They saw no hope of redress from the imperial Government, which seemed to be dominated by philanthropic hysteria. It is a grave indictment, and worth examination. The slavery question stands in the foreground. The ocean slave-trade was suppressed in 1807, and the English

abolitionists had leisure to turn their minds to South Africa. The first progressive enactment came in 1816, when the registration of slaves and slave-births was made compulsory in every district. In 1823 a series of laws were passed restricting slave labour on the Sabbath, giving slaves the right of owning property, and limiting the punishments to which they were liable. In 1826 officials were appointed in country districts to watch over slave interests, and see that the protective enactments were carried out. The famous Fiftieth Ordinance of 1828 gave the Hottentots the same legal rights as the white colonists. Meanwhile for years a great missionary agitation for total abolition had been going on, which was powerfully supported by the Whig party in England. The Dutch saw clearly the trend of events, and, in what is known as the "Graaff-Reinet proposals," attempted to procure gradually the emancipation which they realised was bound to come. They proposed, unanimously, that after a date to be fixed by Government all female children should be free at birth, and, by a majority, that all male children born after the same date should also be free. I cannot find in these proposals the insidious attempt to defeat the movement which some writers have discerned: they seem to me to be as fair and reasonable an offer as we could expect a slave-holding class to make. But the British attitude is also perfectly clear. Slave-holding had been condemned as a crime by the national conscience, and there could be no temporising with the evil thing. Here, again, a certain kind of education was necessary to appreciate the point

of view. The farmers of Graaff-Reinet had not listened to the harangues of Wilberforce and Fowell Buxton; Zion Chapel and its all-pervading atmosphere of mild brotherly love were not within the compass of their experience. England was right, as she generally is in policies which are inspired by a profound popular conviction; but she could hardly expect men of a very different training to fall in readily with her views. In any case the working out of the policy was attended by many blunders. The Emancipation Act took effect in Cape Colony from the 1st of December 1834. £1,200,000 seems a rather inadequate compensation for 35,000 slaves, and as each claim had to be presented before commissioners in London, the farmer had perforce to employ an agent, who bought up his claims at a discount of anything from 18 to 30 per cent.

The losses from emancipation were chiefly felt in the rich agricultural districts of the colony, such as Stellenbosch, Ceres, and Worcester; the border farmers were not a large slave-owning class, and the lack of cheap labour did not trouble them. But emancipation meant a general dislocation of credit all over the country. A man who in 1833 was counted a rich man was comparatively poor in 1835, and this *peripeteia* had a bad effect on the whole farming class. It was rather the spirit of the Act which the Boers of Graaff-Reinet complained of, – the theory, to them ridiculous, that the black man could have legal rights comparable with the white, and the sense of insecurity which dwellers under such a *régime* must feel. The average Boer was an

arbitrary but not an unkind slave-master; he regarded his slaves as part of his *familia*, an enclosure to which the common law should not penetrate. To be limited by statute in the use of what he considered his chattels, to find hundreds of officious gentlemen ready to take the part of the chattels on any occasion against him, were pills too bitter to swallow. Emancipation produced vagrants, and he asked for a stringent vagrancy law which his landrosts could administer. England, refusing naturally to take away with one hand what she had given with the other, declined to expose the emancipated slave to the arbitrariness of local tribunals. Well, argued the farmers, our slaves, being free, have become rogues and vagabonds; they may plunder us at their pleasure and England will take their part: it is time for us to seek easier latitudes.

But the chief factor in Dutch dissatisfaction was undoubtedly Lord Glenelg's limitation of the eastern border line. There is something to be said for the view of that discredited, and, to tell the truth, not very wise statesman. The Boer was a bad neighbour for a Kaffir people. He was always encroaching, spurred on by that nomadic something in his blood – a true Campbell of Breadalbane, who built his house on the limits of his estate that he might "brise yont." A buffer state was apt to become very soon a Boer territory. Better to try and establish a strong Kaffir people, who might attain to some semblance of national life, and under the maternal eye of Britain become useful and progressive citizens. So reasoned Lord Glenelg and his advisers, missionary and official. Unfortunately facts were against him, the chimera of

a Kaffir nation was soon dispelled, and ten years later Sir Harry Smith, a governor who did not suffer from illusions, made the eastern province a Kaffir reserve under a British commissioner. The frontier Boer, however, was not in a position to share any sentiment about a Kaffir nation. He saw his cattle looted, his family compelled to leave their newly acquired farm, and a long prospect of Kaffir raids where the presumption of guilt would always be held to lie against his own worthy self. Above all things he saw a barred door. No more "brising yont" for him on the eastern border. Expansion, space, were as the breath of his nostrils, and if he could not have them in the old colony he would seek them in the untravelled northern wilds.

There were thus certain well-defined reasons for the Great Trek in contemporary politics which, combined with distorted memories like Slachter's Nek, made up in Boer eyes a very complete indictment against Pharaoh and his counsellors. But the real reason lay in his blood. Had the British Government been all that he could desire, he would still have gone. He was a wanderer from his birth, and trekking, even for great distances, was an incident of his common life. A pastoral people have few vested interests in land. There are no ancient homesteads to leave, or carefully-tended gardens or rich corn-lands. Their wealth is in their herds, which can be driven at will to other pastures. The Boer rarely built much of a farm, and he never fenced. A cottage, a small vegetable-yard, and a stable made up the homestead on even large farms on the border. There was nothing to leave when

he had gathered his horned cattle into a mob, yoked his best team to his waggon, and stowed his rude furniture inside. With his rifle slung on his shoulder, he was as free to take the road as any gipsy. He was leaving the country of the alien, where mad fancies held sway and unjust laws and taxes oppressed him. He was bound for the far lands of travellers' tales, the country of rich grass and endless game, where he could live as he pleased and preserve the fashions of his fathers unchanged. He would meet with fierce tribes, but his elephant-gun, as he knew from experience, was a match for many assegais. There was much heroism in the Great Trek, but there was also for the young and hale an exhilarating element of sport. To them it was a new, strange, and audacious adventure. No predikant accompanied the emigrants. The Kirk did not see the Scriptural parallel, and to a man preferred the treasure in Egypt to the doubtful fortunes of Israel.

The first party consisted of about thirty waggons, under the leadership of Louis Trichard and Jan van Rensburg. They travelled slowly, the men hunting along the route, and outspanned for days, and even weeks, at pleasant watering-places. The main object of those pioneers was to ascertain the road to Delagoa Bay; so they did not seek land for settlement, but pushed on till they came to Piet Potgieter's Rust, a hundred miles or so north of Pretoria, which they thought to be about the proper latitude. Here the party divided. Van Rensburg and his men went due east into the wild Lydenburg country on their way to the coast, and were never heard of again. Trichard waited a

little, and then slowly groped his way through the Drakensberg to Portuguese territory. The band suffered terribly from fever; their herds were annihilated by the tsetse fly, of which they now heard for the first time; but in the end about twenty-six survivors struggled down to the bay and took ship for Natal. So ended the adventure of the path-finders. The next expedition was led by the famous Andries Potgieter, and came from the Tarka and Colesberg districts. The little Paulus Kruger, a boy of ten, travelled with the waggons to the country which he was to rule for long. Potgieter settled first in the neighbourhood of Thaba 'Nchu on the Basuto border, and bought a large tract of land from a Bataung chief. Farms were marked out, and a few emigrants remained, but the majority pushed on to the north and east. Some crossed the Vaal, and finding a full clear stream coming down from the north, christened it the Mooi or Fair River; and here in after-days, faithful to their first impression, they planted the old capital of the Transvaal. Potgieter with a small band set off on the search for Delagoa Bay, but he seems to have lost himself in the mountains between Lydenburg and Zoutpansberg. On his return he found that Mosilikatse's warriors had at last given notice of their presence, and had massacred a number of small outlying settlements. So began one of the sternest struggles in South African history.

Potgieter gathered all the survivors into a great laager at a place called Vechtkop, between the Rhenoster and Wilge rivers. The precaution was taken none too soon, for one morning a few

days later a huge native army appeared, led by the chief induna of Mosilikatse. The odds, so far as can be gathered, were about a hundred to one, but the little band was undaunted, and Sarel Celliers, a true Cromwellian devotee of the Bible and the sword, called his men to prayer. Then forty farmers rode out from the laager, galloped within range, spread out and fired a volley, riding back swiftly to reload. They did good execution, but forty men, however bold, cannot disperse 5000, and in a little the Matabele were round the laager, and the siege began. The defence was so vigorous that after heavy losses the enemy withdrew, driving with them the little stock which formed the sole wealth of the emigrants.

The glove had been thrown down and there could be no retreat. Midian must be destroyed root and branch before Israel could possess the land. After a short rest Potgieter and Gerrit Maritz began the war of reprisals. With a commando of over 100 men and a few Griqua followers, they forded the Vaal, crossed the Magaliesberg, and arrived at Mosilikatse's chief kraal at Mosega. The farmers' victory was complete. Over 400 of the Matabele were slain, several thousand head of cattle secured, and the kraal given to the flames. Potgieter returned to found the little town of Winburg in memory of his victory, and, with the assistance of Pieter Retief, to frame a constitution for the nascent state. But Mosilikatse still remained. He had not been present at the *debâcle* of Mosega, and while he remained on the frontier there was no security for life and property. New recruits had

come up from the south, including the redoubtable family of Uys, the horses were in good condition, all had had a breathing-space; so a new and more formidable expedition started in search of the enemy. They found him on the Marico, and for nine days fought with him on the old plan of a charge, a volley, and a retreat. Then one morning there was no enemy to fight; a cloud of dust to the north showed the line of his flight; Mosilikatse had retired across the Limpopo. Whereupon the emigrants proclaimed the whole of the late Matabele territory – the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, and a portion of Bechuanaland – as theirs by the right of conquest.

