THE TRANSVAAL AND ITS GOLD-FIELDS.

IMPRESSIONS OF A RECENT VISIT.

FEW thoughtful persons will deny that the "South African question" is so knotty in its nature, and demands so much experience for its solution, that a new-comer attempting to give a comprehensive verdict on the subject would be acting with pernicious folly. Yet the following statement of facts which came under my actual observation, and of opinions which I carefully noted down at the time they were expressed, may not be without interest. It is suggested, indeed, that first, fresh impressions are sometimes more accurate than the old stagers' angry dicta, sodden by prejudice and obscured by self-interest.

On first landing at Durban in Natal, one is charmed with its contrast to Cape Town. The well-paved footpaths and well-kept streets, the numerous handsome public and private buildings, the beautiful gardens, the brisk business, and the bright cleanliness, are all in vivid contra-distinction to the many tumble-down tenements, the ill-kept thoroughfares, and the reeking drains of Cape Town. The Durbanites have set to work, busily as bees, to dredge the bar and enlarge their harbour accommodation, and, after a vast expenditure of toil and money, have succeeded to a remarkable extent. They have also established and armed, at their own expense, for the defence of the port, a battery which is not only respectable but formidable. Their volunteers are organised on an efficient footing, and take trouble to learn their duties. In fact, all in Durban is activity, enterprise, and "go-ahead," whereas Cape Town is satisfied with a dignified but inefficient indifference. It is therefore not unnatural that there should exist between the two a jealousy, almost a latent hostility, nearly as pronounced as though they formed parts of different empires, and a new-comer cannot ingratiate himself more effectually with the Natalians than by disparaging remarks on their Cape rivals. They glow with gratified pride, and probably ask him to dinner on the spot.

It must be remembered that though an average map includes the distance between Cape Town and Durban within, say, a couple of inches, in country and climate, in races and prejudices—in all, in fine, which tends to individualise a community—the two are, figuratively speaking, miles asunder.

After all, however, Durban, like most thriving colonial ports, is a cosmopolitan town, and in many respects scarcely typical of Natal. Let us make our way into the interior of the country. I question if another so strange a railway-route exists on the face of the earth. The constructors were resolute to avoid tunnelling, and the line consequently wriggles about in a manner compared to which a spider's web or the Hampton Court Maze is simplicity itself. The cart-road to our destination is only forty miles—the railroad is seventy. North, south, east, and west, round curves of 300 so sharp that the engine seems staring at you full in the face, in the

fashion of a refractory tandem leader; up and down inclines of 1 in 30, as steep as a "switch-back," so that the needle of my Pillischer's aneroid, the accuracy of which has stood the test of many climates and countries, almost quivers in our course; ascending from the region of tropical vegetation into endless rolling mountains, rich in turf but poverty-stricken in wood and water, until we reach Pietermaritzburg, the seat of Government, the head-quarters of the British troops, and a delightful specimen of a Natal town. Apart from the beauty of its situation, it possesses the attraction of cheerful prosperity, notwithstanding that the prolongation of the railway is dragging much of its riches northwards. The streets are busy with happy-looking natives and energetic Englishmen.

Here there is none of that evil talk, so common in our Eastern possessions, of the "damned nigger." There is not a sign of cuffing or bullying; the natives are on the whole treated with the same justice and impartiality as the Europeans—a righteous principle which excites certain unrighteous Dutch Boers to fury. There are few more pleasing sights than the crowd of Englishmen and Kafirs assembled in the public park, and listening with a common pleasure to the military band. The natives, unlike most savages, seem perfectly entranced with civilised music, and their expression when "God save the Queen" is played is that of admiring awe.

These Kafirs are really stalwart, well-looking, fine fellows. They would even look dignified but for their extraordinary costume, which to a new-comer excites unbounded amusement. They represent a museum of almost every uniform in the British army — gunners, sappers, riflemen, linesmen, and dragoons; but three or four of them are required to illustrate a complete turn-out. Here is a big black fellow whose entire costume consists of a lancer's tunic, buttoned tightly across his otherwise naked body, and leaving visible a pair of splendid legs of a shining mahogany colour, which in a dining-room table would be quite beautiful. Another is coatless, but wears a pair of trews; another has on an artilleryman's trailing greatcoat; and another has on nothing particular at all. These tunics (brightened and cleaned up) are sold in numerous slop-shops, at the current price of 3s. 6d. each, and very proud the wearers seem of their finery. Their wives—for their plurality is on the Mormon principle—would be, on the contrary, displeasingly ugly, with their repulsive busts, their coarse oiled horse-hair locks, and their skewered ears and noses, were it not that this is almost redeemed by their dignity and by the grace of their walk. Driven in single file in front of their lords, they bear heavy pitchers on their heads with an upright classical gracefulness resembling figures which depict Rebecca at the well.

An Englishman must regard this offshoot town — Pietermaritzburg —with a feeling akin to pride, it is so energetic and so prosperous, so well-ordered and so law-abiding; and the hearty friendliness with which he is treated implies the maintenance of the warmest affection for the "old country." Is there, then, naught but goodwill towards her? Yes, indeed, there is one drop of ill-feeling, and a very bitter and serious drop it is. Touch on the contingency of hostilities breaking out, either from native insurrection or Boer treach-

ery — in an instant the friendly features become clouded with wrath and resentment, and the never-failing, never-varying phrase bursts forth, "No more Downing Street for us!" Then the staunch colonists relate, in accents which wax warmer as they proceed, how in bygone days they foresaw the impending troubles, and suffered through anxiety for the fate which might overtake their families and homes; how they fought and bled, not only in their own defence, but for the sake of England and her interests; how, as they consider, they were requited by England with ingratitude, and thrown over with contempt.

No man deceived by his most trusted friend, no woman betrayed by her adored lover, could speak with more bitterness than that manifested by the brave ex-soldiers of Natal, as they reiterate in indignant denunciation, "No more Downing Street and no more Gladstone for us. Next time we will manage our own affairs ourselves!" It is possible to mitigate their anger a little, a very little, by an allusion to Sir Bartle Frere. "Yes," they reply, in calmer tones, but in enthusiastic liking, "being human, he was not always free from error; but he was an able, honourable, right-hearted British statesman, and he, too, was browbeaten and betrayed by his accursed Government." Remember, reader, I am simply recapitulating the opinions of others, not expressing my own.

Pietermaritzburg is the headquarters of many mining and industrial enterprises; but if we wish to obtain a superficial idea of the wealth and resources of Natal, we must proceed still more northwards and still more inland. A further railway journey of about 100 miles, as the crow flies, and we reach Elands Laagte, the point up to which the line had been constructed at the time of which we are writing—on paper, a town; in point of fact, a few sheds. Thence a mail-waggon with six horses conveys us for a distance of fifty-eight miles, at times at a hard gallop, to the frontier town of Newcastle, through a country the outward aspect of which is a little bare and not a little desolate. But what riches, as yet only half suspected by the outside world, do these rolling turf-mountains contain! Practically, they are at present nearly all grazing land, whereon an occasional tin shanty marks the habitat of a recluse-farmer. Even as pasturage the country is Crœsus-like in its richness. But here and there are patches where the ground has been turned up. Scratch the surface, cast thereon some seed as promiscuously as though you were feeding the chickens, and a harvest of abundance is the result. Stick in a few twigs, and a luxuriant plantation flourishes. And the mineral wealth? I put aside the question of gold—it is as yet too problematical. I content myself with the iron and the coal. At frequent intervals, and in various directions, I descry untidy-looking mounds of earth, with the occasional addendum of an elementary shaft. "Coal," is the reply to my inquiry. "How deep?" "On the surface." "Come, my friend, coal is not to be dug up like potatoes." "Well, if you *are* so particular, at a depth of five or six feet. It is not good then, though it answers all ordinary household purposes; but some shafts have been sunk as low as forty feet, and there the quality is excellent, even for steam appliances."

