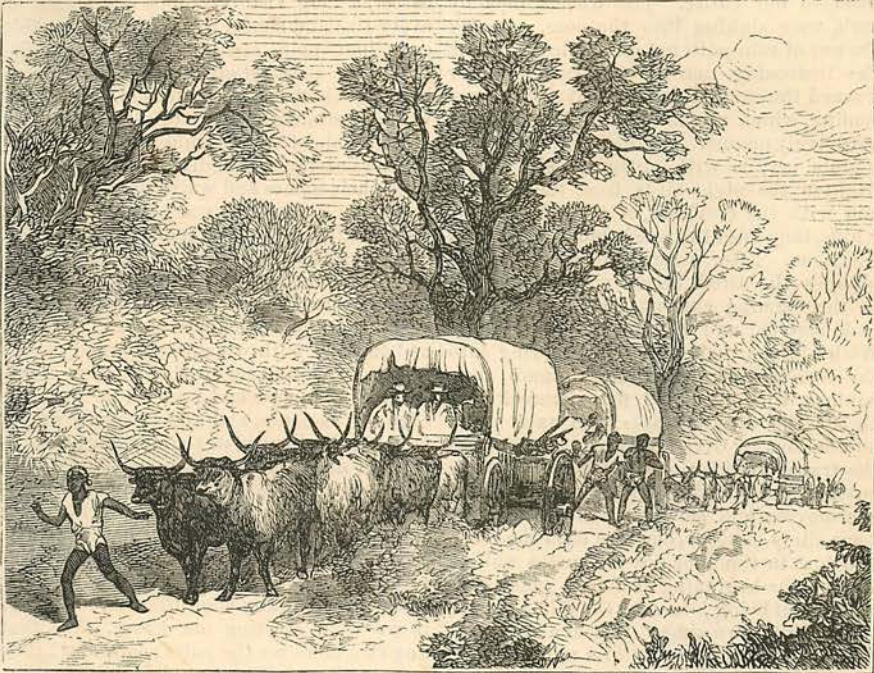


HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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LIFE IN THE DIAMOND FIELDS.



EN ROUTE TO THE MINES.

MOST people imagine that four hundred and fifty miles of travel through the best settled portion of South Africa implies an exceedingly romantic journey, full of picturesque incident, the monotony broken by exciting hunting expeditions, or pleasant and instructive interviews with the boers and natives. Such ideas of the trip have charmed the intending traveler; but to one who has made the journey it means four or five days and nights in a horrid jolting mail-cart, with no sleep and but little food, or else thirty or forty days in a bullock wagon, isolated from the world, and drearily plodding through treeless, stony plains, or over barren hills, with naught but a flock of sheep here and there, or a dirty and dilapidated boer's house to break the monotony. Amidst such scenes as these the month of

June, 1871, found the writer and companions on board an "ox chariot," bound from Algoa Bay to the land of gems.

The sixth day out from the bay saw us fast on the summit of the dreary Zuurberg Mountain, a thick fog obscuring every thing, the oxen lost in one of the many mountain ravines, chilly winds blowing, and wood and water extremely scarce.

The twenty-fifth day out found us in a veritable Slough of Despond, near the Orange River, wagon sunk to the hub, drivers discouraged, the "transport rider" (conductor of wagons) snoring on his bed in a drunken sleep, and the oxen so emaciated by want of grass and water, and so dreadfully abused by the brutal Hottentots, that some were dead, others lay exhausted in the mud, while the rest evidently could do no more at the

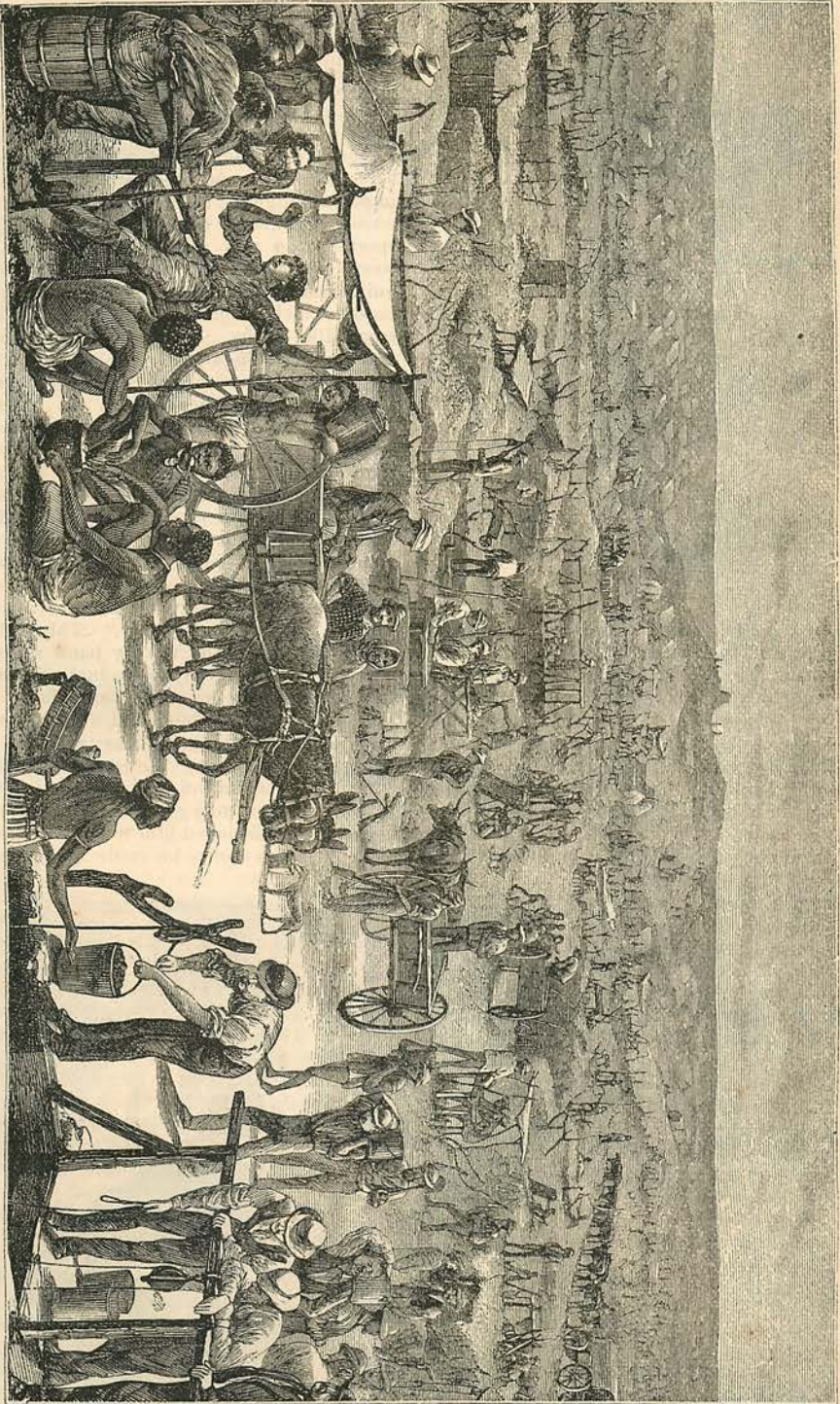
bidding of "shambok"* and whip, or kicks and blows. Rest they wanted, and food and drink, and all these they had after a fashion before our caravan again proceeded.