So runs the tale of the Great Trek, – rather an Iliad than an Odyssey, perhaps, and a very bloodthirsty Iliad, too. To most men it must seem a noble and spirited story. Whatever the justice of the emigrants' grievances, they conducted themselves well in their self-imposed exile. Potgieter and his men were indeed rather exceptional specimens of their race, and they were strung to the highest pitch by Christian faith and the unchristian passion of revenge. They relapsed, when all was over, to a somewhat ordinary type of farmer, which seems to bear out the general conception of the Boer character – that, while it is capable of high deeds, it is powerful by sudden effort rather than by sustained and strenuous toil. The experiment which began so well should have ended in something better than two bourgeois republics. There are some who see in the tale nothing more than an unwarranted invasion of native territory, and a cruel massacre of a brave race.

No view could be more unjust. The Matabele had not a scrap of title to the country, and had not dwelt in it more than a few years. The real owners, if you can talk of ownership at all, were the unfortunate Bataungs and Barolongs, whom the emigrants befriended. The Matabele were indeed as murderous a race of savages as ever lived, and their defeat was a moral as well as a political necessity. It is well to protect the aborigine, but when he is armed with a dozen assegais and earnestly desires your blood, it is safer to shoot him or drive him farther afield. That the Boers were guilty of atrocities in those fierce wars is undoubted, and, if some tales be true, unpardonable. But there are excuses to be made. When a man has seen his child writhing on a spear and his wife mutilated; when he reflects that he stands alone against impossible odds, and has a keen sense, too, of Scriptural parallels, – he may be forgiven if he slays and spares not, and even gives way to curious cruelties. Revenge and despair may play odd pranks with the best men: *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*.

What, then, is the proper view to take of this footnote to the world's history, this Marathon of an unimaginative race? It is possible to see in it only an attempt of a half-savage people to find elbow-room for their misdeeds. The voortrekkers, it has been said, fled the approach of a mild and enlightened modern policy, invaded a land which was not theirs, slaughtered a people who had every right to resist them, and created for themselves space to practise their tyranny over the native, and perpetuate their exploded religious and political creed in

a retrograde society. It is easy to say this, as it is easy to explain the doings of the Pilgrim Fathers as a flight from a too liberal and tolerant land to wilds where intolerance could rule unchecked. With the best will in the world to scrutinise Dutch legends, the Great Trek seems to me just that legend which can well support any scrutiny. For it was first and foremost a conflict between civilisations. There were strong and worthy men among the voortrekkers, as there were estimable people among their opponents. The modern political creed, based on English constitutionalism, stray doctrines of the French Revolution, and certain economic maxims from Bentham and Adam Smith, is, in spite of minor differences, common to the civilised world. This was the creed which was forced upon the Border Dutch, and, having received no education in the axioms on which it was based, they unhesitatingly rejected it, and clung to their old Scriptural feudalism. When two creeds come into conflict, the older and weaker usually goes under. But in this case the men on the losing side were of a peculiar temper and dwelt in a peculiar country. They took the bold path of carrying themselves and their creed to a new land, and so extended its lease of life for the better part of a century. Let us take the parallel of the American Civil War. The North fought for the cause of the larger civic organism and certain social reforms which were accidentally linked to it. The South stood for the principle of nationality, and for certain traditions of their own particular nationality. Roughly speaking, it was the same conflict; but the Southern

creed perished because there was no practicable hinterland to which it could be transplanted. Had there been, I do not think its most stubborn opponents would have denied admiration to so bold an endeavour to preserve a national faith.

The Great Trek set its seal upon the new countries. The Orange River Colony and the Transvaal are still in the rural places an emigrant's land. The farmhouse is the unit; the country dorps are merely jumbles of little shanties to supply the farmers' wants. The place-names, with the endless recurrence of simple descriptive epithets like Sterkstroom or Klipfontein, or expressions of feeling like Nooitgedacht or Welgevonden, still tell the tale of the first discoverers. There is no obscurity in the nomenclature, such as is found in an old land where history has had time to be forgotten. Any farm-boy will tell you how this river came to be named the Ox-Yoke or that hill the Place of Weeping. It has made the people a solemn, ungenial folk, calculating and thrifty in their ways, and given to living in hovels which suggest that here they have no continuing city. Perhaps, as has been said, no performance, however stupendous, is worth loss of geniality; and the finer graces of life have never had a chance on the veld. There is gipsy blood in their veins, undying vagabondage behind all their sleepy contentment. The quiet of the old waggon journeys, when men counted the days on a notched stick that they might not miss the still deeper quiet of the Sabbaths, has gone into the soul of a race which still above all things desires space and leisure. It is this gipsy endowment which

made them born warriors after a fashion; it is this which gives them that apathy in the face of war losses which discomfits their sentimental partisans. Britain in her day has won many strange peoples to her Empire; but none, I think, more curious or more hopeful than the stubborn children of Uys and Potgieter.

CHAPTER IV.
THE BOER IN SPORT

It is a fair working rule of life that the behaviour of a man in his sports is a good index to his character in graver matters. With certain reservations the same holds true of a people. For on the lowest interpretation of the word "sport," the high qualities of courage, honour, and self-control are part of the essential equipment, and the mode in which such qualities appear is a reflex of the idiosyncrasies of national character. But this is true mainly of the old settled peoples, whose sports have long lost the grim reality in which they started. To a race which wages daily war with savage nature the refinements of conduct are unintelligible; sport becomes business; and unless there is a hereditary tradition in the matter the fine manners of the true hunter's craft are notable by their absence.

It is worth while considering the Boer in sport, for it is there he is seen at his worst. Without tradition of fair play, soured and harassed by want and disaster, his sport became a matter of commerce, and he held no device unworthy in the game. He hunted for the pot, and the pot cast its shadow over all his doings. His arms were rarely in the old days weapons of precision, and we can scarcely expect much etiquette in the pursuit of elephant or lion in a bush country with a smooth-bore gun which had a quaint trajectory and a propensity to burst. The barbarous ways

which he learned in those wild games he naturally carried into easier sports. Let us admit, too, that the Boer race has produced a few daring and indefatigable hunters, who, though rarely of the class of a Selous or a Hartley, were yet in every way worthy of the name of sportsmen. I have talked with old Boers from the hunting-veld, and in their tales of their lost youth there was a fervour which the commercial results of their expeditions did not explain. But the fact remains that to an Englishman the Boers, with a few exceptions, are not a sporting race – they are not even a race of very skilful hunters. They came to the land when game was abundant and they thinned it out; but the manner of this thinning was as prosaic as the routine of their daily lives.

One advantage the Boer possessed in common with all dwellers in new lands – he was familiar from childhood with gun and saddle, and had to face the world on his own legs from his early boyhood. In this way he acquired what one might call the psychological equipment of the hunter. Any one who has hunted in wild countries will remember the first sense of strangeness, the feeling that civilisation had got too far away for comfort, which is far more eerie than common nervousness. To this feeling the Boer was an utter stranger. It was as natural for him to set a trap for a lion before returning at nightfall, or to go off to the hunting-veld for four winter months, as it was to sow in spring and reap in autumn. And because it was an incident of his common life he imported into it a ridiculous degree of domesticity. On his farm he shot for the pot; on his winter treks with stock to the bush-veld

and the wilder hunting expeditions for skins and horns he carried his wife and family in his buck-waggon, built himself a hut in the wilds, and reproduced exactly the life of the farm. It was easy to reproduce anywhere, for it was simplicity itself. Mealie-meal, coffee, and some coarse tobacco were his supplies, and fresh meat when game fell to his gun. So it is not to be wondered at if hunting became to him something wholly destitute of romance and adventure, an affair like kirk and market, where business was the beginning and the end.

But besides the Boer who farmed first and hunted afterwards, there was the Boer who hunted by profession. The class is almost extinct, but in outlying farms one may still meet the old hunter and listen to his incredible tales. Some were men of the first calibre, the pioneers of a dozen districts, men of profound gravity and placid temper, who rarely told the tale of their deeds. But the common hunter is above all things a talker. Like the Kaffir, he brags incessantly, and a little flattery will lead him into wild depths. He lies to the stranger, because he cannot be contradicted; he lies to his friends, because they are connoisseurs in the art and can appreciate the work of a master. Boer hunting tales, therefore, should be received with extreme caution. They would often puzzle an expert lawyer, for they are full of minute and fallacious particulars, skilfully put together, and forming as a rule a narrative of single-hearted heroism. I have listened to a Boer version of a lion-hunt, and I have heard the facts from other members of the same party; and the contrast was a lesson in the

finer arts of embroidery. But this society had its compensations. Those men live on the outer fringe of Boerdom; they have no part in politics and few ties to the civilised society of Pretoria; and the result is that race hatred and memory of old strifes have always had a smaller place in their hearts. Without the virtues of their countryman, they are often free from his more unsocial failings.