Now, at various periods since 1860, a dismal dirge has been

sounded to the effect that our English coal resources are within "a measurable distance" of exhaustion, and that with the extinction of this mainstay of our industries, our wealth, and therefore our world-wide power, will lapse into atrophy. The prophecy has been supported by the elaborate statistics of geologists and political economists, but it only illustrates that truism, habitually learnt so late in life, "The evils we suffer from most are those which never occur." We have only passed over fifty-eight miles of recognised and rich coal-measures, a mere fraction of that which may be developed throughout the whole of the colony. Yet even this region contains a wealth of coal sufficient to upset the above calamitous anticipations, and, apart from considerations of generosity and justice, sufficient to prompt the consideration to the money-grubber, "Shall we not do wisely to conciliate the Natalians as our fellow-countrymen, and thus to preserve Natal for the indefinite future as a British colony?"

At a short distance from Newcastle we passed the former dwelling of the well-known novelist, Rider Haggard,—a wretched little hut surrounded by a few trees, and with a small ugly brick-field in the midst of the bare, desolate veldt. A putrid dust-heap would, as far as beauties of locality are concerned, be more calculated to inspire an author with the spirit of brilliant poetic descriptions; but Mr Haggard's bright depicting powers are above such influences, and I may mention that after having travelled over the whole of the country described in his novel 'Jess,' I was much struck with the minute accuracy of his vivid representations.

Next day we pass through those districts rendered so sadly memorable to Englishmen by the engagements at Imgogo, Majuba Hill, and Lang's Nek. There are certain specific reasons why I carefully abstain from introducing into this article professional military criticism, but it would be mere affectation were I to be entirely silent concerning the heated popular talk and the non-professional facts of the subject.

The whole country reminds me of Aldershot on a large scale. Imgogo is like Cove Common, Lang's Nek is very similar to Fox Hills, and Majuba bears some resemblance to Cæsar's Camp magnified. The ground is the open veldt, and the slopes approximate to those of the Surrey hills. For nearly thirty years we had been teaching our soldiers to fight over this nature of locality; yet when we applied our lessons to actual warfare, we were defeated in such a manner, and with such a loss, as to produce on an Englishman inspecting the sites a feeling of actual distress. Here, on the Imgogo rise, is a simple stone monumental cross executed in admirable taste, and maintained in admirable order; it marks the resting-place of about seventy valiant English soldiers. Farther on is the enclosure and trees indicating Sir George Colley's grave. His name elicits from some bystanders bitter censure; but it is hushed when I remind them that he was a gallant soldier, who died when trying to do his duty.

Here is Lang's Nek, with its skilfully traced shelter trenches, two feet six inches deep, still unfilled. Our men had actually gained the position by their courage; they lost it by their folly. And, last of all, there is the precipitous face of Majuba Hill, down which our exhausted soldiers stag-

gered, and were pitilessly shot down like rabbits. Where are the Boer graves amongst our own Aceldama? There are none. Careful investigation then and subsequently convinced me that the Dutch loss did not at the utmost exceed three or four men.

"I presume it cannot be disputed that the Boers were skilful soldiers and brave men?" was my oft-repeated inquiry of those who had either participated in the war or were fully cognisant of its features. The question was invariably evaded with an ambiguous smile, and the reply may be summarised thus: "They shot wonderfully well, and concealed themselves still better. The British shot marvellously ill, and concealed themselves still worse." Then arose a criticism on our faulty tactics, which would be out of place in this paper.

But all my informants were singularly unanimous in their enthusiasm in one respect. They had never seen Sir Frederick Roberts,—they had only known of him by second-hand hearsay,—but one and all with common assent expressed the same vehement wish, "If ever we have another English General to lead us on active service, let that General be Sir Frederick Roberts."

I know not if I shall be contributing aught to general information in repeating the following statement by a Dutchman who had himself taken part in the engagement in question, but I do know that it clearly illustrates what I have already represented on the subject. "The British," he said, "fought bravely and steadily, and were gallantly led by their officers. At Majuba the fight lasted from early in the morning until about 5 P.M., and until a late hour they never wavered. Shortly after daybreak the Boer scouts came into our camp in rear of Lang's Nek, and reported that they had been fired on from Majuba, whereupon Joubert, considering this a flank attack, decided on retreat; but 'General' Smidt, second in command, declared that the English must at all hazards be dislodged from their vantage height. The arguments waxed warm, until Smidt shouted out for volunteers, accepted two hundred mounted men from among those who responded, and the whole party galloped helter-skelter, without the smallest semblance of military order, to the base of Majuba, the very steepness of which sheltered them from the fire of the defenders on the summit. Here they dismounted, cast loose their horses, which at once made their way back to camp, and began to crawl and 'dodge' up the acclivity. They could do so with practical safety. The English had opened fire at 1500 yards, but neither at this nor at short ranges did they effect the slightest loss. Not a single Dutchman was killed. They entirely disregarded all advantages of cover, and fired," said my informant, "as wildly as boys trying to scare away birds by making a noise. The Boers, on the other hand (carefully concealed behind boulders, and leisurely watching their opportunities), aimed at every head as though they were stalking stag, and were themselves amazed at the deadly execution they inflicted. Each man advanced independently by short rushes until near the top, but still the defenders stood firm. Meanwhile, however, a flanking detachment of twenty-five men had crept round by the right of the attack, topped the crest, and poured down into the crater-shaped apex of the hill, and began an enfilade fire against the

defenders. Then at last the British soldiers gave way, and as they were rolled down the reverse precipice, were slaughtered by the unscathed and victorious Boers at their ease."

It must be borne in mind that all the above engagements were fought in Natal, and that thus the Boers retain the prestige of having invaded the British territory. We now descend the slopes of the Drakensberg mountains, and cross the Transvaal frontier. The country becomes gradually flat and uninteresting, and the thinly scattered population shares these characteristics; indeed it contains a not inconsiderable admixture of scoundrel refugees from the adjacent States. One of my travelling companions proved to be of this nature. Starting with a fair show, he announced that he was a native of Aberdeen, had formerly served as a private in the English army, had then spent twelve years in Bolivia, then had lived a while in Natal, and was now on his way to seek his fortune in Johannesburg. In reply to some tentative questions I put to him, with a view to ascertaining the genuineness of his assertions, he beamed with delighted surprise, dropped his odious American twang and his blackguard *argot*, and burst forth into his broad mother-Scotch: "Do I ken Ballater and the Muick, and Monaltrie and the Gairnside? Am I acquent with the Gilly —— and with ——? Ah, but she was a bad one! Hech, sirs! wha would have thocht that we twa should have chanced upon each other in this desolate place, so far from our ain Scotland and from auld lang syne?" Then of course an entreaty to drink with him; but as I declined, he produced a bottle of raw spirits, and solaced his sentiment with immoderate "pulls." Very rapidly the proverb, *in vino veritas*, was illustrated; he once more lapsed into cosmopolitan *patois*, and volunteered a great deal of information about the ill deeds of his misspent life, winding up with—"First I was in the 11th Hussars, then in the 92d, and then in"—some other regiment. "I took French leave from them all, but you cannot touch me now, for we are in the Transvaal." At last he became so offensive and menacing that the driver persuaded him to alight for a moment, and then suddenly drove off, leaving the disreputable vagabond standing by a tin shanty in the desolate veldt, swearing with all the fury of drunken impotence.