The thirty-fifth day out left us at eventide in the slimy channel of the Modder River, a Free State stream, whose muddy banks, quaggy bed, and sudden floods are the dread of every transport rider in the country. Our wagon, weighted with nine thousand pounds of merchandise, refused to budge, despite the addition of an extra span of oxen to our cattle. The wheels, inch by inch, were sinking into the ooze, a heavy shower of rain pattered on our heads, while the increasing roar of the turbid water warned the excited drivers that a flood was coming, which might end our journey in a very lively manner. "Trek, trek!" the Hottentots cry, as with guttural yells which frighten the night-birds from their perch, and with the cracking of their murderous whips, they urge the miserable oxen to fresh exertions. After a series of struggles and plunges the tired beasts sink deeper yet in the foaming current. Things begin to look serious, and the blacks are frantic. With shrieks and curses they spring into the torrent and attack their dumb companions with foot and fist, shambok and club. The din increases; the oxen moan and bellow. "Give it to them, boys!" cries the transport rider. "Yaw, boss!" and the cutting and slashing are renewed. There she moves; and slowly the huge ark, like some slimy monster, emerges from the river, and just in time, for down comes a wall of water—the beginning of a flood which ends all hope of being joined by the other wagons for an unknown time. Wet and chilly, we jogged along at the rate of a mile an hour. About midnight a range of low, flat-topped hills was visible. The transport rider pointed to it, and said, "Gents, there's Du Toits Pan. You'll be in the camp to-morrow." And we rejoiced; for after thirty-five days of privation, alternately pinched by cold and scorched by heat, having shot no game but an ugly baboon, and the hospitable boers of the country, with whom we tried to be friends, calling us "dom" Englishmen, and slamming their doors in our faces, no wonder any change seemed preferable to "trekking" in a bullock wagon.

Exactly at nine the next morning, tired and sore, our nerves excited, but happy and joyous, we entered the great central camp of Du Toits Pan. We found all at work in the claims. The metallic grating of the gravel shaking through the sieve, the blows of pick and shovel in breaking obdurate lumps, and the cries of the barbarous Caffres and Hot-

tentots employed in the claims, all made up a strange volume of sound not elsewhere heard. On every claim was a dirt heap, on every heap a table (often improvised from a packing-case), and on every table a pile of gravel, over which bent the anxious digger, carefully scraping it away piecemeal in his search for wealth. Beyond this exciting scene of toil lay the expanse of tents, their white outlines varied by some building of wood or iron devoted to the interests of trade. Again opening before me was Main Street, a long vista of shops and stores of every size and shape, while from their gable ends long poles arose, on which were displayed the most astonishing combination of bunting that eye ever beheld. The list would contain the flags of all nations, the sailor's code of signals, and then leave room for the enterprising individuals who advertised their names and wares in this elevated manner. This street was always crowded: diggers after new picks, ladies out shopping, or a black after a blanket. While one and all never forgot the seductive canteens, at whose doors all day long a double stream of customers proved the dryness of claim dust, and the ease with which Cape brandy cleared the throat and renewed the action of the tongue. After we had been set down on the edge of the camp, and the immense wagon which had conveyed us so tediously up country had departed, our first endeavor was to pitch our eight-by-ten tent, which was guaranteed to be impervious alike to heat and cold, or rain and dust. In fact, we considered it a paragon of excellence, until a month's residence under its leaky roof and yawning sides dispelled any such illusion. Well, at it we went erecting our house. We first dug two holes for the poles; but, alas! they were sunk at different angles, and when the poles entered they seemed divided in opinion as to what was the perpendicular. However, we let this pass in our hurry, and put the canvas over, which we began to pull down and fasten at the bottom, when, to my sorrow and my partner's discomfort, a graceful little whirlwind approached, and intruding upon our half-finished labor, unceremoniously took up tent, stakes, and all; and when, after a moment of bewilderment, blinded by sand and suffocated with dust, I managed to look around, the tent was gone. I gazed up and down, to the right and left, and sang out at the top of my voice for Jones, who was nowhere to be seen, when above a mound a few yards away I spied a head. I stared a moment—could it be?—yes, it was Jones's red head, and away I went to find the unfortunate fellow tangled in the cords of the tent, which was lying in a mixed condition at his heels. Happily he was unhurt, and after some maledictions on tents in general and ours in particular, he assisted me in dragging our home—sweet home—

* A small rod of rhinoceros hide. It resembles a flexible cane, and skillfully handled, draws blood at every stroke.



IN THE DIAMOND FIELDS.



JUMPING A CLAIM.

back again, when, with some help from a neighbor, it went up in safety.

Our household affairs being arranged, we proceeded to look about for a claim. On going to the kopje (pronounced *copy*) we made up to an industrious digger, who was swinging his sieve with might and main. "Good-day," I said. He bowed his head, but spoke not, for when claim dust is flying people keep their mouths shut as much as possible. "Are there any vacant claims around here?" I asked. This time the mouth opened, and laconically pronounced the word "Lots." This was encouraging; so, after some little explanations and directions, we found ourselves on a deserted piece of ground thirty feet square, with a half-filled hole in one corner, and the surface covered with two or three tons of whitish-green powdery dust. To comply with the law, we took a pick, and having made a fresh mark in the hole, the claim was declared to be legally "jumped;" and an old digger who was witness

to the "jumping" told us to get out our license, and if there was another claimant, *à la* Tichborne, he would back us up in court. Accordingly away we went, and after a little search found the inspector of claims snugly ensconced in a Lilliputian house, on which were inscribed the professions of its last occupant, viz., "Diamant Kooper" (diamond buyer), "Watch-maker." This place was crammed to suffocation with impatient diggers, all holding their old licenses imploringly toward the harassed inspector, who was nervously entering the items of one before him. The place was quite dark, as the small window held three heads, which projected into the office on crane-like necks. At last he looked up, and finding things had reached a climax, dropped his pen, rose, and commenced hammering the three heads with his ledger. They withdrew in haste, at the same time seriously damaging the rheumatic window-frame which delayed their retreat. The inspector again took his seat, and ironically advised a few more to enter the den. "Do come in, gentlemen; there's lots of room. Some of you had better stand on the table." And then in anger he roared out, "D—n it! can't you take a hint? Give me some air, or I'll not issue another license." This had a slight effect, and the worthy band retired for a few moments, only to gradually invade the premises more seriously than before.

Having a tent, a claim, and a license, we only lacked one thing, and that was native labor, to commence digging in good earnest. After due consultation and deliberation we betook ourselves to a general agent or broker, and commissioned him to get us a servant. In a few hours he made his appear-



"SOME OF YOU HAD BETTER STAND ON THE TABLE."

ance at our tent door with a lank, shriveled Caffre, both old and ugly. "Here he is, gents—a fine 'boy.' He's old, but all the better for it; besides, he's an old digger; and then he's honest. He just told me he never 'jumps' any thing but grub, and that he's bound to have. But he'll never 'jump' a diamond. Don't you fear: he's the right sort." With these comforting remarks the agent turned him over to me and received his commission. And now the fun commenced. "Boy, what's your name?" I asked. He took no notice of my question, but kept staring at a pot near by, as if expecting the lid to jump off and disclose some delicate joint to his gaze. I shook him, and repeated my question. "Yaw, boss, moey" (good), he answered, pointing to the pot. In despair, I took the lid off the pot, when in went his hand on some pieces of mutton, and I politely left him to make a clearance and appease his hunger before making any further attempt at conversation. Jones now came out, and burst into laughter at the sight of our Caffre, squatted on his haunches over the pot, with an old sheep-skin on his back, and ravenously de-



OUR DOWN EAST NATIVE.

vouring mutton. In the end he gave us a name which we construed into Yankee; and having loaded our pick and shovel on the back of our *down East* native, we marched to the claim. When there he stripped off his clothing—to wit, the sheep-skin—before he went to work, and I actually envied him his ease and comfort in this condition. He had better use of his limbs, was not fettered by tight pants, close-fitting waistcoats, or clumsy shoes, while in an economical point of view he eclipsed all civilized workingmen I know of.