It is as a big-game hunter that he has acquired his reputation, and by big game he meant the lion and the elephant, animals which he had to go farther afield and run greater risks to secure. The old race of elephant-hunters were a strong breed, men in whom courage from long experience had become a habit; and certainly they had need of it with their long-stocked cumbrous flint-locks, which might put out a man's shoulder in the recoil. They knew their business and took no needless risks, for elephant-hunting is a thing which can be learned. Save in thick bush, there is little real danger; and if the hunter awaits a charging elephant, a point-blank shot at a few yards will generally make the animal swerve. Mr Selous, whose authority is beyond question, has drawn these men as they appeared to him in Mashonaland – skilful shikarris, but jealous, uncompanionable, often treacherous as we count honour in sport; and Oswell's story is the same. The lion, which, in spite of tales to the contrary, remains one of the two most dangerous quarries in the world, was a different affair to them. There was little commercial profit from shooting him, and they had no other motive to face danger. Nor can we blame them, for a charging lion to a man with an

uncertain gun means almost as sure destruction as a shipwreck in mid-ocean. The Boer hunter shot him for protection, rarely for sport. Very few of the lions killed on the high veld fell to rifles; a trap-gun set near a drinking-place was the ordinary way of dealing with them. Mr Ericsen, the most famous of Kalahari pioneers, who brought many herds of Ovampa and Damara cattle across the desert, used to tell this story of Boer prowess in lion-hunting. He was travelling with a party of Boer hunters, and one night a lion killed one of the oxen. The men were in a fury, and urged Mr Ericsen to follow, bragging that each of them was prepared to tackle the beast single-handed. Mr Ericsen said that he was no hunter, but promised to let them have his dogs and natives to follow up the spoor in the morning. But when the morning came the party had silently dispersed, mortally afraid lest they should be expected to fulfil their promises. In the long list of South African big-game hunters the names are mostly English, – Gordon-Cumming, Byles, Hartley, Oswell, Sharpe, Selous, Francis, John Macdonald, – and the reason does not wholly lie in the inability and disinclination of the Boer to bring his deeds from the rhetoric of talk to the calmer record of print.

At other four-footed game, from the buffalo to the duiker, the Boer was generally a fair shot, in some cases a good shot, but very rarely a great shot. Reputation in marksmanship was very much a matter of accident. A happy fluke with them, as with natives, might make a reputation for life, though the man in question shot badly ever afterwards. The number of Boer marksmen of

the first rank could be counted on the ten fingers. On the other hand, the nature of their life produced a very high average. The Boer boy shot from the day he could hold a rifle, and there were few utter failures among them. To be sure, it was not pretty shooting. His first business was to get the game, and if he could do it by sitting on a tree near the stream and killing at twenty yards, he did it gladly. When he went hunting he reflected that his cartridges cost him 3d. apiece, and were all that stood between him and starvation; so very naturally he became as poky a shot as the English gamekeeper who is sent out to kill for the table. If a hunter took out 500 cartridges and brought back 120 head of game, he was reckoned a good man at his work. To this, of course, there were exceptions, such as old Jan Ludig, who once in Waterberg shot five gnu (who travel in Indian file) within seven miles. The name of Mr Van Rooyen, too, familiar to all Matabele hunters, shows what the Dutch race can produce in the way of marksmanship and veld-craft. In one branch of the chase they were consummate masters. The Boer method of stalking is an art by itself, for it is really a kind of driving, by showing oneself at strategic points till the game is forced into suitable ground. In open country they also followed with great success the method of riding down. Mounted on a good shooting pony, the hunter galloped alongside a herd till he was within reasonable distance; then in a trice he was on the ground, had selected his animal, and fired – all within a few seconds. This was a risky game for a large party, owing to the very rude etiquette which prevailed

on the subject of shooting in your neighbour's direction; and I have heard of many seriously wounded and even killed by their companions' shots. Still another way was to ride alongside an animal and shoot him from the saddle at a few paces' distance. This was called "brandt" or "burning," and required a firm seat and a very steady eye.

Birds were thought little of, except by some of the more advanced farmers and by sportsmen from the towns. The country is full of many excellent sporting birds: guineafowl, quail, francolin, duck, geese, and several kinds of partridge and bustard; but though a few farmers shot wildfowl on their dams, the average Boer was a poor shot with a gun, and when he did use one he liked to take his birds sitting. A hunter might kill a bird neatly with a rifle, which he would miss at shorter range with a shot-gun. This fashion is quickly passing. Many farmers possess excellent guns of the latest pattern; and I have known Boers who could hold their own with credit in Norfolk or Perthshire. As shooting is becoming more of a sport and less of a business, etiquette is growing up; and the Boer is learning to spare does and ewes and take pleasure in hard shots, where his father would have slaughtered casually and walked long and far to spare his cartridges. The new order is bringing better manners, but nothing can restore the noble herds of game which fell unlamented and unnoted under the old *régime*.

Other sports were scarcely considered. He rarely fished, leaving the catching of yellow-fish, tiger-fish, and barbel to the

Kaffirs; and when he did, his rod and tackle were neolithic in their simplicity. I have never seen a Boer rod which had any of the proper attributes of a rod, and he used to profess scorn for a man with a greenheart or a split-cane as for one who would stipulate for an elegant spade before digging potatoes. Sometimes in a village or among neighbouring farmers flat-races would be got up; but the Boer pony was bred more for endurance than for speed, and a small selling-plate meeting was about the limit of his horse-racing. I have never seen or heard of a Boer steeplechase. On the other hand, he had a wonderful skill, as our army discovered, in riding at full speed over a breakneck country, – a skill due, perhaps, more to veld-craft than to horsemanship. Hunting big game on horseback taught him, as part of the business, to leave much to his horse; and his horse rarely played him false. Whether he was clattering down a stony hillside, or dodging through thick scrub, or racing over veld honeycombed with ant-bear holes, he rode with a loose rein and full confidence in his animal. It is difficult to frame an opinion on his horsemanship. His long stirrups, the easy "tripple" of his horse, and his loose seat make him a type of horseman very different to our cavalryman or Leicestershire master of hounds. But, loose as he sits, he can stick on over most kinds of country, and he is a natural horsemaster of the first order. A Boer knows by instinct how to manage his horse: he never frets him; he rarely ill-treats him; and he can judge to a mile the limits of his endurance.

As a sportsman, then, the Boer is scarcely at his best. He has shown himself dull, sluggish, unimaginative, capable of both skill and endurance, but a niggard in the exercise of either, unless compelled by hunger or hope of gain. Unlike most races, it is in his sports that he shows his most unlovely traits, and that flat incomprehensible side of his character which has puzzled an ornamental world. The truth is that he is, speaking broadly, without imagination and that dash of adventure which belongs to all imaginative men. The noble spurs of the Drakensberg rose within sight of his home; but he would as soon have thought of climbing a peak for the sport or the scenery as of dabbling in water-colours. A dawn was to him only the beginning of the day, a mellow veld sunset merely a sign to outspan; and I should be afraid to guess his thoughts on a primrose by the river's brim, or whatever is the South African equivalent. His religion made him credulous, but his temperament transformed the most stupendous of the world's histories into a kind of Farmer's Almanac, and Eastern poetry became for him a literal record of fact. A friend of mine, travelling with a Boer hunter in the far north, called his attention to the beauty of the starry night, and, thinking to interest his companion, told him a few simple astronomical truths. The Boer angrily asked him why he lied so foolishly. "Do not I read in the Book," he said, "that the world stands on four pillars?" And when my friend inquired about the foundation of the pillars, the Boer sulked for two days. But there is one trait which he shared with all true sportsmen,

a love of wild animals. To be sure, the finest reserves of buck were made by new-comers, such as Mr van der Byl's park at Irene and Mr Forbes's at Athole, in Ermelo, both unhappily ruined by the war. But many veld farmers had their small reserves of springbok or blesbok, and permitted no hunting within them. Some did it as a speculation, being always ready to lease a day's shooting to a gun from Johannesburg, and many for the reason that they sought big farms and complete solitude – to pander to a sense of possession. But in all, perhaps, there was a strain of honest pleasure in wild life, a desire to encircle their homes with the surroundings of their early hunting days. In which case, it is another of the anomalies which warn us off hasty generalisations.

CHAPTER V.
THE BOER IN ALL SERIOUSNESS. [10]

The Boer character has suffered by its simplicity. It has, as a rule, been crudely summed up in half a dozen denunciatory sentences, or, in the case of more curious students, it has been analysed and defined with a subtlety for which there is no warrant. A hasty condemnation is not the method for a product so full of difficulty and interest, and a chain of laborious paradoxes scarcely enables us to comprehend a thing which is pre-eminently broad and simple. The Boer has rarely been understood by people who give their impressions to the world, but he has been very completely understood by plain men who have dwelt beside him and experienced his ways in the many relations of life. It is easy to dismiss him with a hostile epigram; easy, too, to build up an edifice of neat contradictions, after the fashion of what Senancour has called "le vulgaire des sages," and label it the Boer character. The first way commends itself to party feeling; the second appeals to a nation which has confessedly never understood its opponents, and is ready now to admit its ignorance and excuse itself by the amazing complexity of the subject. Sympathy, which is the only path to true understanding,

[10] The word "Boer" is used in this chapter to denote the average country farmer in the new colonies, and not the educated Dutch of the towns.

was made difficult by the mists of war, and, when all was over, by the exceeding dreariness of the conquered people. There was little romance in the slouching bearded men with flat faces and lustreless eyes who handed in their rifles and came under our flag; National Scouts, haggling over money terms, and the begging tour of the generals, seemed to have reduced honour to a matter of shillings and pence, and dispelled the glamour of many hard-fought battlefields. There is a perennial charm about an *ancien régime*; but this poor *ancien régime* had no purple and fine gold for the sentimental – only a hodden-grey burgess society, an unlovely Kirk, and a prosaic constitution.