Law in the Transvaal is little better than a farce,—it neither protects the weak nor punishes the strong. An Englishwoman at one of our resting-places bitterly lamented to me that she could obtain no redress from the fraud and oppression of her Boer neighbours. I was informed, after careful inquiry from reliable sources, that if a white man be maimed or murdered by a black, the Landroost and his subordinates instantly hunt up the district until some one suffers for the crime. "And if the colour of injured and injurer be reversed, is there the same activity in furtherance of justice?" I asked. The tacit reply of a grim smile implied volumes.

At a later period of my travels the following incidental straw was very characteristic of the current of habitual opinion entertained by the Boers towards the natives. When changing teams at a veldt shanty, two Kafirs suddenly came forward and asked for places in our mail-waggon to a destination about 150 miles ahead, in payment for which they tendered the re-

quired sixteen sovereigns. They were rather naked, exceedingly dirty, and redolent of "bouquet de Kafir"; and I cordially endorsed the remonstrances of the other European passengers against being jammed up for days in a stuffy canvas-covered vehicle with these two natives, who, flush with money from the mines, chose to discard their ordinary means of transport, an ox-waggon. But the sixteen sovereigns were too much for our driver; the Kafirs were thrust in, the team started off at its usual wild gallop, and we could only solace ourselves with invective. By degrees, however, the circumstance assumed a fresh complexion. It was palpable that one of these natives was miserably and gravely ill, possibly from small-pox, perhaps from some brain malady, probably from fever, and that the sufferer's object was to reach his kraal—perchance to die. He lay crouched up in torment in a corner, motionless, save occasionally to assuage his thirst out of a tin pannikin of water, and with every evidence of pain. He stirred not at our eating halts; he passed the night in the bitter open veldt; he was becoming manifestly worse, and at last I was wont, becoming sorely smitten in my conscience, to bring him out from time to time a cup of tea and a crumb of white bread. "Dank, Baas" (thank you, master), he faintly murmured, in surprise that any European should stop short of being a brute in indifference to the suffering of a black human being. But my Boer fellow-travellers manifested not merely surprise but sour disapproval—almost anger; and after the conclusion of our journey I learned that one of them, a member of the Free States Legislature, had indignantly held forth to the following effect: "Did you see that Englishman actually bringing out tea and bread to the Kafir? That is the way Englishmen behave! That is the way they ruin the natives!" And then—with an amiable wish to extenuate my frailty—he added: "However, apparently the Englishman has himself been recently suffering from a bad illness, so perhaps that is the reason why he thus acted."

The free-and-easy administration of Boer penal rule was well illustrated by an experience which befell Mr Tennant, ex-M.P. for Leeds. At Lydenburg, I think, the Landroost was expatiating on the ease and efficiency with which he managed his convicts: "I send out a gang of about twenty men in the morning," he said, "road-making, under the sole care of a single white warder armed with a loaded carbine, and at 6 P.M. they docilely return with the utmost regularity and punctuality. If you like to join me this evening, you may see them marching in." Mr Tennant kept tryst at the appointed hour, but no convicts appeared, and the Landroost began to look both foolish and uncomfortable. At last, after a delay of half an hour, a procession was descried leisurely returning towards the prison in the following order of march: The warder, dead drunk, wheeled in a barrow by a convict, a black prisoner carrying his loaded carbine; the rest of the gang in file, unconcernedly making their way to the jail. Rumour states, indeed, that at Bloemfontein, where great latitude is given to the outgoing and incoming of the prisoners, a notice is posted up on the gates warning the convicts that any one not returning by 6.30 P.M. will be shut out for the night.

I should probably be allowing

the reader to entertain an entirely erroneous idea of the conditions of Transvaal life, and of the difficulty of travel, were I to be silent concerning the routine of each day's journey. I must premise by remarking that even a sturdy campaigner would pronounce it characterised by fatigue, tedium, and I may almost say hardship. At any hour in the morning, as early as 2 A.M. and as late as 6 A.M., I am roused by the braying of the driver's bugle warning us that the post-waggon will very soon start. A wise man will have lain down with his clothes on,—clean boots, washing, and shaving, so essential to the preservation of an Englishman's self-respect, must perforce be practically ignored whilst he is on the tramp in this country; huddle my traps into a small bag, the weight of which regulation limits to 20 lb.; pay for dinner and bed, which are habitually covered by the modest sum of 5s.; swallow a cup of vile coffee, which is so muddy that it serves for food as well as for drink; and hurry into the dark air, where dusky natives are flitting about with dimly flickering lantern lights, where the wild coltish team is plunging, and where the driver is vituperating us in his "kitchen"-Kafir Dutch for our delay. The eight or nine passengers, of all sorts and conditions of life, muffled up to the eyes, and looking exceedingly dirty and disreputable, silently jam themselves into the narrow oblong mail-waggon, as closely dovetailed as troop-horses in a railway van, and more viciously disposed than troop-horses to lash out at an encroaching neighbour. The driver shouts out his shibboleth for a start; the eight horses, which had twisted themselves into the mixed up attitude of a herd of wild cattle, are cast free; they bound wildly forward, uncontrolled in speed, and checked only in direction, into the darkness, and the vehicle, swaying like a ship in a typhoon, shaves boulders and chasms, of which, happily for our own peace of mind, we can only discern the dim outline. A more miserable, taciturn,—I may say morose,—collection of human beings were surely never gathered together in so small a space. An irrepressible young 'Arry, fresh from the dissipations of Camberwell and the music-halls of the Borough, tries to crack a few vacuous and fatuous jokes, but is instantly snarled down; our teeth are almost chattering with the intense cold which precedes a South African dawn, and we do not even have recourse to that native tobacco which is so innocent in its effects, and which smells like a mixture of burning weeds and dead dog. But after about a couple of hours of this misery, the "hues of the rich unfolding morn," presaging, contrary to weather-signs in England, a continuance of that weather which is the glory of the Cape district, rouse and brighten us as though we were hibernating bears. A halt is made for breakfast, pipes are lighted, immoderate heat replaces intolerable cold, and, in fact, food, perspiration, and tobacco are the ethereal agencies which awaken within us what men are pleased to designate the finer instincts of intellectual observation.