A day or so after we commenced digging, as I was busy in our claim preparing to sink a shaft, I was startled by hearing a most

tremendous shouting and yelling, and on looking around me I discovered all the diggers, Caffres, and Hottentots making for a distant claim at the top of their speed, while their unearthly "hoorays" and cries inspired all outsiders with curiosity to know what was up. Upon reaching the centre of attraction I found a large crowd swaying to and fro around a shallow hole. In this hole was a red-shirted man, and in his mouth: was the exciting cause—a diamond—over which his lips scarcely closed, while his cheeks swelled out with its size. The crowd kept shouting "Throw it up, old fellow!" "How big is it?" "Is it off colored?" etc. The lucky man with difficulty squeezed it out, and held the glittering gem in his palm as a general answer to all inquiries, his big Dutch face beaming on all around with child-like complacency. He could rise superior to all common troubles, now fortune had been so generous. His silence was more expressive than words, and for once I saw a man forty years old with a perfectly satisfied face. The calm joy of that countenance is what our artists search after in vain. As I returned to my claim a long line of diggers was leaving the kopje, and at its head was the red-shirted man. He was about to "wet his find"—that is, stand as much Champagne, brandy, and ale as a houseful of thirsty men could swallow. And such was the state of public opinion that a man was sure of being grossly insulted who refused to treat all hands if he had made a good find. The tone of morality at the fields is very low. The most influential of the inhabitants are accustomed to drink, many of them to gamble, while profane swearing and licentiousness are general. Several times have I seen a reverend gentleman—the Church of England chaplain—after preaching to an audience of diggers, turn into a canteen and drink off a glass of brandy in company with the profane and ungodly. And at another time he was so overcome with Cape sherry that, as Mrs. Gamp says, "quite unbeknown" to himself, he was unable to take part in a social gathering, and had to go to his tent. This example was not lost on the minds of his hearers, who invariably followed suit whenever possible. In fact, but for the leaven of good, respectable married and single women who were upon the fields, and exercised a restraint upon their friends, morals and manners, no doubt, would descend to the level of those of Bendigo and Ballarat. Still Du Toits Pan compared favorably with any mining camp in the world with regard to the amount of crime committed.* In fact, the police sel-

* The above applies to the Free State government. The British rule has been very lax. Natives discovered stealing diamonds went unpunished; and on the 18th of December, 1871, the diggers took the law in their own hands. The magistrates did not punish the rioters, and since then the condition of the camps has



"THROW IT UP, OLD FELLOW!"

dom had many whites in the "trouk" (jail). Drunkenness was no crime there, and consequently the police fraternized with the drinking community, and unfortunately also often took a drop too much. The principal offenders were the Caffres, who at the hour of 9 P.M. were supposed to leave the streets and keep in their tents or inclosures. Now a Caffre thinks himself as good as a white man, and he never understood the reason why a "boss" could stay out all night, get drunk, fight, and behave as he liked, while he was so mercilessly kept under. Numbers were continually evading this law, and every morning a long row of trembling natives stood out in front of the "trouk" to receive from ten to twenty-five lashes each—sentenced generally on the oath of the policemen that they were out after the prescribed hour. When any great number were to be

grown worse and worse. By the last mail it appears robberies are on the increase. Lynch-law is commonly resorted to, and these formerly peaceful and model camps are on a par with those so notorious on the gold fields of California and Australia.

punished, a large crowd would assemble to view the tortures of the prisoners; and very often a digger who had a lot of lazy or thievish Caffres would march down to the "trouk" at their head, and give them a view of what they might expect unless they reformed. The most expert man with the cat was a German who had been a man-o'-war's man for many years, and, as boatswain, had acquired such skill in the use of "nine-fingered Tom" that here he was unanimously appointed the chief tormentor. He would walk up and down the trembling rank of prisoners, drawing the pliant leathers through his hand as he counted the shining muscular backs which soon would be ridged and gory in answer to the lash, and then standing at number one, he would wait

the signal for business to commence. The blacks, on the whole, displayed much firmness and fortitude under punishment, and but few yelled and screamed, as some notorious garroters did when being flogged in London a few years ago. I saw one young boy receive thirty-five lashes for stealing diamonds. He stood up bravely, while strips of flesh hung down from his back and great drops of blood coursed down his legs. Whir, whir, the cat crossed his shoulders until his large eyes were blood-shot, his lips quivering, his hands working in agony; but he kept silence until the thirtieth time the lash descended, when, with a deep groan, full of the misery of physical torture, he fainted. At such scenes as these the black spectators would become much excited. They would grind their teeth, and with menacing looks gaze upon the officers of justice. I often thought they only waited for some favorable opportunity to wreak vengeance on their masters.

The word "jumped" was applied to any article which had left its resting-place in

the night, or during the temporary absence of its owners. Of course it was not stolen, as the "jumper," generally being poor, considered he was perfectly justified in appropriating what his rich neighbor could very well spare. The greatest run was on sieves, picks, buckets, and sorting-tables, which are all necessary to work a claim, but still cost more than a poor man felt justified in giving; consequently these articles were watched very carefully by their owners, and either placed for the night in the deepest pit in the claim, or under the impromptu couch of the wearied toiler. But the "jumper" appeared to possess an improved Argus eye, which saw sieves far in the bowels of the earth, or gazed triumphantly through the canvas of a tent upon some serviceable table; and in either case the article unaccountably departed, and forever after could be classed as "jumped" property by the indignant loser. He might hunt the camp over the next day, or complain to the police; justice was not to be had; and he might even stand over his identical property and not recognize it, so completely had plane, chisel, hammer, and saw disguised its features. When Bulbfontein Kopje was first opened, it was against the will of the owners (certain Jews from Hope-town); however, as they had no physical power with which to drive away the diggers, they planted huge signs in the ground warning people to leave the farm, or suffer all the fines and punishments the Orange Free State could inflict. The diggers paid much attention to these signs—that is, to the wooden part, as every night the planks disappeared very mysteriously, to be forthwith remodeled into the most approved patterns of sieves and tables. Next day these would do duty under the very noses of the proprietors, who, in tribulation, were searching for their "jumped" sign-boards.

The most interesting class of beings on the fields was the blacks, who, being willing to work, tramped in numerous bodies from their "kraals" to the mining camps. They are of four different nations. The handsomest and most trustworthy race are the Zulu Caffres of Natal and Caffraria; the next are the Basutos; third are the thievish and drunken Hottentots; and fourth, the Koraunas, small, ugly, and contemptible beings, despised by all the rest, and no use to the diggers from their unconquerable laziness. I always admired a Zulu. There was one lived near our tent, a model for a sculptor. He would sometimes cross my path, with his long steady stride, his blanket hanging around him in graceful folds, like the toga of a Roman senator. One hand grasped the robe and allowed freedom of motion, while the other would be crossed on his breast. In his woolly locks, braided and arranged neatly on his head, would appear feathers of different wild birds, while underneath his mass-

ive brow shone a pair of eyes—coal-black eyes—with such long lashes they reminded me of eyes in Eastern pictures. A man with such orbs as his could speak were he deaf and dumb. An aquiline nose with inflated nostrils overshadowed a delicately curved mouth full of firmness and pride. Below was the massive chin of statesmen and conquerors. In fact, he was a model man in ebony. If a number of such noble heathens could but be educated Christians, they would do more in evangelizing their nations and in civilizing and opening up Central Africa than all the foreign missionaries, or even a score of Livingstones. Their habits of life are very simple. They live principally on "mealies" (Indian corn) and sour milk, sheep and oxen being accounted too valuable for every-day consumption. All wild beasts are eaten, and these, with some nutritious roots, form the additions to the Caffre's regular diet. The great curse of domestic life among barbarians is there in full force, viz., the utter subjection of the females. They are obliged to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, to till the ground, herd the sheep, and at the same time attend upon their lord and master and their young children. You may well say a Caffre woman has her hands full. Her lot is miserable enough, and but for the law of polygamy it would be unbearable. Any Caffre can have as many wives as he can buy; and if he is rich in sheep and cattle, he travels through the country with a business eye, inquiring into the prices of different daughters, and judging whether they will suit him or not. If he likes a girl (they never fall in love), or her father is hard up and will sell reasonably, a bargain is made, and she goes to his "kraal," there, perhaps, to meet five or six other matrons of the family. This accession is followed by a feast, in which the old wives are congratulated upon having an addition to their laboring forces, while the husband has thus risen another peg in the scale of wealth and ease. Through hard labor, insufficient food, the cares of a family, etc., the women soon become ugly and crabbed. The greatest contrast possible is between the Caffre and his wives. At thirty years old he is sleek and handsome, with a self-contented air, as if enjoying life. At the age of from twenty-five to thirty his wives present a graduated scale of lean, attenuated spectres, with wrinkled faces and lack-lustre eyes. They jealously struggle with one another for the rights of their respective children, while each one has within her breast an eternal fire of hate for her copartners in misery. The Zulus' amusement consisted principally in smoking, dancing, or a grand talk or chat around the camp-fire. Their dances are very animated, and they kick and thump in an outrageous manner, while their mouths are uttering a wild chorus to some patriotic

song. At a distance the music sounds well. Night after night have I lain upon my couch while the distant song of perhaps ten or fifteen Caffres floated to my ears in rising and falling cadences of mournful music. As the sigh of the cool night breeze wafted the sounds over the dreary heaps of dust surrounding us I could distinguish the voices, some deep and guttural, others shrill and youthful, and when the wind was still the sound became indistinct, until some fresh blast brought again the song in Æolian harmony.