And yet the proper understanding of this character is of the first political importance, and a task well worth undertaking for its own sake. Those men are for ever our neighbours and fellow-citizens, and it is the part of wisdom to understand the present that it may prepare against the future. To the amateur of racial character there is the chance of reading in the largest letters the lesson of historical development, for we know their antecedents, we can see clearly the simple events of their recent history, and we have before us a product, as it were, isolated and focussed for observation. Nor can sympathy be wanting in a fair observer, – sympathy for courage, tenacity of purpose, a simple fidelity to racial ideals. No man who has lived much with the people can regard them without a little aversion, a strong liking, and a large and generous respect.

In any racial inquiry there are certain determinant factors

which form the axioms of the problem. In the case of a long-settled people these are so intricate and numerous that it is impossible to disentangle more than a few of the more obvious, and we explain development, naturally and logically, rather by the conscious principles which the race assimilated than by the objective forces which acted upon it from the outer world. But in the case of a savage or a backward nation, the history is simple, the ingredients in racial character few and intelligible. The wars of the spirit and the growth of philosophies are potent influences, but their history is speculative and recondite. But the struggle for bare life falls always in simple forms, and physical forces leave their mark rudely upon the object they work on. In this case we have a national life less than a century long, a mode of society all but uniform, a creed short and unsophisticated, an intelligible descent, and a country which stamps itself readily upon its people. Origin, history, natural environment, accidental modes of civilisation, these are the main factors in that composite thing we call character. We can read them in the individual: we can read them writ large in a race which is little more than the individual writ large. In complex societies the composition is a chemical process, the result is a new product, not to be linked with any ingredient; the soul and mind of the populace is something different in kind from the average soul and mind of its units. But in this collection of hardy individualists there was no novel result, and the type is repeated with such scanty variations that we may borrow the attributes of the individual for

our definition of the race.

Descent, history, natural environment have laid the foundation of the Boer character. The old sluggish Batavian stock (not of the best quality, for the first settlers were as a rule of the poorest and least reputable class) was leavened with a finer French strain, and tinctured with a little native blood. Living a clannish life in solitude, the people intermarried closely, and suffered the fate of inbreeders in a loss of facial variety and a gradual coarsening of feature. Their history was a record of fierce warfare with savage nature, and the evolution of a peculiar set of traditions which soon came into opposition with imported European ideas. They evolved, partly from the needs of their society and partly from distorted echoes of revolutionary dogma, an embryo political creed, and in religion they established a variant of sixteenth-century Protestantism. Their life, and the vast spaces of earth and sky amid which they lived, strengthened the patriarchal individualism in their blood. The whole process of development, so remote from the common racial experience, produced in the Boer character a tissue of contradictions which resist all attempts at an easy summary. He was profoundly religious, with the language of piety always on his lips, and yet deeply sunk in matter. Without imagination, he had the habits of a recluse and in a coarse way the instincts of the poet. He was extremely narrow in a bargain, and extremely hospitable. With a keen sense of justice, he connived at corruption and applauded oppression. A severe moral critic, he was often lax, and sometimes unnatural,

in his sexual relations. He was brave in sport and battle, but his heroics had always a mercantile basis, and he would as soon die for an ideal, as it is commonly understood, as sell his farm for a sixpence. There were few virtues or vices which one could deny him utterly or with which one could credit him honestly. In short, the typical Boer to the typical observer became a sort of mixture of satyr, Puritan, and successful merchant, rather interesting, rather distasteful, and wholly incomprehensible.

And yet the phenomenon is perfectly normal. The Boer is a representative on a grand scale of a type which no nation is without. He is the ordinary backward countryman, more backward and more of a countryman than is usual in our modern world. At one time this was the current view – a "race of farmers," a "pastoral folk"; but the early months of the war brought about a reversal of judgment, and he was credited with the most intricate urban vices. Such a false opinion was the result of a too conventional view of the rural character. There is nothing Arcadian about the Boer, as there is certainly nothing Arcadian about the average peasant. A Corot background, a pastoral pipe, and a flavour of honeysuckle, must be expelled from the picture. To analyse what is grandiloquently called the "folk-heart," is to see in its rude virtues and vices an exact replica of the life of the veld. "Simple" and "pastoral," on a proper understanding of the terms, are the last words in definition.

Let us take an average household. Jan Celliers (pronounced Seljee) lives on his farm of 3000 morgen with his second wife

and a family of twelve. His father was a voortrekker, and the great Sarel was a far-out cousin. Two cousins of his mother and their families squat as bywoners on his land, and an orphan daughter of his sister lives in his household. The farmhouse is built of sun-dried bricks, whitewashed in front, and consists of a small kitchen, a large room which is parlour and dining-room in one, and three small chambers where the family sleep. Twelve families of natives live in a little kraal, cultivate their own mealie-patches, and supply the labour of the farm, while two half-caste Cape boys, Andries and Abraham, who attend to the horses, have a rude shanty behind the stable. Jan has a dam from which he irrigates ten acres of mealies, pumpkins, and potatoes. For the rest he has 500 Afrikander oxen, which make him a man of substance among his neighbours, including two spans of matched beasts, fawn and black, for which he has refused an offer of £30 apiece. He is not an active farmer, for he does not need to bestir himself. His land yields him with little labour enough to live on, and a biscuit-tin full of money, buried in the orchard below the fifth apricot-tree from the house, secures his mind against an evil day. But he likes to ride round his herds in the early morning, and to smoke his pipe in his mealie-patch of a late afternoon. He is not fond of neighbours, but it is pleasant to him once in a while to go to Pretoria and buy a cartload of fancy groceries and the very latest plough in the store. As a boy Jan was a great hunter, and has been with his father to the Limpopo and the Rooi Rand; but of late game has grown scarce,

and Jan is not the fellow to stir himself to find it. Now and then he shoots a springbok, and brags wonderfully about his shots, quite regardless of the presence of his sons who accompany him. These sons are heavy loutish boys, finer shots by far than Jan, for they have that infallible eyesight of the Boer youth. They, too, are idle, and are much abused by their mother, when she is wide awake enough to look after them. The daughters are plump and shapeless, with pallid complexions inside their sun-bonnets, and a hoydenish shyness towards neighbours. Not that they see many neighbours, though rumour has it that young Coos Pretorius, son of the rich Pretorius, comes now and then to "opsitten" with the eldest girl. Jan believes in an Old Testament God, whom he hears of at nachtmaals, for the kirk is too far off for the ordinary Sabbath-day's journey; but he believes much more in a spook which lives in the old rhinoceros-hole in the spruit, and in his own amazing merits. He is sleepily good-natured towards the world, save to a Jew storekeeper in the town who calls himself on the sign above his door the "Old Boer's Friend," and on one occasion cheated him out of £5. But Jan has also had his triumphs, notably when he induced a coal prospector to prospect in an impossible place and leave him, free of cost, an excellent well. When war broke out Jan and three of his sons, sorely against their will, went out on commando. Two of the boys went to Ceylon, one fell at Spionkop, and Jan himself remained in the field till the end, and came back as proud as a peacock to repatriation rations. His womenfolk were in the Middelburg Burgher camp, where

they acquired a taste for society which almost conquered their love for the farm. At any rate, it was with bitter complaints that they sat again under a makeshift roof, with no neighbours except the korhaan and a span of thin repatriation oxen. Jan did not enjoy war. At first he was desperately afraid, and only the strangeness of the country and the presence of others kept him from trekking for home. By-and-by he found amusement in the sport of the thing, and realised that with caution he might keep pretty well out of the way of harm. But in the guerilla warfare of the last year there was no sport, only stark unrelieved misery. Sometimes he thought of slipping over to the enemy and surrendering; often he wished he had been captured and sent to Ceylon with his boys; but something which he did not understand and had never suspected before began to rise in his soul, a wild obstinacy and a resolve to stand out to the last. Once in a night attack he was chased by two mounted infantrymen, and turned to bay in a narrow place, shooting one man and wounding the other badly. He did his best for the sufferer before making off to the rendezvous, an incident which has appeared in the picture papers (Jan is depicted about eight feet high, with a face like Moses, whereas he really is a broken-nosed little man), and which shows that he had both courage and kindness somewhere in his slow soul. But he gladly welcomed peace; he had never cared greatly for politics, and had an ancestral grudge against the Kruger family; and when he had assured himself that, instead of losing all, he would get most of his property back, and perhaps a

little for interest, he became quite loyal, and figured prominently on the local repatriation board. He takes the resident magistrate out shooting, and has just sold to the Government a fraction of his farm at an enormous profit.

Such is an ordinary type of our new citizens. If we look at him the typical countryman stands out clear from the mists of tortuous psychology. It is an error, doubtless, to assume that the primitive nature is always simple; it is often bewilderingly complex. An elaborate civilisation may produce a type which can be analysed under a dozen categories; while the savage or the backwoodsman may show a network of curiously interlaced motives. But the man is familiar. We know others of the family; we have met him in the common relations of life; he stands before us as a concrete human being.