No tradition of the skill of charioteers can approach that displayed by the half-breed drivers. Of our team of eight horses, the leaders are perhaps fairly steady, the two centre pairs are unreliable scapegraces, and the wheelers are vicious young scamps practically entering on their career, and bent on involving our vehicle in utter de-

struction, from which they are only prevented by being dragged into the order of march by their more sedate seniors. At the very first start, one of them succeeds in bestriding his pole, hurling himself over to the off-side, and tying himself up into a knot with the harness, whereat his companions seeing him down and helpless, humanlike utilise the opportunity of lashing out savagely at him. The tangle released, stinging slashes, impartially administered, cause the whole team to bound forward like greyhounds. The rule of the whip and of the reins is exercised by two different individuals, each of whom is prepared to assist his fellow as the emergency may require. The one handles his network of leather straps with the dexterity of a lace-worker manipulating the bobbins, and with the strength of a bargee unlading coals; while he who wields the whip would, in a loch or a stream, be far and away the most skilful fly-fisher Scotland could produce. Shouting out the name of any beast showing the slightest sign of being sluggish or recalcitrant, he instantly makes him wince under the lash without touching one of the others, whether the offender be "laying himself out" eighteen yards in front of the box, or under the very nose of the chastiser. How severe is the punishment was once practically made known to me when the back swirl of the thong caught me round the neck, producing a sensation of decapitation, and leaving a bloody wheal which remained for a week. Now we can duly estimate the perils of our former dark drive. There is not the smallest pretence of a road. The track over the illimitable veldt is merely indicated by the beaten-down herbage, and is rendered still more puzzling by the incessant divergences struck out according to the fancies of preceding drivers. It is diversified by deep chasms, large boulders, and, worse than all, by numerous formidable "drifts" or fords over shrunken rivers with steep banks. These latter, indeed, fill the "green" traveller with amazed apprehension, until frequent recurrence has produced contempt. As we descend the sharp incline leading to the brink, it would appear as practicable to drive in a straight line through Stonehenge as safely to surmount the rugged masses in front of us. The drivers obviously bring into play all their care, skill, and even strength. We plunge, we splash, we jolt over the rocky bottom; we make a sudden twist almost at right angles, and scrape past a perpendicular mass which threatens us like a stone wall; the long team winds like a pliable thread past water-caverns, and we ascend the opposite height. Then is the time of the driver's exultation. The whip-man flogs furiously, the rein-man yells, and the half-maddened horses rush up the hill in a Walpurgis gallop, for the time being distinctly running away with us. But no team ever foaled could gallop for any length of time up such a long heavy steep. They begin to pant and to sob, and finally they subside into a hand-canter, just as our preserving acclivity has come to an end.

The whole transaction is "ticklish" beyond expression in broad daylight, but precisely the same career is pursued during hours of profound darkness, and how vehicle and passengers escape being smashed into pieces of the size of lucifer-matches, utterly baffles comprehension. Skill [illegible] seems to develop into instinct. The drivers themselves cannot account for their immunity, or attempt to

solve the problem by declaring that they know the shadow of every chasm and the outline of every rock.

So long as we were in the Drakensberg region the scenery was exceedingly magnificent; and I have never witnessed a tropical storm more imposing than one which befell us among these mountains. The sheets of rain in a few minutes converted rivulets into torrents, the lightning was so blinding and close as to impart the sensation that we could smell it, and the reverberating thunder brought to one's mind the crack of doom; but as we descend into the vast expanse of comparatively flat veldt we begin to loathe the dreary outlook, of which the principal features are endlessly rolling ridges covered with coarse brown grass, and almost entirely treeless. The game is shy, but that it is abundant in localities farther from the track is evident from several specimens of buck, orriba, paauw (a species of bustard), koran (a smaller genus), partridges, and plover, which we startle into sight.

The dead animal kingdom is amply represented by the ghastly skeletons and putrid carcasses of horses, oxen, and mules lining the roadside, tainting the atmosphere with fetid miasma, and round which obscene gorged vultures heavily flap. At long intervals we meet a stolid Boer family trekking with their household goods, or rather their dirty rubbish, to some Robinson Crusoe district which fulfils their craving for elbow-room—in other words, where there is not a dwelling or neighbour within sight. Their teams of sixteen oxen—sleek, fat, and well-liking, like unto Pharaoh's—impart a certain picturesqueness even to this exceedingly unpicturesque knot. The precept against unequal yoking is certainly disregarded. I have frequently seen a heterogeneous team of twelve or fourteen, made up of horses, mules, and donkeys, all pulling as evenly together as a machine. Here, again, is a solitary Boer horseman, conspicuous by his ungainly seat, armed, but with a lack of that cumbersome equipment which we might so advantageously imitate in the person of our handsome imposing dragoons—who undeniably would be useful in a Waterloo or Balaclava charge—galloping with set purpose in the direction of a boundless desert, which seems to lead nowhere. We see comparatively few natives. Here and there is a Kafir kraal, the naked denizens whereof are crawling in and out of their bee-hive tenements like beasts of the field, unless indeed they have imparted to their appearance a burlesque of civilisation by proudly disporting themselves in the costume of the "Scottish Division of the Royal Artillery."

At the end of about every fifteen miles, or after two hours' journey, we change teams, for both rate and toil could scarcely be exceeded. I reckoned that in a journey of two hundred and twenty-two miles from Elands Laagte to Johannesburg we worked out fifteen teams of eight horses each, or upwards of one hundred and twenty animals. The number of eight per team is sometimes made up with a mule or two, but the speed is scarcely at all diminished thereby. I marvel at their soundness and efficiency. Small-sized, though well-bred, unshod and therefore with perfect feet, ungroomed, ill-stabled, and carelessly though abundantly fed, they get through an amount of work which would make an English coachman stare.

No sooner are they cast loose from their flapping, ill-fitting, tattered old harness than they first wallow in a dust-heap—the omission of this little ceremony is considered a symptom of illness—and then stroll off for a happy picnic on the veldt, perfectly fit for another spell of similar hard work whenever required.

I observe that my fellow-passengers are scrutinising with singular attention the rapid sinking of the glaring sun.

> "'Tis gone, yon bright and orbèd blaze,
> Fast fading from our wistful gaze;"

and in an instant the old stager, be he stalwart or sickly, seizes greatcoat and comforter, and notwithstanding that a few minutes previously he had been sweltering under the glowing heat, muffles himself from head to foot as though he had just risen from rheumatic fever or ague. He does wisely. The sudden chill of the short Transvaal twilight is as the scythe of death, and woe betide him sooner or later if he defies precautions! Our Dutch Kafir driver now produces a bugle. He had picked up our regimental calls during residence in an English garrison; and as he sounds the "retreat" as an indication of our approach to the wayside shanties, or the "stable-call" as a warning that a fresh team is required, or the "assembly" to collect his passengers for a fresh start, or "commence firing" to hasten serving dinner, or the "last post" as an appropriate blast to the finale of our day's travel,—the dear old familiar strains are startlingly familiar as they re-echo in the darkness over a wild expanse of country which England once owned as her appanage, but which she lost by the somewhat worse than folly of her rulers.