Some of the Zulus' traditions, and their practicing the rite of circumcision, have made many believe they are one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Whether this be so or not, it is evident they are the descendants of some Northern, perhaps Egyptian or Nubian, race, and have preserved through the lapse of centuries the most important of their ceremonies. Though these people are not so tractable as the South Sea Islanders, still, when once they change their lives and become civilized, they are generally honorable members of society. One of them, the Rev. Tiyo Saga, lately deceased, went to England after his conversion, had a theological education, and returned to Africa an ordained Wesleyan minister. He married a Scotch lady, and they together lived lives of usefulness. Hundreds of blacks can thank this devoted pair for their being instructed in the ways of religion and civilization.

The Basutos are an inferior race to the Zulus, and, although stout and intelligent, lack the regularity of feature and symmetry of their neighbors. They are fierce and impetuous in war, and occasioned the British much trouble a few years ago. Now they are valuable servants, and are upon the fields in great numbers. We preferred them to others, and employed as many as eight before we left the diggings. Some of them were very shrewd and penurious, and managed to get a great deal more out of us than their eight shillings per week. They thankfully accepted old clothes, shoes, needles and thread, etc., and never failed to inform you every two or three days that your working suit was much too poor for a "boss" to wear. I found out, however, if we were too liberal, we fell in their estimation; they imagined in such a case we would sacrifice all for their good-will and comfort, and acted accordingly. We had a very large Caffre, named Dick, a stout, broad-backed fellow, who came to me one day and said, "Boss, de moey" (boss, that good), pointing to one of my old coats, very weak in the back. I laughed at him, for he was one of the largest men I ever saw, and had a great brawny chest. However, I gave it to him, and he put it on. It scarcely came round on his breast at all. The button and button-hole were completely divorced, with no prospect

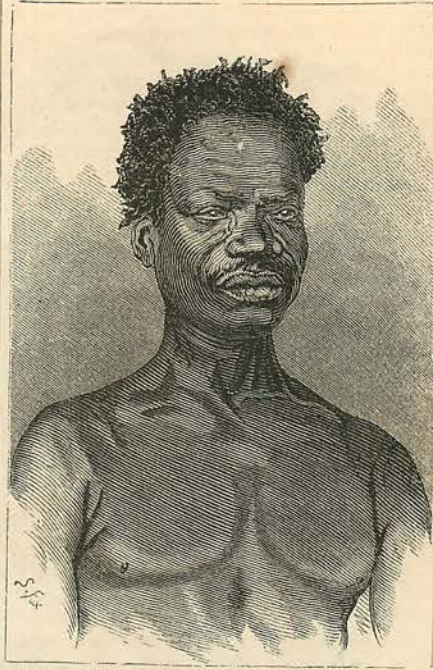


A CLOSE FIT.

of a reconciliation. Buttoning up my coat, I pointed to his; he thought he must follow the fashion, and tugged and tugged at the two sides, fairly groaning in his efforts to bring them together. Suddenly there came a loud crack, and—split went the back of the coat. He buttoned it, but that split it completely down, so that the two sides hung over his arms. All this time the other "boys" were roaring with laughter, and shouting "hooray." The poor fellow became disgusted when he found he could not keep the two pieces on his back; so he tore them off, and flung them into a puddle of water. Another Caffre fished them out, and thought he might be able to do something with them; but Dick never wore any thing from me afterward, unless, perhaps, a discarded paper collar, which, as it was too short, he tied round his huge neck with a string. If they are going out for a promenade, or wish to surprise a rival, they dress up in all imaginable odds and ends. Some wear a dilapidated hat only, others perhaps a coat or vest; and I have seen a big black fellow strutting along clad in a large pair of kid gloves and one lady's prunella boot, with the end cut off to let his toes out. Some stalk proudly along attired in paper collars, while others prefer the livery of nature to all else. As a rule, they are very sensitive to insults, and remember ever after a curse or a blow. They dislike all nicknames; and when we gave one of our "boys" the name of Sambo, he was much displeased. Through the medium of a Hottentot inter-

preter he told us "he was no nigger," and that he was as good as we were; so we were obliged to recall the offensive name, and use a most horrid combination of letters, which my tongue refused to pronounce.

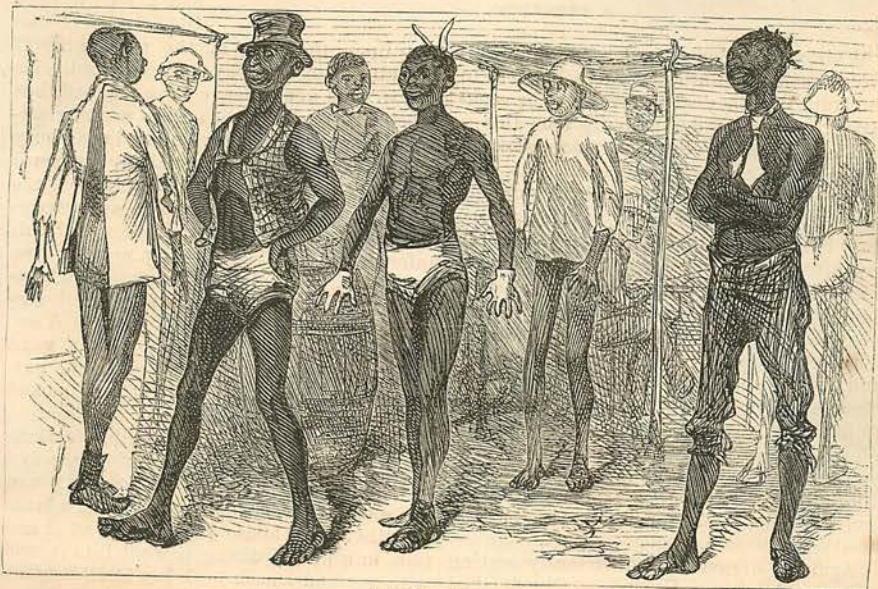
One very unpleasant thing on the fields is the amount of dust and flies in circulation; and of these two, the latter are the most agreeable. Although persecuting one most incessantly by day, night puts a stop to their torments, while no sooner does a puff of air come from yonder plain than you inhale a volume of dust—not the earthy, loamy dust of agricultural land, but the whitish-gray limy powder which has been refined by the action of shovel and sieve until it is as light as air. It impregnates your food, your hair is like a door-mat, and your eyes have a chronic soreness as though a thousand delicate needles were pricking into the eye-balls, while your body is chafed and sore from the friction of dusty clothes. All this is unpleasant; but we will suppose that the gentle wind has increased to a howling tempest, that storm-clouds fill the sky, and tents shake to the breeze; then, and then only, do the diggers reach the climax of misery. From hundreds of sieves and hundreds of conical dust heaps the wind gathers its load, and like some malicious fiend sweeps through the camp, turning the light of day into a hideous yellow twilight, circling round unprotected tents, and through all the seams and cracks, filling them full of floating dust. The diggers sneeze, cough, weep, and for relief rush into the open air, or more properly into an air of lime, where, utterly choked and blinded, they fall on their faces, there to gasp for breath like a