His most obvious characteristic is his mental sluggishness. Dialectic rarely penetrates the chain-armour of his prejudices. He has nothing of the keen receptive mind which, like a sensitive plant, is open to all the influences of life. His views are the outcome of a long and sluggish growth, and cling like mandrakes to the roots of his being. He makes no deductions from ordinary events, and he never follows a thing to its logical conclusion. His blind faith requires a cataclysm to shake it, and to revise a belief is impossible for him save under the stress of pain. Death and burning towns may reveal to him a principle, but unless it is written large in letters of blood and fire it escapes his stagnant intelligence. Change is painful to all human creatures,

but such coercion of change is doubly painful, since he has no scheme of thought into which it can fit, and it means, therefore, the upturning of the foundations of his world. But the countryman, while he holds tenaciously his innermost beliefs, has a vast capacity for doing lip-service to principles which he does not understand. He sees that certain shibboleths command respect and bring material gain, so he glibly adopts them without allowing them for a moment to encroach upon the cherished arcana of his faith. Hence comes the apparent inconsistency of many simple folk. The Boer had a dozen principles which he would gladly sell to the highest bidder; but he had some hundreds of prejudices which he held dearer (almost) than life. His principles were European importations, democratic political dogmas, which he used to excellent purpose without caring or understanding, moral maxims which bore no relation to his own ragged and twisted ethics. The mild international morality which his leaders were wont to use as a reproach to Britain seems comically out of place when we reflect upon the high-handed international code, born of filibustering and Kaffir wars, which he found in the Scriptures and had long ago adopted for his own. His political confession of faith, which the framers of his constitution had borrowed from Europe and America, with its talk of representation and equal rights and delegated powers, contrasted oddly with the fierce individualism which was his innermost conviction, and the cabals and "spoils to the victor" policy which made up his daily practice. His religion

had a like character. In its essentials it was the same which a generation or two ago held sway over Galloway peasants and Hebridean fishermen; but the results were very different. The stern hard-bitten souls who saw the devil in most of the works of God, and lived ever under a great Taskmaster's eye, had no kinship with the easy-going sleek-lipped Boer piety. The Boer religion in practice was a judicious excerpt from the easier forms of Christianity, while its theory was used to buttress his self-sufficiency and mastery over weaker neighbours. His political creed may be stated shortly as a belief in his right to all new territories in which he set foot, his indefeasible right to control the native tribes in the way he thought best, a denial of all right of the State to interfere with him, but an assertion of the duty of the State to enrich him. To these cardinal articles liberty, equality, and fraternity were added as an elegant appendage before publication. So, too, in his religion: God made man of two colours, white and black, the former to rule the latter till the end of time; God led Israel out of Egypt and gave to them new lands for their inalienable heritage; any Egyptian who followed was the apportioned prey of the chosen people, and it was a duty to spoil him; this beneficent God must therefore be publicly recognised and frequently referred to in the speech of daily life, but in the case of the Elect considerable latitude may be allowed in the practice of the commandments, – such may fairly be taken as the ordinary unformulated Boer creed. But, as the statement was too short and bare, all the finer virtues had to be attached in public

profession.

A countryman lives in a narrow world which he knows intimately, but beyond is an unexplored region which he knows of by hearsay and fears. He is not naturally suspicious. Among his fellows he is often confiding to a fault, and a little acquaintance with a dreaded object will often result in a revulsion to contempt. The Boer has in a peculiar degree this characteristic of rural peoples. He has an immense awe of an alien Power while he does not know it, but once let it commit itself to some weakness, and the absence of all mental perspective changes the exaggerated awe into an equally exaggerated condescension. This truth is written clear over the whole history of England in Africa. A lost battle, a political withdrawal, a wavering statesman, have had moral effects of incalculable significance. The burgher who opposed us with terror and despair became at the first gleam of success a screeching cock-of-the-walk, and this attitude, jealously fostered, obscured the world to him for the rest of his days. In our threats he saw bluster, in our kindness he read weakness, in our diplomacy folly; and he went out at last with the fullest confidence, which three years of misery have scarcely uprooted. This is one side of the parochial mind; the other is the suspicion which became his attitude to everything beyond his beacons. It is not the proverbial "slimness"; that graceful quality is merely the rustic cunning which he thought the foundation of business, a quality as common on Australian stock-runs and Scottish sheep-farms. His suspicion was his own

peculiar possession, born of his history and his race, and, above all, of his intercourse with native tribes. He did not give his confidence readily, as who would if he believed that the world was in league against him? New ideas, new faces, new inventions were all put on his black list. Like Mr By-ends, he found his principles easy and profitable, and was resolved to stick to them. Two forces, however, tended to undermine his distrust. One was his intense practicality. If his principles ceased to be profitable, he was prepared, against the grain, to consider emendations. The second was his crude pleasure in novelties, the curious delight of a child in a mechanical toy. A musical box, a portrait of Mr Kruger which, when wound up, emitted the Volkslied, or the latest variety of mealie-crusher, were attractions which he had no power to resist.

At the root of all his traits lies a meagre imagination. In religion he turns the stupendous tales of Scripture into a parish chronicle, with God as a benevolent burgomaster and Moses and the prophets as glorified landrosts. In politics no Boer since President Burgers saw things with a large vision, and his rhetorical dreams were folly to his countrymen. The idea of a great Afrikander state, very vigorously held elsewhere in South Africa, had small hold on the ordinary population of the Republics, save upon sons of English fathers or mothers, half-educated journalists, and European officials. In the wars which he waged he saw little of the murky splendour which covers the horrors of death. The pageantry of the veld was nothing to

him, and in the amenities of life he scarcely advanced beyond bare physical comfort. He had neither art nor literature. If we except Mr Reitz's delightful verses, which at their happiest are translations of Burns and Scott, he had not even the songs which are commonly found among rural peoples. His nursery tales and his few superstitions were borrowed from the Kaffir. On one side only do we discern any trace of imaginative power. Somehow at the back of his soul was the love of the wilds and the open road – a call which, after years of settled life, had still power to stir the blood of the old hunter. He was not good at pictorial forecasts, but he had one retrospect stamped on his brain, and this hunger for old days was a spark of fire which kept warm a corner of his being.

The typical countryman he remains, typical in his limitations and the vices which followed them. The chief was his incurable mendacity. Truth-speaking is always a relative virtue, being to some men an easy habit, and to others of a livelier fancy a constant and strenuous effort. The Boer is not brutal, he is eminently law-abiding and sober, and kindly in most of the relations of life. He has the rustic looseness in sexual morals, and in the remoter farmhouses this looseness often took the form of much hideous and unnatural vice. But the cardinal fault, obvious to the most casual observer, is a contempt for truth in every guise. Masterful liars, who have held their own in most parts of the world, are vanquished by the systematic perjury of the veld. The habit is, no doubt, partly learned from the

Kaffir, a fine natural professor of the art; but to its practice the Boer brought a stolid patience, an impassive countenance, and a limited imagination which kept him consistent. He bragged greatly, since to a solitary man with a high self-esteem this is the natural mode of emphasising his personality on the rare occasions when he mixes with his fellows. He lied in business for sound practical reasons. He lied at home by the tacit consent of his household. The truest way to outwit him, as many found, was to tell him the naked truth, since his suspicion saw in every man his own duplicity. But because he is a true countryman, when once he has proved a man literally truthful he will trust him with a pathetic simplicity. There were Englishmen in the land before the war, as there are Englishmen to-day, whose word to the Boer mind was an inviolable oath.

So far I have described the average Boer failings with all the unsympathetic plainness which a hostile observer could desire. But there is a very different side to which it is pleasant to turn. If he has the countryman's faults strongly developed, he has also in a high degree the country virtues. Simplicity is not an unmixed blessing; but it is the mother of certain fine qualities, which are apt to be lost sight of by a sophisticated world. He could live bare and sleep hard when the need arose; and if he was sluggish in his daily life it was the indolence of the sleepy natural world and not the enervation of decadence. Because his needs were few he was supremely adaptable: a born pioneer, with his household gods in a waggon and his heart turning naturally to the wilds. The grandeur

of nature was lost on him; but there is a certain charm in the way in which he brought all things inside the pale of his domesticity. His homely images have their own picturesqueness, as when he called the morning star, which summoned him to inspan, the *voorlooper*, or "little boy who leads out the oxen." It is the converse of sublimity, and itself not unsublime. His rude dialect, almost as fine as lowland Scots for telling country stories, is full of metaphors, so to speak, in solution, often coarse, but always the fruit of direct and vigorous observation. In short, he had a personality which stands out simply in all his doings, making him a living clear-cut figure among the amorphous shades of the indoor life.

Wild tales and judicious management from Pretoria succeeded in combining him temporarily into a semblance of a state and a very formidable reality of an army; but at bottom he is the most dogmatic individualist in the world. His allegiance was never to a chief or a state, but to his family. The family was generously interpreted, so that distant relations came within its fold. This clannishness has not been sufficiently recognised; but it is a real social force, and of great importance to a survey of Boer society. In the country farms, with their system of bywoners, a whole cycle of relations lived, all depending upon the head of the household for their subsistence. When sons or daughters married they lived on in the homestead, and as their children grew up and married in turn they squatted on a corner of the farm. The system led to abuses, notably in the

ridiculous subdivision of land and the endless servitudes and burdens imposed on real estate; but it relieved the community of any need for orphanages and workhouses. The Boer's treatment of orphans does him much credit. However poor, a family would make room for orphaned children, and there was no distinction in their usage. It is a primitive virtue, a heritage from the days when white folk were few in numbers: a little family in the heart of savagery, bound together by a common origin and a common fear.