Dusty, bored, and utterly weary, our wishes had been concentrated during the last five or six hours on reaching our night halting-place; during the next five or six hours they are concentrated on getting away from it again. I repudiate the charge of fastidiousness, and emphatically assert that a tent, a camp-fire, and a bed of heather would have been extreme luxury, compared with our habitat at the ragged-looking hamlet marked on the map as Standerton, and which was a compromise between an Irish pot-house, an Indian wigwam, and a Kafir kraal. Elsewhere, I found that even the Boer farmer's dwelling is characterised by the dirt and disorder of a numerous uncouth family, and in many instances with but a scanty display of goodwill. True, we get a sufficiency of flesh and bread to devour; but two, three, or four total strangers, sometimes very evil associates in every point of view, are huddled together in one room not much smaller than the Black Hole of Calcutta, and not much more fetid than a Cape Town sewer. Indeed, the less fortunate are fain to roll themselves up in foul blankets, and to stretch themselves on the still fouler earthen floor.

The wakening blast of the bugle at 2 A.M. is in truth welcome, though at that hour the frost is so severe that in fording the Vaal river we rather crash into the ice than splash into the water. Our first indications of approach to Johannesburg are at Boksburg, ten miles distant,—a large, newly springing up coal village, the underground wealth of which would instantly render it of foremost note, were it not overshadowed by its neighbour's gold-mines. The ugly, bare, dreary area around is rendered more dis-

pleasing by the ever-increasing number of the swollen carcasses of animals, and great is our relief when at a late hour our wearied team drags us into the dark accumulation of irregular buildings which constitute the wonderful town of Johannesburg. There the hotels are unquestionably comparatively havens of comfort,—not in this respect equal to a second-rate English inn, not even to a monstrous mushroom American establishment, but immeasurably preferable to the dirt and churlishness of many of the Transvaal veldt shanties. To obtain sole possession of a room so small and mean and dark that an English Mary Jane would give instant warning were she required to occupy it, is a feat of difficult accomplishment, and solitude is purchased by a considerable addendum to the already high tariff. The daily influx of arrivals from every part of South Africa is so considerable, that the number of applicants is far in excess of the available accommodation, and strangers are frequently obliged to wander for hours over the town ere they can obtain a bed at any price. Therefore, although to get a cupful of hot water I had to purloin it stealthily from the kitchen while the cook's back was turned, and to get my grimy boots cleaned I must thrust them into the hand of a chance Kafir, with alternate menaces and entreaties, I admit that these discomforts are at present inevitable; that probably ere these lines are in print somewhat will have been done to remedy them; and that, above all, a most good-natured friendliness and anxiety to oblige characterise the administration of the "Grand National," by far the best hotel in Johannesburg. Shortly after nightfall the streets become curiously silent and deserted, and are conspicuous for the absence of public lighting. It is not prudent for an unarmed stranger to dawdle through precincts so favourable to garotters and cut-throats. Yet, on the whole, the public orderliness and good behaviour are only less marvellous than the contemptible inefficiency of the Dutch police.

The real conditions of the city are, however, first realised when we sally forth in the morning. Houses of every size, architecture, and material,—houses of brick, wood, and tin,—have been casually run up or capriciously dropped down at the mere sweet will of the contractors, without the slightest regard to the public convenience, and untrammelled by any municipal restrictions. The process is still being carried on with magic celerity. After a month's absence, I was, on my return, at sea as to locality-ground; the previous resort of squatters and Kafirs was now occupied by thriving shops and business offices. A broker showed me a small room about the size of a garret, for which he paid a rental equivalent to £300 a-year; and still, building cannot keep pace with requirements. Be it remembered that three years ago Johannesburg was not sufficently large to be termed a village, whereas now its total population is estimated at 30,000, with a monthly influx little short of 1000. When a large post-office, spacious exchange, and enormous market-square were laid out about two years back, their proportions excited immoderate ridicule. "Are you planning for your grandchildren?" Yet each of the above public places is already utterly inadequate for the needs of the community, and each must either be reconstructed or furnished with

"annexes." Of the condition of the streets, it can only be said that they have quite outgrown their strength. They are cumbered with rubbish and building materials; they are unpaved and un-metalled, and, according to the weather, alternate between ankle-deep sand and ankle-deep slush. The animation which characterises them, however, is almost fatiguing in its intensity.

Now, this sudden starting into existence of a large populous city is almost unparalleled under the special circumstances. Chicago, and other American towns, afford no counterpart, because the mainstay of their progress and rapidity was founded on the railway. Here every ounce of material, of goods, and especially of mining machinery —of which gigantic bulk more anon — and every white human being, have been conveyed by animal power hundreds of miles over a vast veldt, practically roadless and desolate. This feat has been chiefly accomplished by the enterprise and energy of Englishmen, a nation which constitutes the bulk of the population, though others, notably Germans and Jews, have since stepped in to share the riches.

To a mere outside observer, to a non-participator in the fortunes of Johannesburg, the rapidly speeding, crowded stream seems to be distraught with the mania of some fever. In reality, they are possessed by the demon of gold. They rush and jostle along the sidewalks; they recklessly gallop in buggies, the noiseless wheels of which through the heavy sand are a source of imminent danger to foot-passengers. Every one is eagerly talking, and no one seems to be listening. A large proportion are unkempt, unwashed, and unbrushed, and yet there is something in their language and demeanour which conveys the idea of educated but out-at-elbows English gentlemen. Herein is a prominent distinction between Johannesburg and a suddenly developed American town. Here there are no ruffling bullies, no wanton insults, no blackguard saloon brawls, and no brutal pistolling. Stop a passer-by who looks as though life and death depended on his speed,—he instantly becomes composed, he answers with the courtesy of a Chesterfield and the goodwill of an old friend. He spends some time in putting you on the right road, or in solving your difficulties, ere he again girds up his loins to hasten forward some speculative enterprise on which may depend for him the question of a plus or a minus of thousands of pounds. The large dining-rooms of the hotel and club are suddenly filled at the luncheon-hour with the same hurry-possessed crowd, each racing his neighbour in the speed of deglutition, and each restricting his conversation to the sole topic of stocks, shares, and gold-mines. The Exchange, to which I succeeded in obtaining admission by special favour, is, as already stated, far too small for needs, and gives an inadequate idea of the amount of business transacted there. For the privilege of selling liquor at the tiny little bar, the tenant pays the committee £400 a-year, and his pot-boy every morning drives down to his work in a buggy and pair. A pale, sickly lad of about twenty-two was pointed out to me as having recently sustained a loss of £60,000, but he still possessed a balance of about £200,000 wherewith to continue his speculations. Here we begin to get a glimmering of the magnitude of the sums dealt in. A profit of 7 per cent is laughed out of discussion. Offer

to lend money at 9 per cent, and a crowd will follow you down the street imploring you for the loan, on security as good as that of the Standard Bank. A speculation fails to be attractive unless it promises 25 per cent in three months, or cent per cent per annum. In fine, all our old estimates of money value in England are here upset. The cost of the smallest article is quadrupled or distorted. I paid fifteen shillings for a moderate-sized bottle of eau-de-Cologne, and I am charged two shillings for a glass of beer by a barmaid who is carelessly sipping champagne out of a scarcely touched bottle, the invariable price of which is £1.