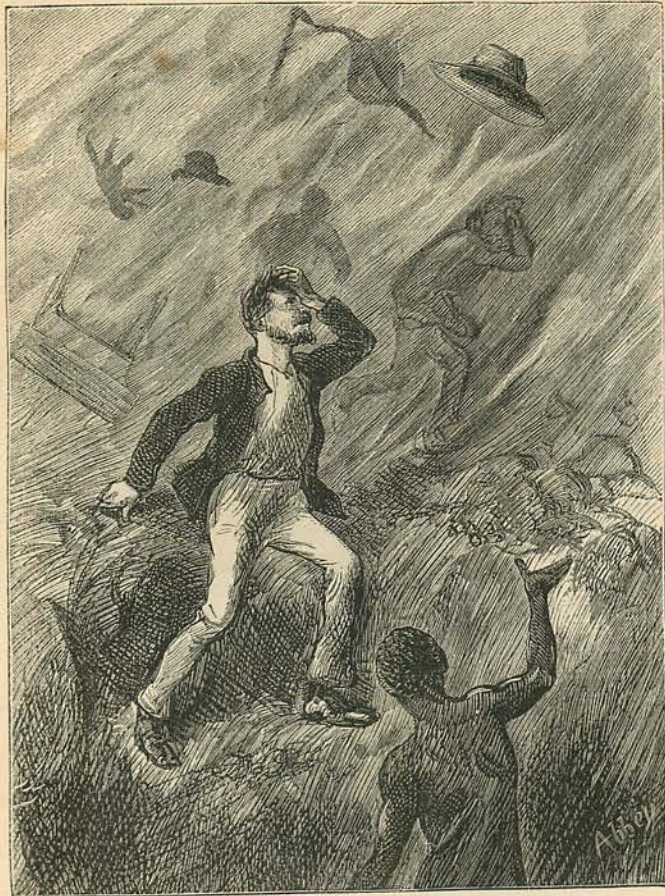
"I AM NO NIGGER!"

dying turtle, and curse the day they saw the fields.

This sometimes continues for hours: business is suspended; people desert their claims and shut themselves up in their dwellings; the streets are abandoned to the dogs; and no one has rest until the wind falls or a blessed shower turns dust to mud.



THE PROMENADE.



A WHIRLWIND.

Whirlwinds of any size or power are always considered unpleasant visitors, and in Du Toits Pan they still keep up their reputation. They do not actually tear things upside down and ruin whole tracts of country, as our Western tornadoes do, but they have an elevating influence, which tents unfortunately find it hard to resist, and try their hand at some mischievous trick, which involuntarily makes the sufferer shake his fist at the receding column, as if it was some naughty boy with a smart pair of legs. Now a broad-brimmed hat leaves its owner's head with a rush, and when he clears his sight, and spies it majestically revolving two or three hundred feet above him, and evidently having a through ticket for the distant plain, his heart sinks within him, and he mournfully descends his heap to purchase another, or he lets his "angry passions rise," and flails his Caffre for "hooraying" at the exciting spectacle.

Again a digger is industriously sorting on a light table. He has nearly finished his work, when, on looking up, he sees that

which makes him shut his eyes, hermetically seal his lips, and bob his head under the table. It is an unlucky position, for the whirlwind upsets the table on his head. It skins his face, and then dives down the adjoining hole on top of some affrighted black, while the column of wind and sand rushes on, increasing in size and power until it appears on the edge of the camp, to the dismay of all ladies on the streets, all cooks in their canvas or open-air kitchens, and all owners of crazy or dilapidated tents. A minute or two more it is a thing of the past. The damage is done. The column is far out on the dreary plain, and people resume their occupations. One spring day a tent-maker who lived by us had placed a large and light frame

tent upon the edge of the road, without fastening it in any way to the ground. He was warned not to leave it so exposed, but it being a calm day, the advice was neglected. About an hour after he was inside busy decorating its walls with red tape, when a sudden and violent whirlwind swept off the claims in all its dusty majesty, and careering down the Puiel road, encountered this unfortunate tent. A moment more it rose in the air like a balloon, the astounded tent-maker vainly hanging to its ribs, until, seeing it was bound to go up, he dropped out like an apple from a tree. Up it went whirling with frightful velocity, and pursuing the course of the road until it knocked fiercely against the gable of a neighboring canteen. In went the roof, while out came the inmates, amidst the smash of bottles and the running of brandy. On and on and round and round went the tent, until, spying a jaunty little canvas house which defied wind and rain, in a fit of jealousy it went into it, and with a grand smash both lay in ribbons on the ground, while the disgusted tent-maker

settled a bill for two ruined homes, instead of being paid for erecting one.

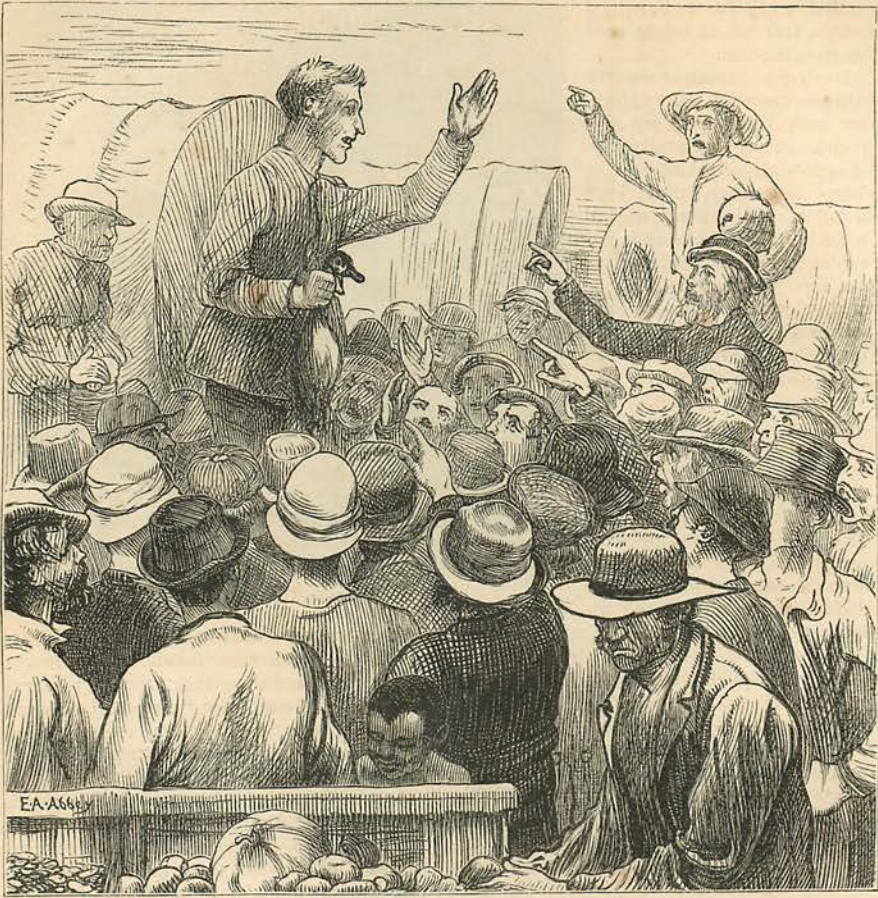
During the summer months rain-storms, with heavy thunder and lightning, are frequent. They generally approach with a violent breeze, sharp lightning, and loud thunder. The clouds are all in motion, crossing and meeting each other, while along the face of the nimbus, or storm-cloud, is a heavy gray pall of vapor. This is much lower than the rain-cloud, and when close to the earth portends a fearful storm. The gathering blackness, increased by clouds of dust, the zigzag lightning, the hoarse, reverberating sound of the thunder, and the moaning wind, all strike the spectator with awe. He gazes around him out on the distant plain, where all is dreary and sombre; up and down the street, full of men and animals seeking shelter; at the immense gray mounds of the claims, deserted and looking ghostly and unearthly against their pitchy background—and the storm is upon us. Some ominous rain-drops strike the tent, a flash of lightning blinds, a peal of thunder stuns, and the gates of heaven open. The roar of the tempest drowns all other sound, the tent shakes and trembles beneath the blast, while rivers of water course down the street, cutting great gullies in the road, and quickly undermining any protective earth-work the digger has placed around him. Soon the canvas begins to leak, and the inmates of the tent stand in dripping silence, listening to the war of the elements. One night our Caffres were drowned out by one of these heavy storms. They generally slept in a large circular fire-place of three feet depth, just sufficient to keep the cold from them, and in this were snugly encooned when it began to rain. Above the fire-place was a hollow which drained into it. As this drainage was very unpleasant, and often in heavy rains flooded out the fire, we had built a dam against it as a protection. On the night in question it rained so fast the hollow was soon a sheet of water, which pressed with such force against the dam that it gave way. In an instant the fire-place was full to overflowing, and the Caffres, thus rudely awaked, gave one mighty yell as the waters covered them. Aroused by the noise, I peeped forth as they were struggling out, their black heads showing around the edge of the fire-place like those of so many hippopotami. After getting out and giving some hearty shakes,