But his chief virtue was his old-fashioned hospitality. A stranger rarely knocked at his gates in vain. You arrived at a farmhouse and asked leave to outspan by the spruit. Permission was freely granted, and in a little girls came out with coffee for the travellers. An invitation to supper usually followed, and there is no better fare in the world than a chicken roasted by a Boer housewife and her home-made sausages. Then followed slow talk over deep-bowled pipes, and then good-night, with much handshaking and good wishes. And so all over the veld. The family might be wretchedly poor, but they dutifully and cheerfully gave what they had. In the early months of peace it was a common thing to come on a Boer family living in a hut of biscuit tins or a torn tent, with scanty rations and miserably ragged clothes. But those people, in most cases, set the little they had gladly before the stranger. The Boer, who will perjure himself deeply to save a shilling, will part with a pound's worth of entertainment without a thought.

And, as a host, he has a natural dignity beyond praise. A placid life, backed by an overwhelming sense of worth, is a fine basis for good manners. Boastfulness and prejudice may come later, but the first impression is of an antique kindliness and ease. The veld has no nerves, no uneasy consciousness of inferiority, least of all the cringing friendliness of the low European. The farmer, believing in nothing beyond his ken, makes the stranger welcome as a harmless courier from a trivial world. No contrast can be more vivid than between the nervous, bustling cosmopolitans who throng the Rand and the silent veld-dwellers. The Boer type of countenance is not often handsome; frequently it is flat and expressionless, lustreless grey eyes with small pupils, and hair growing back from chin and lip. But it is almost always the embodiment of repose, and in the finer stock it sometimes reaches an archaic and patriarchal dignity. The same praise cannot be given to the *jeunesse dorée* of the Afrikander world, who acquired the smattering of an education and migrated to the towns. Ignorant, swaggering, mentally and bodily underbred, they form a distressing class of people who have somehow missed civilisation and hit upon the vulgarity of its decline. They claim glibly and falsely the virtues which their fathers possessed without advertisement. Much of the bad blood and spurious nationalism in the country comes from this crew, who, in partnership with the worst type of European adventurer, have done their best to discredit their nation. The true country Boer regards them much as the silent elder Mirabeau

and Zachary Macaulay must have regarded their voluble sons – with considerable distrust, a little disfavour, and not a little secret admiration for a trick which has no place in his world.

Understanding is the only basis of a policy towards this remarkable section of our fellow-citizens – understanding, and a decent abstinence from subtleties. We used to flatter our souls that we created our Empire in a fit of absent-mindedness, and in all our troubles convinced ourselves that we were destined to "muddle through." But there are limits to this policy of serene trust in Providence, and it is rather our duty to thank God we have taken so few falls, and brace our minds to forethought and prudence. The Boer is the easiest creature in the world to govern. He is naturally law-abiding, and he has an enormous respect for the accomplished fact. True union may take long, but the nominal amalgamation which is necessary for smooth government already exists. We must understand how slow he is to learn, how deep his pride is, how lively his suspicions. Spiritually he will be a slow pupil, but with proper care politically he may be a ready learner. He has a curiously acute sense of justice, which makes him grumble at compulsion, but obey, and end by applauding. He is also quick to realise what is competent and successful in administration. He will give everything a fair trial, waiting, watching, and forming his slow mind; and if a thing is a practical fiasco, he will laugh at it in the end. The practical is the last touchstone for him. He is not easily made drunk with the ideals of ordinary democracy; an efficient government, however

naked of adornments, will always command his respect, and the fool, though buttressed with every sublime aspiration, will find him adamant. To a government which can estimate the situation soberly and face it manfully he is a simple problem. But he will be a hard critic of weakness, and when once his laggard opinions are formed it will be a giant's task to shake them. The war has broken his old arrogance, and he now waits to make up his mind on the new *régime*. We shall get justice from him from the start – laborious justice and nothing more. If we fail, all the honesty of purpose on earth will not save us; for to the Boer good intentions may preserve a man's soul in another world, but they cannot excuse him in this one. There is much practical truth in Bunyan's parable when he makes Old Honest come "from the town of Stupidity," which town "lieth four degrees *beyond* the City of Destruction."

If the Boer is once won to our side we shall have secured one of the greatest colonising forces in the world. We can ask for no better dwellers upon a frontier. If the plateaux of our Central and East African possessions are to be permanently held by the white man, I believe it will be by this people who have never turned their back upon a country which seemed to promise good pasture-land. Other races send forth casual pioneers, who return and report and then go elsewhere; but the Boer takes his wife and family and all his belongings, and in a decade is part of the soil. In the midst of any savagery he will plant his rude domesticity, and the land is won. With all her colonising activity, Britain can

ill afford to lose from her flag a force so masterful, persistent, and sure.

PART II.
NOTES OF TRAVEL

CHAPTER VI.
EVENING ON THE HIGH VELD

We leave the broken highway, channelled by rains and rutted by ox-waggons, and plunge into the leafy coolness of a great wood. Great in circumference only, for the blue gums and pines and mimosa-bushes are scarcely six years old, though the feathery leafage and the frequency of planting make a thicket of the young trees. The rides are broad and grassy as an English holt, dipping into hollows, climbing steep ridges, and showing at intervals little side-alleys, ending in green hills, with the accompaniment everywhere of the spicy smell of gums and the deep rooty fragrance of pines. Sometimes all alien woodland ceases, and we ride through aisles of fine trees, which have nothing save height to distinguish them from Rannoch or Rothiemurchus. A deer looks shyly out, which might be a roebuck; the cooing of doves, the tap of a woodpecker, even the hawk above in the blue heavens, have nothing strange. Only an occasional widow-bird with its ridiculous flight, an ant-heap to stumble over, and a clump of scarlet veld-flowers are there

to mark the distinction. Here we have the sign visible of man's conquest over the soil, and of the real adaptability of the land. With care and money great tracts of the high-veld might change their character. An English country-house, with deer-park and coverts and fish-ponds, could be created here and in many kindred places, where the owner might forget his continent. And in time this will happen. As the rich man pushes farther out from the city for his home, he will remake the most complaisant of countries to suit his taste, and, save for climate and a certain ineradicable flora and fauna, patches of Surrey and Perthshire will appear on this kindly soil.

With the end of the wood we come out upon the veld. What is this mysterious thing, this veld, so full of memories for the English race, so omnipresent, so baffling? Like the words "prairie," "moor," and "down," it is easy to make a rough mental picture of. It will doubtless become in time, when South Africa gets herself a literature, a conventional counter in description. To-day every London shopboy knows what this wilderness of coarse green or brown grasses is like; he can picture the dry streams, the jagged kopjes, the glare of summer, and the bitter winter cold. It has entered into patriotic jingles, and has given a *mise-en-scène* to crude melodrama. And yet no natural feature was ever so hard to fully realise. One cannot think of a monotonous vastness, like the prairie, for it is everywhere broken up and varied. It is too great for an easy appreciation, as of an English landscape, too subtle and diverse for rhetorical

generalities – a thing essentially mysterious and individual. In consequence it has a charm which the common efforts of mother-earth after grandiloquence can never possess. There is something homely and kindly and soothing in it, something essentially humane and fitted to the needs of human life. Climb to the top of the nearest ridge, and after a broad green valley there will be another ridge just the same: cross the mountains fifty miles off, and the country will repeat itself as before. But this sameness in outline is combined with an infinite variety in detail, so that we readily take back our first complaint of monotony, and wonder at the intricate novelty of each vista.

Here the veld is simply the broad green side of a hill, with blue points of mountain peeping over the crest, and a ragged brown road scarred across it. The road is as hard as adamant, a stiff red clay baked by the sun into porphyry, with fissures yawning here and there, so deep that often it is hard to see the gravel at the bottom. A cheerful country to drive in on a dark night in a light English cart, but less deadly to the lumbering waggons of the farmer. We choose the grass to ride on, which grows in coarse clumps with bare soil between. Here, too, are traps for the loose rider. A conical ant-heap with odd perforations, an ant-bear hole three feet down, or, most insidious of all, a meerkat's hole hidden behind a tuft of herbage. A good pony can gallop and yet steer, provided the rider trusts it; but the best will make mistakes, and on occasion roll over like a rabbit. Most men begin with a dreary apprenticeship to spills; but it is curious how few are hurt, despite

the hardness of the ground. One soon learns the art of falling clear and falling softly.

The four o'clock December sun blazes down on us, raising hot odours from the grass. A grey African hare starts from its form, a meerkat slips away indignantly, a widow-bird, coy and ridiculous like a flirtatious widow, flops on ahead. The sleepy, long-horned Afrikander cattle raise listless eyes as we pass, and a few gaudy butterflies waver athwart us. Otherwise there is no sound or sight of life. Flowers of rich colours – chrysanthemums, gentians, geraniums – most of them variants of familiar European species, grow in clumps so lowly that one can only observe them by looking directly from above. It is this which makes the veld so colourless to a stranger. There are no gowans or buttercups or heather, to blazon it like a spring meadow or an August moorland. Five yards off, and nothing is visible but the green stalks of grass or a red boulder.