However much the actual mining operations of Johannesburg startle us by their magnitude and results, perhaps their chief characteristic is the simplicity of their working, and a very short description will suffice to make the reader acquainted with the whole method of procedure. The "Randt" is a low narrow ridge extending farther than the eye can reach due east and west, and situated at its nearest point about three miles from the centre of the town. The intervening area is depressingly displeasing, and its general aspect reminds one of the dregs of the Derby day. Innumerable vehicles of every description, except of a respectable description, dragged by teams of every genus — horses, mules, donkeys, and oxen,—several mounted men, and a few pedestrians, are proceeding in breathless haste towards yonder El Dorado. The numerously dotted dwellings are conspicuous by their dirty, tumble-down appearance, and by the utter absence of that neatness which so closely borders on decoration. They have been constructed out of odds and ends of the hideous and universal corrugated sheet-iron, with the sole object of affording a temporary and imperfect shelter. Some display for sale a few evil-looking blankets, or coarse pots and pans, or some of the bare necessaries of life, with which even a savage cannot dispense. Slatternly, witch-haired, bedraggled women are loafing about their evil tenements, while grimy semi-nude children are manufacturing mud-pies in an adjacent accumulation of sloppy garbage. Yet these are the families of the machinery workers,—of men who in England would be favourable specimens of our upper middle-classes, and who would be horrified at the mere sight of denizens of the Seven Dials in a state of such foul squalor. Here they are possessed by the gold-god —should we not rather say, by the money-demon?

On the crest of the ridge the area is marked out with lengths of old barbed wire attached to rickety half-rotten stakes. Each enclosure shows a company's claim; but they are so roughly not to say so carelessly delimitated, that removing a landmark a few inches, and thus adding or subtracting a few thousands from the subterranean worth, is by no means an infrequent occurrence. About the centre of every claim is a shaft, a heap of dirt, and a small tin shanty, which serves as an office. At one of these, representing the working headquarters of one of the most prosperous companies at Johannesburg, I applied, according to previous arrangement, for the purpose of being conducted over the mine. My inquiries were most civilly answered by a lad of about twenty-five, clad in dirty rags, which a London costermonger would have discarded as discreditable, and accompanied by a

morose-looking bull-dog, the very type of savage villany. Scarcely, however, has he opened his lips ere I am struck with the contrast between his outward appearance and his demeanour, language, and refinedly modulated tones of voice. We soon become friendly, almost intimate, and I find that he is a highly educated English gentleman in every sense of the word. The son of a Devonshire clergyman, one of his kindred commands a splendid regiment of cavalry, another is an honoured colonel of artillery, and he himself was brought up in one of our foremost public schools. With the object of accumulating sufficient to enable him to purchase a farm, he had engaged in the mining industry; but nothing, he declared, should induce him to remain in it after his immediate end had been attained.

"Is it not miserable work," I inquired, "for you as a gentleman to spend your young life in such an avocation, deprived of every sort of intellectual occupation and interest, and of every amenity of civilisation?" He said: "No; it was odious at first. I have become used to it — used even to the absence of literature. I am so hard at work from morning to night as a sort of superintendent, and so engrossed with my object in view, that I have no time for repining."

Then we are lowered down the shaft, from which three tunnels branch out at different levels. The middle one is 130 feet below the surface, and along this we slowly grope our way with all the well-known precautions and observances which attend a mine investigation; but the reader will only be interested in hearing the special characteristics of a Johannesburg gold-mine. One is an almost exceptional immunity from catastrophes. A disastrous rush of water is very rare; there are no explosions, no fire-damp, and very seldom any falling-in of ground. Then, when we reach the extremity of the short working,—for although the company is in full and prosperous swing, it is in its youth, like all the others of this district, —the scene is grotesque beyond measure, and Dante-like in its Inferno of sight and sound. A few flickering lights reveal groups of Kafirs, black and hideous, seminude and sweltering, picking, hauling, and lading, in dancing, excited activity. The ringing echo of the crowbar is mingled with their shouts, and as the grimy stalwart workers rush hither and thither out of the shadow of the cavern-hollows into the lurid glare of the loading-trucks, they might be taken as fit emblems of the sons of Vulcan. They possess one less classical peculiarity. The "bouquet de Kafir" is in its way quite as distinct as the "bouquet de Renard," and considerably more overpowering.

Three hundred natives is the normal number employed in this mine, and they are certainly participating in the newly discovered wealth of that soil which is theirs by inheritance, and the white man's by seizure. Their wages range from fourteen shillings to eighteen shillings a-week, in addition to food and lodging. Gathered together from many different tribes, they nevertheless live perfectly peaceably together except on Sundays, when they first wallow in intoxication, and then proceed to pay off old scores. They work hard, are amenable to discipline, and intelligent; yet no Kafir can under any circumstances be trusted to exercise the slightest supervision over his fellows. This duty must in-

variably be delegated to a white man. They are singularly susceptible to cold, and are consequently averse to working during the winter season in the country. Although this difficulty has been in some degree removed by the erection of wooden huts, the objection, coupled with the scarcity of water for crushing purposes, slackens the progress of work. Hence it is almost a canon among investors, that gold shares should be bought between April and August, and sold during the intervening months.

The ore, or "banket" as it is locally termed, consists of a semi-friable conglomerate of sand and pebbles on which specks of gold glitter. It is loosened in bulk from the surrounding mass by blasting, then partly broken up and conveyed in trucks down an inclined plane to the crushing batteries, some 400 or 500 yards distant. The machinery is enclosed in a large shed-like building, and it may be questioned whether admiration is most justly excited by the magnitude, the regularity, or the simplicity of the working. There are in the present case sixty stamping and crushing machines, all precisely identical, and set in action by a common shaft. The conglomerate is tilted into an upper hopper, through which it falls into a pair of flat iron jaws, slowly opening and shutting, and thus breaking the larger masses into small lumps. These lumps drop down another stage below pestles, which stamp them into dust. This latter is sifted into a water-trough, out of which the very liquid mud trickles in a thin sheet over smooth sloping iron plates lightly filmed with quicksilver. The quicksilver catches the particles of gold in suspension, and the refuse water flows into a reservoir, but so precious is this commodity at Johannesburg that it is again pumped up for repeated use. Nothing can exceed the effectiveness of the process, which I believe is peculiar to the Transvaal, for a careful analysis of the used water shows that the quicksilver has retained every atom of gold. When the deposit of the precious metal is sufficiently thick, the plates are scraped, the amalgam is sent to the retorts, and a fresh coating of quicksilver applied. An average yield of two ounces for every ton of ore would result in immense dividends, so it may be judged how little credibility is to be attached to flowery prospectuses announcing a probable three or four ounces per ton. The greatest depth yet attained does not exceed 300[1] feet, and there is not the faintest symptom of the gold here giving out. It has been ascertained that the main reef extends over a distance of at least thirty-five miles, and at innumerable intervals prospectings have never failed in satisfactory results. Undoubtedly there have been several mining operations in the neighbourhood of Johannesburg which have been attended with disastrous failure—undoubtedly there are a vast number of "rubbish" companies—but in every single instance their sites have been not in the main reef, but in puzzling and precarious leaders or offshoots.

The strata of the Randt are inclined at a varying angle of 45°, and experienced geologists have little doubt that they represent the edge, as it were, of an enormous basin which dips deep into the earth, runs along at an unknown depth, and then crops up

[1] Since these sheets were in the press, tentative piercings have reached a depth of 450 feet, and with highly satisfactory results.

again in some remote district which has yet to be ascertained. Enterprising prospectors have been racking their brains and exhausting their energies in an attempt to find the corresponding basin-edge, which would represent Crœsus fortunes, but thus far utterly in vain. I may add, it is the opinion of many who are competent to judge, that were the sound mines steadily worked in their present condition, without increase of plant or project, they would at present return a minimum dividend of at least 4 per cent. That so few are at this moment paying any dividends at all, is due to ambitious schemes of development.