DROWNED OUT.

they commenced fishing up their bedclothes from the treacherous flood. Long before sunrise next morning they were at the tent door calling loudly for "soupies," or what we denominate "eye-openers," and certainly their condition, after what they had gone through, demanded relief.

As the fields became more thickly populated and the diggers grew richer, a great demand arose for vegetables and fruits. Far and wide went the news of the wonderful prices paid for all green stuff, and it aroused the sleepy farmers to action. From the Transvaal Republic they brought loads of oranges, peaches, and pumpkins; from the Colony sacks of potatoes, onions, and dried fruits; but prices increased, and the extraordinary demand soon exhausted the supply. In January of this year oranges sold for twenty-five cents each; potatoes, \$7 per one hundred pounds; eggs, \$1 25 per dozen, etc. The morning markets were consequently scenes of great excitement. The evening before, the wagons, which had come from afar loaded with produce, "outspanned" on the great plot of ground used as a market square. The next morning at sunrise it would be all alive. Flocks of sheep and goats being driven to their pens; Dutchmen unloading the contents of their caravans and placing each article by itself, or in small lots, to suit the purchaser. Here was a complete digger's outfit going without reserve, there some damaged groceries or goods, all awaiting the hammer of the market-master. At seven that worthy mounts a stool, and business commences. An eager crowd surrounds him, of all colors and nations, yelling, talking, laughing, and



THE MARKET-MASTER.

making themselves merry, when suddenly a dead silence falls on the reckless assemblage, as a pail of eggs is held up to their gaze. "Now how much for the eggs, at per dozen?—one shilling bid." A dozen heads bob in the affirmative. Two shillings; three. The price rises until the man with the long purse becomes their owner. Up goes a pumpkin. A rush by the crowd. Every eye seeks that of the auctioneer. Every man wants to bid; but in the twinkling of an eye it's gone. "For how much?" an outsider asks of another. "Cheap at three 'bob' (shillings), he answers. Up goes another pumpkin, and another, until very likely a whole wagon-load is disposed of, at prices which make the old boer's face wrinkle with smiles. Next there is a scramble to get exactly over a heap of fine potatoes which are to be sold. Two or three weaker ones get upset in the rush, while a dense circle of giant and muscular diggers surrounds the centre of attraction. Of course the unlucky outsiders have no chance of catching the market-master's eye, and in

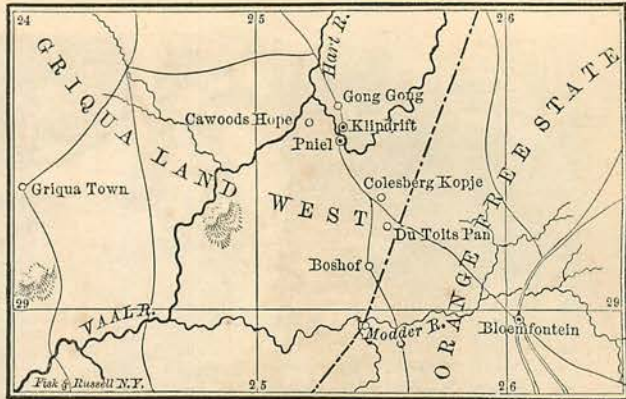
self-defense form an opposition circle around the next pile, each one mentally calculating the amount of "tin" he is prepared to stake on the produce before him. This exciting work goes on until nine o'clock, when the crowd of diggers, having purchased every thing eatable, leave for their claims, while the lucky owners of the wagons crowd into the little market office, eager to receive the price of their loads and to "trek" away from the city of tents.

Du Toits Pan is a rich spot of earth, but five miles north of it lies the most wonderful mine which has ever yet been discovered. Colesberg Kopje, or De Beer's New Rush, is the richest, the smallest, and most dangerous mine in existence. Here is where the wildest dreams of fortune-hunters have been realized; where poor sailors have acquired their thousands in two and three months, and departed literal Sindbads; where from three to four thousand diamonds are exhausted daily, besides quantities of rubies, garnets, emeralds, and olivines; where the eager rush for wealth has caused a square

foot of ground to be sold at from \$25 to \$50, and where the reckless diggers have excavated graves for themselves, in their haste to be rich forgetting proper precautions for working their claims in safety. Foreseeing the tremendous amount of labor that would be concentrated in and about the claims, the surveyors made twelve roads through the kopje, to which each claim-holder gave seven feet and a half. So between

every two lines of claims there was a road fifteen feet wide. Of course this portion of the ground was to remain untouched until some future time, when, the rest of the soil being worked, these alone remained to dig into. But—alas for the anticipations of the authorities and the intentions of the diggers!—the roads were not left intact. They were undermined, gouged, and encroached on, until they began to cave in. Huge slices would break away from the walls, and with a dull thud, and surrounded by a choking limy dust, would crash into the pit below. Perhaps a faint cry would be heard as the horrified digger, looking up, saw his end at hand; or perhaps more likely his back was bent, and, eager to see the sparkling gem turn out before his gaze, he was cut off from the living world without a moment's warning. Another day a gaping crack in the roadway is ominous of an accident. The diggers look at it and say, "It's no wider to-day than yesterday;" "Oh, it will stand;" "We are safe enough;" and so they descend the shaft, unmindful of their peril. Ten minutes after a heavily loaded cart crawls that way, its great wide wheels cutting deep into the ground. It reaches this crack, a wheel enters the seam, and a moment more the digger below and the driver above meet in eternity, while a crowd of Caffres make a "hooray" over the affair as they pull their mutilated bodies away from the confused mass of wood, iron, and dirt. Next day the claim is sold, and people forget the last accident in the still newer horrors which accumulate. The dangerous condition of the mine has caused many to sell out and leave, for as it is at present worked (July, 1872), no man can descend into the claims without peril to his life. In the end the only plan to work it safely will be to form a joint-stock company to work it out piecemeal, for four or five thousand conflicting interests are unmanageable when concentrated in the area of fourteen acres.