At the summit of the ridge there is a breeze and a far prospect. The road still runs on up hill and down dale, through the distant mountains, and on to the great pastoral uplands of Rustenburg and the far north-west. On either side the same waving grass, now grey and now green as the wind breathes over it. Below is a glen with a gleam of water, and some yards of tender lawn on either bank. Farmhouses line the sides, each with its dam, its few acres of untidy crop land, and its bower of trees. Beyond rise line upon line of green ridges, with a glimpse of woods and dwellings set far apart, till in the far distance the bold spurs

of the Magaliesberg stand out against the sky. A thin trail of smoke from some veld-fire hangs between us and the mountains, tempering the intense clearness of an African prospect. There is something extraordinarily delicate and remote about the vista; it might be a mirage, did not the map bear witness to its reality. It is not unlike a child's conception of the landscape of Bunyan, a road running straight through a mystical green country, with the hilltops of the Delectable Mountains to cheer the pilgrim. And indeed the land is instinct with romance. The names of the gorges which break the mountain line – Olifants' Poort, Crocodile Poort, Commando Nek – speak of war and adventure and the far tropics beyond these pastoral valleys. The little farms are all "Rests" and "Fountains," the true nomenclature of a far-wandering, home-loving people. The slender rivulet below us is one of the topmost branches of the great Limpopo, rising in a marsh in the wood behind, forcing its way through the hills and the bush-veld to the north, and travelling thence through jungles and fever-swamps to the Portuguese sea-coast. The road is one of the old highways of exploration; it is not fifty years since a white man first saw the place. And yet it is as pastoral as Yarrow or Exmoor; it has the green simplicity of sheep-walks and the homeliness of a long-settled rustic land. In the afternoon peace there is no hint of the foreign or the garish; it is as remote as Holland itself from the unwholesome splendours of the East and South.

No landscape is so masterful as the veld. Broken up into valleys, reclaimed in parts by man, showing fifty varieties of

scene, it yet preserves one essential character. For, homely as it is, it is likewise untamable. There are no fierce encroachments about it. A deserted garden does not return to the veld for many years, if ever. It is not, like the jungle, the natural enemy of man, waiting for a chance to enter and obliterate his handiwork, and repelled only by sleepless watching. Rather it is the quiet spectator of human efforts, ready to meet them half-way, and yet from its vastness always the dominant feature in any landscape. Its normal air is sad, grey, and Quakerish, never flamboyant under the brightest sun, and yet both strenuous and restful. The few red monstrosities man has built on its edge serve only to set off this essential dignity. For one thing, it is not created according to the scale of man. It will give him a home, but he will never alter its aspect. Let him plough and reap it for a thousand years, and he may beautify and fructify but never change it. The face of England has altered materially in two centuries, because England is on a human scale, – a parterre land, without intrinsic wildness. But cultivation on the veld will always be superimposed: it will remain, like Egypt, ageless and immutable – one of the primeval types of the created world.

But, though dominant, it is also adaptable. It can, for the moment, assume against its unchangeable background a chameleon-like variety. Sky and weather combine to make it imitative at times. Now, under a pale Italian sky, it is the Campagna – hot, airless, profoundly melancholy. Again, when the mist drives over it, and wet scarps of hill stand out among

clouds, it is Dartmoor or Liddesdale; or on a radiant evening, when the mountains are one bank of hazy purple, it has borrowed from Skye and the far West Highlands. On a clear steely morning it has the air of its namesake, the Norwegian fjelds, – in one way the closest of its parallels. But each phase passes, the tantalising memory goes, and we are back again upon the aboriginal veld, so individual that we wonder whence arose the illusion.

A modern is badly trained for appreciating certain kinds of scenery. Generations of poets and essayists have so stamped the "pathetic fallacy" upon his soul that wherever he goes, unless in the presence of a Niagara or a Mount Everest, he runs wild, looking for a human interest or a historical memory. This is well enough in the old settled lands, but on the veld it is curiously inept. The man who, in Emerson's phrase, seeks "to impress his English whim upon the immutable past," will find little reward for his gymnastics. Not that there is no history of a kind – of Bantu wars, and great tribal immigrations, of wandering gold-seekers and Portuguese adventurers, of the voortrekker and the heroic battles in the wilds. But the veld is so little subject to human life that had Thermopylæ been fought in yonder nek, or had Saint Francis wandered on this hillside, it would have mastered and obliterated the memories. It has its history; but it is the history of cosmic forces, of the cycle of seasons, of storms and suns and floods, the joys and sorrows of the natural world.

"Lo, for there among the flowers and grasses

Only the mightier movement sounds and passes;
Only winds and rivers,
Life and death."

Men dreamed of it and its wealth long ago in Portugal and Holland. They have quarrelled about it in London and Cape Town, fought for it, parcelled it out in maps, bought it and sold it. It has been subject for long to the lusts and hopes of man. It has been larded with epithets; town-bred folk have made theories about it; armies have rumbled across it; the flood of high politics has swept it. But the veld has no memory of it. Men go and come, kingdoms fall and rise, but it remains austere, secluded, impenetrable, "the still unravished bride of quietness."

As one lives with it the thought arises, May not some future civilisation grow up here in keeping with the grave country? The basis of every civilisation is wealth – wealth to provide the background of leisure, which in turn is the basis of culture in a commercial world. Our colonial settlements have hitherto been fortuitous. They have fought a hard fight for a livelihood, and in the process missed the finer formative influences of the land. When, then, civilisation came it was naturally a borrowed one – English with an accent. But here, as in the old Greek colonies, we begin *de novo*, and at a certain high plane of life. The Dutch, our forerunners, acquired the stamp of the soil, but they lived on the barest scale of existence, and were without the aptitude or the wealth to go farther. Our situation is different. We start rich, and

with a prospect of growing richer. On one side are the mining centres – cosmopolitan, money-making, living at a strained pitch; on the other this silent country. The time will come when the rich man will leave the towns, and, as most of them are educated and all are able men, he will create for himself a leisured country life. His sons in turn will grow up with something autochthonous in their nature. For those who are truly South Africans at heart, and do not hurry to Europe to spend their wealth, there is a future, we may believe, of another kind than they contemplate. All great institutions are rooted and grounded in the soil. There is an art, a literature, a school of thought implicit here for the understanding heart, – no tarnished European importation, but the natural, spontaneous fruit of the land.

As we descend into the glen the going underfoot grows softer, the flinty red clay changes to sand and soon to an irregular kind of turf. At last we are on the stream-bank, and the waving grasses have gone. Instead there is the true meadow growth, reeds and water-plants and a species of gorgeous scarlet buck-bean; little runnels from the farm-dams creep among the rushes, and soon our horses' feet are squelching through a veritable bog. Here are the sights and sounds of a Hampshire water-meadow. Swallows skim over the pools; dragon-flies and bees brush past; one almost expects to see a great trout raise a sleepy head from yonder shining reach. But there are no trout, alas! none, I fear, nearer than Natal; only a small greenish barbel who is a giant at four to the pound. The angler will get small satisfaction here, though

on the Mooi River, above Potchefstroom, I have heard stories of a golden-scaled monster who will rise to a sea-trout fly. As we jump the little mill-lades, a perfect host of frogs are leaping in the grass, and small bright-eyed lizards slip off the stones at our approach. But, though the glen is quick with life, there is no sound: a deep Sabbatical calm broods over all things. The cry of a Kaffir driver from the highroad we have left breaks with an almost startling violence on the quiet. The tall reeds hush the stream's flow, the birds seem songless, even the hum of insects is curiously dim. There is nothing for the ear, but much for the eye and more for the nostril. Our ride has been through a treasure-house of sweet scents. First the pines and gum-trees; then the drowsy sweetness of the sunburnt veld; and now the more delicate flavour of rich soil and water and the sun-distilled essences of a thousand herbs. What the old Greek wrote of Arabia the Blessed might fitly be written here, "From this country there is a smell wondrous sweet."

Lower down the glen narrows. The stream would be a torrent if there were more water; but the cascades are a mere trickle, and only the deep green rock-pools, the banks of shingle, and the worn foot of the cliff, show what this thread can grow to in the rains. A light wild brushwood begins, and creeps down to the very edge of the stream. Twenty years ago lions roamed in this scrub; now we see nothing but two poaching pariah dogs. We pass many little one-storeyed farms, each with a flower-garden run to seed, and some acres of tangled crops. All are deserted. War has been

here with its heavy hand, and a broken stoep, empty windows, and a tumbled-in roof are the marks of its passage. The owners may be anywhere – still on commando with Delarey, in Bermuda or Ceylon, in Europe, in camps of refuge, on parole in the towns. Great sunflowers, a foot in diameter, sprawl over the railings, dahlias and marigolds nod in the evening sunshine, and broken fruit-trees lean over the walks. Suddenly from the yard a huge aasvogel flaps out – the bird not of war but of unclean pillage. There is nothing royal in the creature, only obscene ferocity and a furtive greed. But its presence, as it rises high into the air, joined with the fallen rooftrees, effectively drives out Arcady from the scene. We feel we are in a shattered country. This quiet glen, which in peace might be a watered garden, becomes suddenly a desert. The veld is silent, but such secret nooks will blab their tale shamelessly to the passer-by.