From the above facts it seems manifest that the expression "uncertainty of mining," very properly applied to Peru, Bolivia, and various Eastern countries, is a misnomer when used with Johannesburg. Take a sheet of foolscap, and with a large black mark in the centre represent a mine in Peru of great richness at the spot struck, but with every element of uncertainty as to its extension to the edges of the paper, the continuous richness of its ore, the dip of the strata, and the depth at which it must or can be worked. Again, take another sheet of equal size to represent the Witwatersrandt, speckle it all over thickly and evenly with dots. They may be fairly compared to the prospecting carried out all over the district, and each spot denotes a successful test. That the riches are there in abundantly paying quantities, which cannot be exhausted for years, is as certain as that when a farmer sows his seed, he will, under ordinary circumstances, reap a harvest.[1]

That ruinous gambling largely prevails in gold shares is beyond all doubt; that bogus companies are floated, that capitals are watered and swollen to an extent which renders their paying the most moderate dividends upon the enormous sums embarked impossible, is equally certain. But to stigmatise, for those reasons, the mining industry as wicked speculation, is as senseless as for a young merchant to denounce his profession because he has lost heavily at unlimited loo, or for a bargee to anathematise trade because he has squandered his earnings at pitch-and-toss.

I have altogether failed in my intentions if I have not conveyed to the reader that, on the whole, the impressions made on me by Johannesburg were favourable. Here has been suddenly gathered a large assemblage of our English men of business, used to diligent work but not to toil and privation, together with some representatives of a higher social stratum, used to neither. Far from the resources of home, they have been deprived of what are usually considered the requirements of civilisation, handicapped by the perverse spite, and still more stupid obstinacy, of the Transvaal Boers, and hampered by all sorts of vexatious restrictions and tyrannical imposts. Nevertheless they have by their own unaided efforts succeeded in establishing a large city, and putting into actual working operation an industry which, primarily set afoot for their own benefit, must ultimately add enormously to the influence

[1] During the months of last October and November, an exceptional and disastrous water-famine stopped mining operations at the Transvaal. This interruption of work, however, was only temporary.

of their native land, and to the wealth of the whole world.

This English community has, by mere moral force, at the same time better maintained law and order, and better kept down blackguardism and brutality, than has been the case in any newly discovered El Dorado in the New World or the Old. A large proportion are patriotic to the core, and have retained those external characteristics of refined language, manner, and demeanour which constitute the chief charm of that indescribable individual, a "gentleman." "Have they no faults, then (Envy says), sir?" I cannot make up my mind to become the accuser of these our countrymen, of whom we may be so proud in many respects; but driven into a corner, I will let them speak for themselves:—

"In financial transactions involving the sale of shares," they have said to me over and over again, "do not trust any one among us. Our fever in the pursuit of gold is carried to such a craze that your best friend, who elsewhere would give his right hand to serve you, could not here resist the opportunity of 'besting' you."

Alas! it is too true that the standard of honour, even of honesty, has under the stress of temptation gradually sunk to a lamentable degree, and brokers and directors live down admittedly flagrant malpractices owing to which they would in England have fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again. One single illustration is so typical of a mass of instances that it will amply confirm the general statement, and is the more striking because it applies to the whole of South Africa. A certain millionaire, whose name, would my editor consent, I should not hesitate to declare, because it would be quite impossible to libel him, is in a large public dining-room at Johannesburg, surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on who in England would not take his hand with a pair of tongs. The knot of gentlemen with whom I am conversing point him out to me as a criminal would be pointed out in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. His antecedents are fully and freely discussed: his early stage of pauperism; his I.D.B. (local shibboleth of Illicit Diamond Buying) transactions, an occupation on a par with that of a "fence" in the thieves' quarters of the Seven Dials, and his rapid accumulation of wealth thereby; his blossoming into a great financial agent, floating bubble companies, bulling, bearing, and rigging the market, until he has amassed a fortune compared to which the plunder of the burrs of English agencies would be beggarly,—are all well known and uncontradicted throughout South Africa. Yet my informant and interlocutor winds up with the remark: "However, I know ——, and he is a very good fellow!"

"Good?" I almost shout out in indignant amazement; "good for what?"

"Oh, we must not be too hard," is the reply. "We brokers never know when we ourselves may be similarly tempted, and similarly succumb."

I have dwelt at some length upon the above circumstances, because they represent the one special plague-spot among a community of Englishmen otherwise generous and honourable. Nor do I say that even at Johannesburg the taint is invariable. I could mention three or four individuals there whose rectitude and dealings were mirrors of the most

scrupulous uprightness. All honour to them: they are the very salt of the place, who will sooner or later restore the traditional code of English integrity now in abeyance.

My next point is Pretoria, thirty-five miles north, the capital of the country, and containing about six thousand mixed but fair types of Europeans, and about three thousand of the most unfavourable description of Boers. Situated in a hollow, malaria and ill drainage render it vilely unhealthy, but it is exceptionally attractive-looking compared with the normal ugliness of Transvaal towns. The buildings are substantial, and brilliantly green patches contrast beautifully with the burnt-up turf of the surrounding veldt, and show what wonderful fertility can be achieved when the most elementary measures of irrigation are put into practice. The Eucalyptus flourishes, and would doubtless materially diminish the malaria were it planted in thousands instead of in hundreds.

Here we are in a great measure removed from the craze of mining business, and in the very midst of Transvaal politics, corruption, and *chicane*. The President's salary, which years ago was £2000, has lately, without any particular why or wherefore, been raised to £8000. He lives in a tenement compared with which an Aldershot hut would be a mansion. Similarly, the salary of each member of the Volksraad has been raised from £1 to £3 a-day. On the other hand, the judges, who, with much reason, applied for an augmentation of £200 each year, have only received an increase of £50. A small stretch of easy flat road, not exceeding three-quarters of a mile, is being metalled at a remuneration to the contractors of £17,000; and yet it is totally incomprehensible wherein consists the charm to these Boers of the mere accumulation of money. They neither spend it nor invest it — they simply keep so many thousands of gold pieces in their dwellings.

A certain Mr F., wishing to purchase a farm, the Boer proprietor doggedly refused to accept bills, cheques, or notes. He would have his price (£25,000) in sovereigns, or he would not sell. So the gold bullion was with much trouble brought to his house. "Will you not stop to dinner?" asked the farmer; and at its conclusion, Mr F., when bidding adieu, observed, "Well, I suppose we may at last consider our transactions quite complete." "Not quite," said the Boer; "you still owe me 3s. 6d. for the dinner." The next episode was that the farmer, worried with the custody of so much coin in his house, resolves with many misgivings to pay the purchase money into the Standard Bank; but the following week he demands to withdraw his deposit, and the hard cash is again produced. He counts it over carefully, and, once more reassured, shoves it back into the cashier's hands. The Boers do not, in fact, seem to have the slightest comprehension of the first principles of finance. Another of this class asked a bank what would be the terms for his proposed deposit of £25,000. "We will give you 6 per cent," replied the clerk, not understanding the drift of the question. "You pay me for taking care of my property?" said the Boer. "No, no; I am not such a fool as to believe that. You are up to some trick!" And he instantly broke off the negotiation.