The appearance of this place when all are

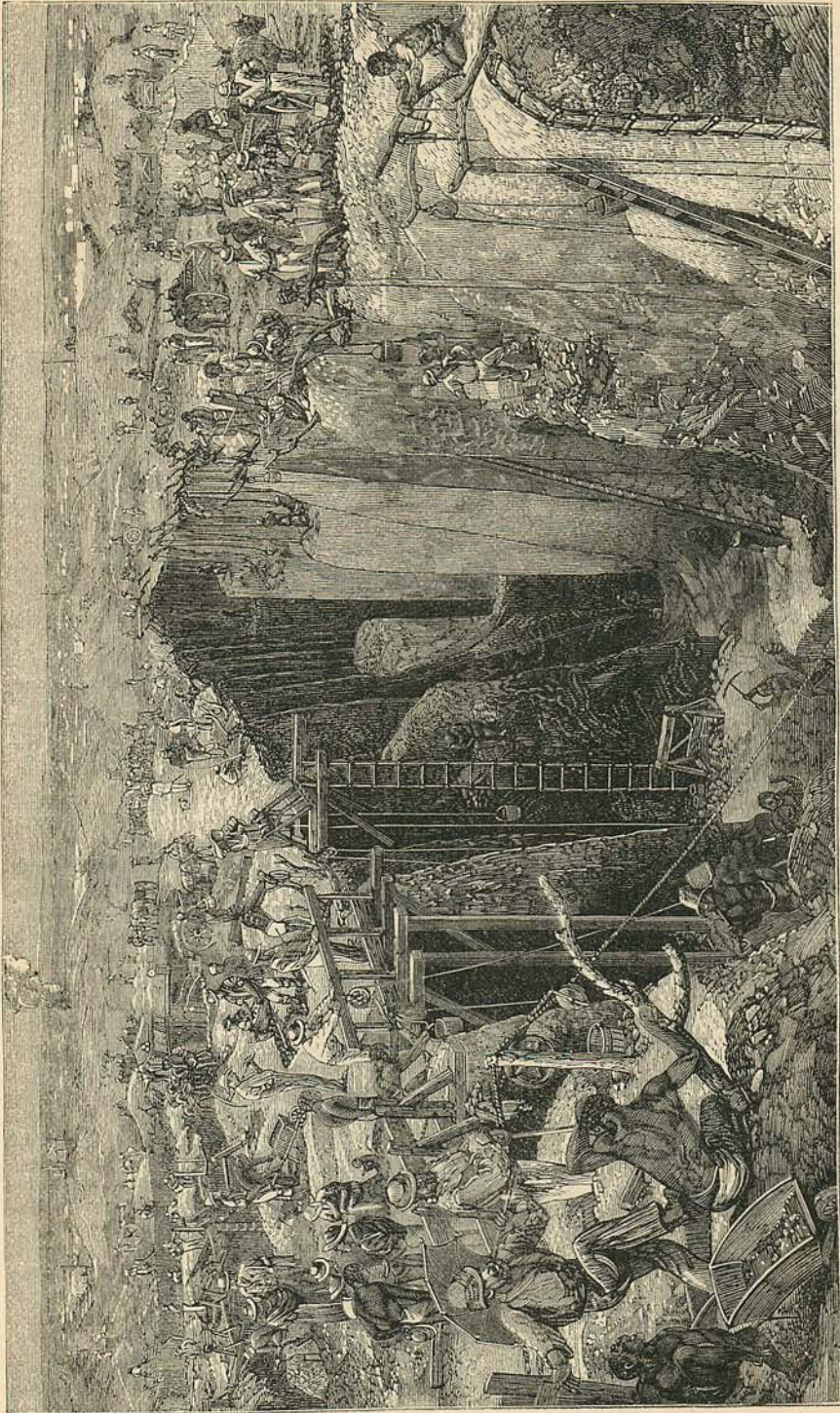


MAP OF DIAMOND FIELDS.

at work is wonderful. It is like a hive of bees swarming over the comb, while the noise of countless iron buckets banging against the stony walls of the claims as they go up and down, the squeaking of blocks and pulleys, the noise of wheels and cries of men, make an uproar like that from the Tower of Babel. One said, "Tis Babel upside down." The immense size of the excavations strikes strangers with amazement. Imagine twelve dry-docks from two hundred and fifty to three hundred yards long and forty-five feet wide, while their depth varies from twenty-five to eighty feet, affording room, if filled with water, sufficient to float twelve *Great Easterns* and a number of ships besides, and you can realize the amount of work which has been done in nine months. All the diamondiferous soil from the inside claims has to be removed in carts, and generally goes to the owner's tents, where he and his family sift and sort it. Around the edge of the mine runs the reef, and the dirt from the outside claims is deposited on this. Month by month these mounds increased, until now they are miniature mountains, and, when I last visited the spot, from their elevation I commanded a fine view of the surrounding country, the diversified camp, and could look directly down into the galleries and pits of the different diggers. Along through the bottom of each excavation was a toiling mass of blacks, looking as though slaves in some Oriental sultan's employ. Occasionally one would "hooray," and holding up his hand, shout out, "Diamond, boss!" The others would take up the shout, and a grand yell would echo and chorus back and forth from one road to another as the happy digger descended to take possession of his find.

Once upon a time, though, a man's happiness on such an occasion was turned very speedily to mourning. The story is as follows:

"A lamentable instance of the frailty of human kind was evidenced at the New Rush last week. The



WORKING IN THE EXCAVATIONS.

judgment of the wrathful Fates followed most rapidly on the offense. Contrary to the Horatian theory about punishment tracking crime with a lame leg, punishment bustled along with peculiar alacrity. A digger had just discovered in the bowels of the earth a large diamond, estimated at from fifty to sixty carats' weight. He put it into his mouth, and proceeded gayly to ascend the ladder out of the cavernous depths. While so doing a nigger at the top happened to shake the machine. Perfectly naturally, and according to the usual custom of the fields, the gentleman spake sharply with his tongue, and favored our colored brother with a few of those flowers of language for which the diggings are achieving a reputation. Alas! as he made these *cursor*y observations the diamond escaped from between his lips, fell into the adjoining claim, and was seen no more of men! We have heard of ladies dropping pearls as they spoke, but we have a still rarer instance of a man cursing diamonds!—*Digger's Gazette*.

From careful calculations it is found that about four thousand diamonds and pieces of diamonds are unearthed here every day. However, out of such a mass of gems but few are "pure water brilliants." A perfect white stone of any size is indeed a treasure. They are rarely seen without blemish, and the majority of finds consist of flawed, spotted, or discolored stones, angular chips, or small fragments, which latter are nearly valueless. The immense quantity of these chips and flawed stones thrown on the market has necessarily caused a tremendous fall in their values. Unlike other commodities, diamonds are imperishable. Once cut and set, they never lose their lustre, never decay or wear out, and are certainly the most lasting of man's possessions. Every one wants new clothes periodically (the ladies want them with each change in the fashions); a nation requires a new coinage every few years; ships and houses begin to decay from the time they are built; but an outfit of diamonds is everlasting. Although it was discouraging to diggers to see this sudden depreciation, they generally stuck to their claims, hoping it might be their good fortune to find a charming family of big ones—every one a hundred carat—when they might bid good-bye to claims and tents, flies and fleas, and emigrate to their chosen home, there to enjoy a fortune built upon a sound diamondiferous basis. A few, generally the first owners of the New Rush claims, made large fortunes. They got their ground for nothing, found one to twenty diamonds every day, sold out when claims realized from £500 to £2000, and their diamonds brought a very fair and remunerative price. One Smuts made £11,000 in a month, then divided his claim into sixths, selling each sixth for £300, and departed a wealthy man. A Captain Behrman was wrecked on the coast, lost his ship, and in the end luckily came to the New Rush, from which place he departed in three months with \$75,000 in hard cash.