The stream bends northward in a more open valley, and as we climb the ridge we catch sight of the country beyond and the same august lines of mountain. But now there is a new feature in the landscape. Bushes are dotted over the far slope, and on the brow cluster together into something like a coppice. It is a patch of bush-veld, as rare on our high-veld as are fragments of the old Ettrick forest in Tweeddale. Two hundred miles north is the real bush-veld, full of game and fevers, the barrier between the tropical Limpopo and these grassy uplands. Seen in the splendour of evening there is a curious savagery about that little patch, which is neither veld nor woodland, but something dwarfish and

uncanny. That is Africa, the Africa of travellers; but thus far we have ridden through a countryside so homely and familiar that we are not prepared for a foreign intrusion. Which leads us to our hope of a new civilisation. If it ever comes, what an outlook it will have into the wilds! In England we look to the sea, in France across a frontier, even in Russia there is a mountain barrier between East and West. But here civilisation will march sharply with barbarism, like a castle of the Pale, looking over a river to a land of mists and outlaws. A man would have but to walk northward, out of the cities and clubs and the whole world of books and talk, to reach the country of the oldest earth-dwellers, the untamable heart of the continent. It is much for a civilisation to have its background – the Egyptian against the Ethiopian, Greek against Thracian, Rome against Gaul. It is also much for a race to have an outlook, a far horizon to which its fancy can turn. Even so strong men are knit and art is preserved from domesticity.

We turn homeward over the long shoulders of hill, keeping to the track in the failing light. If the place is sober by day, it is transformed in the evening. For an hour the land sinks out of account, and the sky is the sole feature. No words can tell the tale of a veld sunset. Not the sun dipping behind the peaks of Jura, or flaming in the mouth of a Norwegian fiord, or sinking, a great ball of fire, in mid-Atlantic, has the amazing pageantry of these upland evenings. A flood of crimson descends on the world, rolling in tides from the flagrant west, and kindling bush

and scaur and hill-top, till the land glows and pulsates in a riot of colour. And then slowly the splendour ebbs, lingering only to the west in a shoreless, magical sea. A delicate pearl-grey overspreads the sky, and the onlooker thinks that the spectacle is ended. It has but begun; for there succeed flushes of ineffable colour, – purple, rose-pink, tints of no mortal name, – each melting imperceptibly into the other, and revealing again the twilight world which the earlier pageant had obscured. Every feature in the landscape stands out with a tender, amethystine clearness. The mountain-ridge is cut like a jewel against the sky; the track is a ribbon of pure beaten gold. And then the light fades, the air becomes a soft mulberry haze, the first star pricks out in the blue, and night is come.

Here is a virgin soil for art, if the art arises. In our modern history there is no true poetry of vastness and solitude. What there is is temperamental and introspective, not the simple interpretation of a natural fact. In the old world, indeed, there is no room for it: a tortured, crowded land may produce the aptitude, but it cannot give the experience. And the new lands have had no chance to realise their freshness: when their need for literature arose, they have taken it second-hand. The Australian poet sings of the bush in the rococo accents of Fleet Street, and when he is natural he can tell of simple human emotions, but not of the wilds. For the chance of the seeing eye has gone. He is not civilised but de-civilised, having borrowed the raiment of his elder brother. But, if South African conditions be as men

believe, here we have a different prospect. The man who takes this country as his own will take it at another level than the pioneer. The veld will be to him more than a hunting-ground, and the seasons may be viewed from another than a commercial standpoint. If the art arises, it will be an austere art – with none of the fatuities of the picturesque, bare of false romance and preciosities, but essentially large, simple, and true. It will be the chronicle of the veld, the song of the cycle of Nature, the epic of life and death, and "the unimaginable touch of time." Who can say that from this land some dew of freshness may not descend upon a jaded literature, and the world be the richer by a new Wordsworth, a more humane Thoreau, or a manlier Senancour?

Once more we are in the wood, now a ghostly place with dark aisles and the windless hush of evening in the branches. The flying ants are coming out of the ground for their short life of a night. The place is alive with wings, moths and strange insects, that go white and glimmering in the dusk. The clear darkness that precedes moonrise is over the earth, so that everything stands out clear in a kind of dark-green monochrome. Something of an antique dignity, like an evening of Claude Lorraine, is stealing into the landscape. Once more the veld is putting on an alien dress, till in this fairyland weather we forget our continent again. And yet who shall limit Africa to one aspect? Our whole ride has been a kaleidoscope of its many phases. Hot and sunburnt, dry grasses and little streams, the red rock and the fantastic sunset. And on the other side the quiet green valleys, the soothing vista of

blue hills, the cool woods, the water-meadows, and the twilight. It is a land of contrasts – glimpses of desert and barbarism, memories of war, relics of old turmoil, and yet essentially a homeland. As the phrase goes, it is a "white man's country"; by which I understand a country not only capable of sustaining life, but fit for the amenities of life and the nursery of a nation. Whether it will rise to a nation or sink to a territory rests only with its people. But it is well to recognise its possibilities, to be in love with the place, for only then may we have the hope which can front and triumph over the many obstacles.

The first darkness is passing, a faint golden light creeps up the sky, and suddenly over a crest comes the African moon, bathing the warm earth in its cold pure radiance. This moon, at any rate, is the peculiar possession of the land. At home it is a disc, a ball of light; but here it is a glowing world riding in the heavens, a veritable kingdom of fire. No virgin huntress could personify it, but rather some mighty warrior-god, driving his chariot among trampled stars. It lights us out of the wood, and on to the highroad, and then among the sunflowers and oleanders of the garden. The night air is cool and bracing, but soft as summer; and as we dismount our thoughts turn homeward, and we have a sudden regret. For in this month and at this hour in that other country we should be faring very differently. No dallying with zephyrs and sunsets; but the coming in, cold and weary, from the snowy hill, and telling over the peat-fire the unforgettable romance of winter sport.

December 1901.

CHAPTER VII.
IN THE TRACKS OF WAR

I

We left Klerksdorp in a dust-storm so thick and incessant that it was difficult to tell where the houses ended and the open country began. The little town, which may once have been a clean, smiling place, has been for months the *corpus vile* of military operations. A dozen columns have made it their destination; the transport and supplies of the whole Western Army have been congested there, with the result that the town lands have been rubbed bare of grass, the streets furrowed into dust-heaps, and the lightest breeze turned into a dust-tornado. Our Cape carts rattled over the bridge of the Schoon Spruit – "Caller Water," as we might translate it in Scots, but here a low and muddy current between high banks – and, climbing a steep hill past the old town of Klerksdorp, came out of the fog into clearer veld, over which a gale of wind was blowing strongly. The desert was strewn with empty tins, which caught the sun like quartz; stands of barbed wire were everywhere on the broad uneven highway; little dust devils spouted at intervals on to the horizon. The place was like nothing so much as a large deserted

brick-field in some Midland suburb.

There is one feature of the high veld which has not had the attention it deserves – I mean the wind. Ask a man who has done three years' trekking what he mostly complains of, and he will be silent about food and drink, the sun by day and the frost by night, but he is certain to break into picturesque language about the wind. The wind of winter blows not so unkindly as persistently. Day and night the cheek is flaming from its buffets. There is no shelter from scrub or kopje, for it is a most cunning wind, and will find a cranny to whistle through. Little wrinkles appear round blinking eyes, the voice gets a high pitch of protest, and a man begins to walk sideways like a crab to present the smallest surface to his enemy. And with the wind go all manner of tin-cans, trundling from one skyline to another with a most purposeful determination. Somewhere – S.S.W. I should put the direction – there must be a Land of Tin-cans, where in some sheltered valley all the *débris* of the veld has come to anchor.

About ten o'clock the wind abated a little, and the road passed into a country of low hills with a scrub of mimosa thorn along the flats. The bustard, which the Boers have so aptly named "korhaan" or scolding cock, strutted by the roadside, a few hawks circled about us, and an incurious secretary-bird flapped across our path. The first water appeared, – a melancholy stream called Rhenoster Spruit, – and the country grew hillier and greener till we outspanned for lunch at a farmhouse of some pretensions, with a large dam, a spruit, and a good patch of

irrigated land. The owner had returned, and was dwelling in a tent against the restoration of his homestead. A considerable herd of cattle grazed promiscuously on the meadow, and the farmer with philosophic calm was smoking his pipe in the shade. Apparently he was a man of substance, and above manual toil; for though he had been back for some time there was no sign of getting to work on repairs, such as we saw in smaller holdings. Fairly considered, this repatriation is a hard nut for the proud, indolent Boer, for it means the reversal of a life's order. His bywoners are scattered, his native boys refuse to return to him; there is nothing for the poor man to do but to take pick and hammer himself. Sooner or later he will do it, for in the last resort he is practical, but in the meantime he smokes and ponders on the mysteries of Providence and the odd chances of life.

In the afternoon our road lay through a pleasant undulating land, with green patches along the streams and tracts of bush relieving the monotony of the grey winter veld. Every farmhouse we passed was in the same condition, – roofless, windowless, dams broken, water-furrows choked, and orchards devastated. Our way of making war may be effective as war, but it inflicts terrible wounds upon the land. After a campaign of a dozen bloody fights reconstruction is simple; the groundwork remains for a new edifice. But, though the mortality be relatively small, our late methods have come very near to destroying the foundations of rural life. We have to build again from the beginning; we have to face questions of simple existence which

seem strange to us, who in our complex society rarely catch sight of the bones of the social structure. To be sure there is hope. There is a wonderful recuperative power in the soil; the Boer is simpler in habits than most countrymen; and it is not a generation since he was starting at the same rudiments. Further, our own settlers will have the same beginnings, and there is a chance of rural communities, Boer and British, being more thoroughly welded together, because they can advance *pari passu*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.