At Pretoria I somewhat carefully examined the Boer barracks, stores, and equipments, my cicerone being a young artillery Hollander. His arrogance was intolerable, until his display of professional ignorance rendered me as cool as contempt could make one. The barracks had formerly been for a considerable time in British occupation, and there is little to be said concerning them, except that their recent occupants had reduced them to a condition of extreme filth. The standing army of the Transvaal consists of a single battery of artillery, and they take every opportunity of assuring us that, in the event of a war with England, they could at once raise a levy of 8000 men who would require no military training, inasmuch as every Boer is a born infantry and cavalry soldier. The nominal strength of this battery is—1 commanding officer, 1 captain, 3 lieutenants, 90 men, and 90 horses; actual strength, 70 men and 70 horses. Its armament is six 6-pounder Krupp guns, ostensibly of mountain equipment, but without any arrangement for pack transport. The gunners, clothed in an admirably serviceable grey uniform, with helmets and brown leather belts, looked rather fine, well-set-up fellows, in the full maturity of strength and age, and altogether far more soldier-like than the condition of the quarters would have led one to anticipate; but they are drawn from very questionable classes, and the less said about their antecedents the better. Their pay is £3, 6s. a-month and rations. The horses were of a good stamp, but small, and a large proportion utterly broken down with age. The harness is old and filthy, but serviceable. Their arsenal was (for the most part) a ludicrous collection of antiquated unserviceable weapons, ill kept, and scattered about in the fashion of a pawnbroker's shop. I noted down the following details: One 8-inch smooth-bore mortar on a travelling carriage. This was considered the jewel of their store. Four 6-pounder Krupps, with the breech apparatus out of order; one 24-pounder English brass howitzer, of the pattern in use at the Alma. One 6-pounder rifled brass gun, dismounted. Four 6-pounder Krupps, serviceable. In addition there were, I was told, four 6-pounder Krupps, two 9-pounder Armstrongs, and one 25-pounder Armstrong at Zoutspanberg. Their ammunition was of the most heterogeneous description, and stored in the vaguest manner—common shell, shrapnel and case, fuses and friction-tubes, deposited in odd, out-of-the-way corners. The artillery officer assured me that case were incomparably effective missiles, and might be relied on up to 400 yards! I also saw their percussion fuses, which were very rough, and their time fuses, which were singularly antiquated. They possessed two field electric-lighting apparatus, worked by steam, which they declared threw a vivid glare along a lineal space of 100 yards from a distance of 3000 yards. Further investigation convinced me that this was mere "gallery" talk, and that the machines worked very inefficiently.

Now, admitting the excellence of the Boers in shooting and skirmishing, it is quite indisputable that their guns and ammunition are so trumpery and ill kept, and that their ignorance of the elements of practical gunnery is so much below that of an English acting-bombardier, that on active service the Boers would, at this moment at

all events, be virtually entirely destitute of artillery. To an Englishman travelling about the Transvaal, his daily necessary contact with the Boers incessantly arouses a mortification and humiliation which is only prevented from breaking into open anger by the most rigid self-control. Perhaps I was unfortunate in my experience, nor do I for one instant put the mass of the many worthy Dutch in South Africa on the same platform as the exceptionally coarse Boers of the Transvaal.

No consideration of good taste and generosity will induce them to miss any opportunity of vituperating the English nation and aspersing English soldiers; of belauding their own superiority in courage and skill; of swaggering over their successes and gloating over our disasters; of defying the British Government, and threatening our men with the thrashing they will again give them when hostilities again break forth. Can it be wondered that there should exist a scarcely concealed hatred towards the Boers on the part of ninety-nine out of every hundred English residents, and that their rage over the retrocession of the country in 1881 should burn fiercely?

When the Treaty of 1881, never spoken of without shame, was signed, the British residents in Pretoria solemnly and publicly buried our national flag, and erected over it a tablet bearing the following inscription: "In loving memory of the British flag in the Transvaal, who departed this life on the 2d of August 1881, in her 5th year. In other climes none knew her but to love her. Resurgam."

The Boers, not unnaturally irritated, threatened to destroy the monument, whereupon it was removed from the grave, and committed to the custody of a trusted English resident, who showed it to me with a veneration which might be thought partly sentimental, were it not wholly sincere.

More than eight years have elapsed since this funeral episode, and still it is not safe to touch on the raw. Still, on the smallest provocation, there breaks forth the never-varying cry, "No more Gladstone — no more Downing Street for us! Next time we will manage our own affairs."

Yet let not the fact be ignored that, in another respect, the seed sown in 1881 is bearing distinct, though happily not abundant, fruit in 1890. A small but evil party exists both in Pretoria and in Johannesburg, British—or Irish—by birth, but alien through their self-seeking interests, who are quite prepared to caress the Boers, to besmirch the English, and to cut themselves adrift from their own country. This small knot have in their trivial folly succeeded in annoying the majority, and in disfiguring the prayers for the Queen in our English service held in our English Church. No longer do they pray for "Victoria, our most gracious Queen and Governor," but for "Queen Victoria," whose sovereignty over the British residents is thus dismissed throughout the liturgy. The English head of the diocese has unfortunately acquiesced in this mutilation.

I grant that the experience of Lord Salisbury's Administration has done somewhat to soften bitterness throughout South Africa. I can even imagine that a few more years of the same treatment might make the colonists once more willing to fight under Imperial Administration. Their

hearts' affection for the "dear old country" has never failed. Would that there were forthcoming an English ruler of South Africa with the audacious genius of a Clive, the administrative talents of a Warren Hastings, and the lofty single-minded rectitude of a Gordon! The future splendour of our African empire would scarcely fall short of that of our magnificent Indian empire.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since the foregoing "Impressions" were written, events in the Transvaal have been developing themselves with that rapidity which is so characteristic of newly established Governments; but I suggest that they accentuate rather than attenuate the conclusions to which my narrative points. A very significant demonstration of English proclivities has just occurred at Pretoria. True, it was not followed by any definite action, for the loyal English inhabitants still feel the smart of the old wounds inflicted on them, as they allege, through the treachery and ingratitude with which they were treated by Mr Gladstone's Administration; but the instinctive enthusiasm for the British flag and British rule burst forth in spite of the efforts of the Boer authorities, and President Kruger was unable to obtain a hearing. Full surely will the conciliatory policy adopted by Lord Salisbury, and so wisely and ably backed up by Sir Henry Loch at the Cape and Sir Charles Mitchell in Natal, towards the English inhabitants of South Africa, produce further satisfactory results, and a juster recognition of our countrymen's rights in the Transvaal.

Again, the depression of and stagnation in the gold-fields money market have been prolonged beyond all anticipation. Mr Ralph Williams, the able British Resident at Pretoria, has publicly set forth the causes of this distrust, and, sharing the fate of all who expose abuses, has been condemned as an inaccurate pessimist. But Mr Williams has justly denounced the overt fraud and covert peculation which have deplorably clogged the prosperity of a district teeming with wealth. The inherent mineral riches of the Witwatersrandt, easily attainable and yielding vast profit, remains a matter of conviction to every reasonable and impartial judge.