A boer, by name Wemmer, turned out in one day thirty-one diamonds, weighing respectively thirty-three carats, eighteen, fif-

teen, nine, seven and a half, and other smaller ones. He had only returned to the fields a few days before, after an absence of a month, and upon his arrival was quietly presented by his black servants, whom he had left in charge, with upward of 300 diamonds! He is now decidedly the richest digger in the camp, and although worth his thousands, still works hard in his splendid claim. His good luck will end no one knows how, as his section is not half worked out, and ere this he may be a second Stewart or Rothschild, and a digger prince among his fellows.* A Diamond Field newspaper thus

* Of course people unlucky enough to have no claim in this El Dorado believed against hope that there must be other "kops"† just as rich; and weekly, almost daily, parties go prospecting. It is rumored they are finding. Thousands rush off to the spot. Time and money are spent, and nothing gained. One day the news was, east of this they are finding diamonds by the handful; plenty of open ground; a sure fortune; and away went the diggers, while the speculative canteen-keepers also migrated. When Jones and I, after a six miles' walk under a hot nine-o'clock sun, parched with thirst and white with dust, approached the reputed mine, we found about a dozen large canteens in full blast, while several carts were coming on the ground loaded with divers ominous-looking casks. Near by was a hole, and packed close around were fully eight or nine hundred diggers, while in the cavity a lazy black was grubbing the lime. A few were marking out claims, but the majority having seen no diamonds, contemptuously asserted, "This is a fool's rush." Suddenly a bloated old fellow near by, nicknamed Mahogany Nose, from the red appearance of that organ, jumps up and down over his table, and shouts, "Diamond! diamond!" A rush is made for him. One or two get tumbled down this hole in their hurry, and we are around the finder. "Let's see it," all cry. "Oh, it's only half a carat! But it's a good sign;" and having delivered it up for inspection, Mahogany Nose scrapes away again frantically. People swallow the bait, and become excited. All seize their picks and mark out claims, until the ground is occupied. More people arrive, and seeing such a wild uplifting of picks and shovels, feel certain this is the spot; but alas! they find no vacancies to fill up. So perceiving one man with a block of four or five claims, they seize one or two and "jump" them. Up comes owner No. 1. "What are you doing?" "I'm taking this claim. You have five, but you can only hold two." No. 1 waxes wroth. "They are for my friends." No. 2 "can't help it;" whereupon No. 1, if a plucky man, pulls off his coat, rolls up his shirt sleeves, and comes up to No. 2 with the ultimatum, "Shoulder your pick and leave, or—" Five minutes more every man on the hill is wedged into an immense circle around this claim, applauding and encouraging the two pugilists. The contest is conducted according to all the rules of the prize-ring; and the winner is borne on his friends' shoulders to a canteen, where gallons of ale and beer are swallowed to commemorate the victory. But there is a suspicion that old Mahogany Nose has been gulling the public. One remarks, "That's his canteen over there;" another thinks he has "planted" the diamonds he is finding, and the intoxicated crowd, putting two and two together, conclude the rush is a hoax, and make such unfriendly demonstrations toward old Mahogany that he leaves his claim, enters his canteen, and gives a free treat to all who come. By this stroke of policy his popularity is restored among the multitude. Now "he's such a good fellow" every body must drink his health. As we are parched with thirst and weary, let us approach his bar. "Have you any water?" He smiled upon us, and shook his head. "What are you washing your glasses in, then?" I ask-

† Hills.

humorously depicts the life, morals, and luck of a fortunate miner:

"Monday.—Sent Caffres to the claim at sunrise, and went to bed again. Strolled down to the claim at 11.30, being stopped by men to come and wet their finds seventeen times in two hundred and fifty yards. My head boy brought me a ten carat, a five, and three little ones. Told them to wire in; proceeded to liquor. At 6 o'clock they brought me five more little ones. Gave the boys a bottle of Cape 'smoke' [brandy].

"Tuesday.—Went into Klipdrift for a wash, and a dinner at Mrs. Schuard's. Played a rubber of whist, and as I did not happen to be hard up, won heavily from some poor devil.

"Wednesday.—Played billiards all the morning, and went in for one of Sanger's curries for tiffin. Played pool in the evening, and dropped, as there were some smart *cueists* about, and the balls went in like greased lightning, and with the unceasing regularity of my tailor's bill in old times.

"Thursday.—Came back to New Rush on horseback. Felt very sore in consequence. Boys brought me twenty-two diamonds. Told them I was disappointed. They can't have half worked.

"Friday.—Found my tent surrounded by persons with satchels, representing themselves as diamond buyers. Boys brought in a seventy carat, but off colored—no use.

"Saturday.—Went early to the claim. Slipped in getting down the ladder, and came down in a sitting posture on a lump of earth. Proceeded to rub myself, and out fell a *two hundred carat*, pure white. Shall go to Cape Town for a spree for a month. So 'Come along, old fellow, let's have a wet! This diamond-digging is cruel hard work.'"

The largest stones are found in Du Toits Pan. Several of one hundred and thirty and one hundred and fifty carats have been unearthed there, as also the largest diamond yet discovered in Africa. Its weight was one hundred and sixty-eight carats, unfortunately not of first water. I once had the pleasure of examining a one-hundred-and-fifty-carat. It is impossible to adequately describe it. There it was on my hand, a great drop of dazzling light, at the least motion throwing out quivering rays and flashes which seemed to be as powerful as those from old Sol himself. No wonder the ancients worshiped them, that the Asiatics use them for the eyes of idols. They strike man with surprise and awe. Adamant itself, mysteriously formed, unassailable by acids, and untouched by time, it is not

ed. He stopped business, and smiling still more openly, replied, "Why, that's ginger-beer. We sold all the water at sixpence a glass, and now we'll give you a tot of ginger-beer for ninepence." Seeing no prospect of any other beverage unless brandy, we swallowed our allowances and left the crowded tent, feeling more painfully than ever the tortures of thirst. "Jones, let us leave," I gasped. But Jones refused. With Yorkshire obstinacy he waited to watch our claim, which I was certain was worthless. And from the talk around me, many others thought theirs so too. Two glum old diggers were shouldering their tools, preparatory to a thirsty six miles' walk. "Bill, I'd like to choke off that d—d old weasel as made this here rush. Blast him!" he continued, "he's sold all his liquors, and to-morrow down comes the tent, while he counts our shillings." His partner comfortingly responded, "Let's pounce 'is 'ead." But the prospect of doing this without serious damage to themselves from Mahogany's drunken friends was small, and they departed sadder and wiser men from Fools' Rush No. —.

strange they are the most valued of earth's productions—our ideals of beauty, and caskets of condensed wealth.

ROBIN'S-EGG BLUE.

FAIR, in the homely raiment
That speaks of her low estate,
Stands Bertha upon the threshold
Just at the stroke of eight,
And says, as she smoothes the tangles
From the rarest of nut-brown curls,
"To-day I shall fashion a bonnet
For the veriest queen of girls!"

For here is the daintiest fabric
That ever in silk was wrought;
And here is the glossiest feather,
That matches just to a thought;
And here are the pinkest rose-buds,
All perfect in shape and hue,
That ever beneath the fingers
Of maiden artist grew.

Swiftly, with fair, neat fingers,
Works Bertha of ready will,
Fashioning crown and border,
And joining the whole with skill;
And while she threads the mazes
Of many a fold and seam,
Swiftly her spirit lapses
Away in a happy dream:

A dream of a garled old orchard,
Where, in the far-off Springs,
Home birds built nests in the branches,
Home robins with russet wings—
Nests full of birds' own treasures,
That are now green, now blue,
That hint of their leafy covering,
And distant sky tints too.

Such hue has the glistening fabric
That under her fingers flows:
"Would it were mine!" says Bertha,
As the fairy structure grows.
Then, with a laugh like music,
"I should need silks and pearls
To wear with a bonnet fashioned
For the veriest queen of girls."

"Blue?" "So exceedingly common!"
"But very stylishly made!
Écru? The hat is imported,
And just the *recherché* shade."
A shrug of the stately shoulders,
A slightly gathering frown:
"I've had one like it already
Since we came back to town."

"This? 'tis the very latest,"
As, with unconscious grace,
Timidly little Bertha
Steps forward from her place.
No rarer product of labor
Has high-born maiden seen:
Bertha a chaplet has fashioned
Befitting a fairy queen.

"This!"—with a smile complacent,
And, glowing with happy pride,
Into her waiting carriage
The lady sweeps aside.
And Bertha, standing reluctant,
Utters a rising sigh
For a life she can but dream of,
And pleasures that pass her by:

A life she can but dream of,
And filled with the brightest things;
But Bertha is happy-hearted—
No guile in her bosom springs.
Slowly the twilight gathers,
Telling her day's work done:
With innocence as an armor
Homeward she walks alone.

Just a few tear-drops welling
Softly her pillow greet;
But care comes with the morrow,
And labor's rest is sweet.
Surely the waiting angels
(Some say that such there be)
Perfect in the blissful dream-land
The broken reality.