

## The Boer "Tower of London."

A VISIT TO THE STAATS MUSEUM, PRETORIA.

BY REV. JOHN C. HARRIS, OF JOHANNESBURG.

[The writer of the following interesting article, a clergyman who has been driven from his home in Johannesburg, took the photographs himself, and these are the only ones ever taken of the many objects of peculiar interest to the British people at the present time.]

“**N**OW that our burghers are busy fighting for 'land and folk,' I venture to appeal to them to remember our State Museum. Let them all be on the look-out for any relics likely to be of interest—such as flags, lances, helmets, swords, etc. Such articles should find a place in our new Museum, so that we may show posterity at what a price, and against what wicked and cruel devices of our enemies, we won our freedom.”

So wrote Dr. Gunning, the Superintendent of the Pretoria State Museum, in the notorious *Standard and Diggers' News*, just a month after the Boers commenced the present war.

Most Englishmen will regard the sublime confidence and assurance of the Doctor with amusement. And yet few realize what a powerful factor that Museum, stuffed away in an obscure corner in Pretoria, has been in keeping alive the racial feud, stimulating the bitter antipathies, and inflating the fancied prowess of the hundreds of back-veldt Boers, who have, during their infrequent visits to Pretoria, gazed open-mouthed at its treasures.

It is to them all that the Tower of London and Holyrood Palace and Westminster Abbey are to Britons. All that, with a "Madame Tussaud's" thrown in! It is the only history they can read, the shrine of all their heroic traditions and glowing achievements, the record of their long fugitive years, of their "treks" and battles—and vic-

tories. There the hairy, grimy old veteran tells his boys of Bronkhorst Spruit and Majuba, of Dingaan and Malaboch, of the Voor-trekker's—and of Jameson. Here have been fed and fanned the slumbering fires of hate, the lingering love of liberty, and the perverted sense of patriotism: the factors and forces which have made the brave but ignorant people an all too easy prey to the scheming cliques and mercenary intrigues of opposing factions, the wild conflict of which has flung them with the force of Fate to their destiny—and their undoing.

It never struck me in this light until one day I watched some of the burghers who had "outspanned" their waggons on the market square outside stroll around the cases, and gaze vacantly at the well-arranged treasures of the Museum.

I was amazed to find that almost everything was associated in their minds with the English—the "verdomde Rooinek."

As you pass through the turnstile to enter, the word *UIT* indicates the way of exit. But you observe how cleverly the authorities have turned the letters *O u t*, which were cast in the iron, into the Dutch word. The



English word must not be seen. Immediately inside the door is a fine model of one of the Castle boats, presented to President Kruger by Sir Donald Currie.

"Ah, see!" said one old Boer to the others, "there is the ship that brings the Rooineks over the sea." A significant grunt

occasion of my last visit it was missing. While photographing it I remarked to the Hollander attendant (to whose kindness and courtesy I am very much indebted), "It seems not to have been used very much, does it?" "Well," he replied, in a burst of confidence, and with a laugh, "it wasn't

Jameson's at all! We got it from a safe in Johannesburg at the time of the Raid; but"—with an apologetic smile—"we must have something to show the burghers when they come, you see."

Yes, I saw!

"But," he went on, lest I might think the whole thing was a fraud,



From a]

REVOLVER SHOWN AS DR. JAMESON'S.

[Photograph.

followed; until, catching sight of an *aas vogel* (vulture) suspended from the iron roof, another said, with exultant gutturals, "Yah, and there is the bird that eats the *rooi baatjes* (red-coats) when we shoot them on the veldt." "Yes," said a third, with rising triumph, "and here is Jameson's revolver."

There is, of course, the usual assortment of horrors and curios, the bottled snakes, dried birds, musty skulls, and the inevitable mummy—in this case a very dilapidated one. But these to the average Boer are meaningless. His eye sees only that which it brings with it, and to him history is of yesterday, and to-morrow.

All the sturdy patriotism of his race, all the wild freedom of the veldt, all the blood-feud of the years, and the rankling memories of past grievances gleam in his eyes and ring in his tremulous voice as he gazes at these dumb but eloquent relics of his age-long struggle.

On several occasions I have visited the Museum, and the photographs herewith were taken by the special permission of the courteous superintendent, a few weeks before the war commenced.

Almost the first object to catch the eye, on entering, was a large revolver labelled "Jameson's Revolver." I say *was*, for on the

"these are genuine—picked up at Doornkop—and so is Jameson's saddle." Would I care to see it?

Of course I would. It was in one of the small rooms leading off the main hall, and I had no little difficulty in getting a good photograph of it, but here it is in the lively company of skeleton fishes and Kaffir spears. It is still a good saddle, and "Dr. Jim" may yet ride abroad on it some day. May he never repeat his magnificent madness!



From a]

DR. JAMESON'S SADDLE

[Photograph.

Hanging on the wall, as though keeping grim guard over the Raiders' relics, is an excellent photograph of President Kruger as he appeared nearly thirty years ago, and which reveals the sullen, dogged determination of the man.



PRESIDENT KRUGER IN 1870.  
From a Photograph.

Not less determined is the glance of the "British Lion," which glares with its glassy eyes upon the old President. Surely a significant juxtaposition that these two should have thus faced each other for so long in that dusty, flag-floored hall!

Perhaps the most interesting articles in the place are the relics of the old Voor-trekkers—the Pilgrim Fathers of the Boers, the sturdy and untamed spirits who, from the days of Van Rubeck to the present time, have sought a home



From a

PIET RETIEF'S BIBLE.

[Photograph.]



From a

THE BRITISH LION.

[Photograph.]

in the vast wilderness, setting out in their waggons upon the great wastes, as the early mariners pushed out upon the unknown seas: and as their great hero, Abraham, went out "not knowing whither he went."

The modern globe-trotter who, landing in Cape Town from a palatial liner, is whirled in a comfortable saloon across the great Karoo and the arid highlands to the goldfields, little thinks of the privation, the loneliness, and the weary sufferings of these old pilgrims and pioneers. Among them-

selves there were few to chronicle the tragedy and pathos of it. Dr. Theal, in his history of the Boers, recounts some of the tale, but the most pathetic and touching witnesses are the few relics gathered by their descendants, and enshrined in the National Museum.

Here is the huge Bible of Piet Retief, one of the leaders of the great trek of 1814. A ponderous volume it is—Dutch, of course, and fearfully and wonderfully illustrated, as will be seen from the realistic picture of Jonah, shown in the photograph.

But the most curious, and most prized, of all the Voor-trekker relics is the old almanac shown here. Out on the wide veldt, trekking for month after month, far from the haunts of men, these daring old

Boer-Bedouins must have often lost count of time but for this simple and primitive contrivance. It is a small black board, about two feet square. Along the top run the initial letters of the week-days; down the left are rows of holes numbered up to thirty-one; and down the centre a similar row marking the months of the year. Three pegs serve to indicate at a glance the day of week and month. In the photograph the date marked is Donderdaag (Thursday), 5th May.

Apparently there were no Leap-years in those days. So greatly do the authorities in Pretoria value this old curiosity that at the time of my last visit—in September, 1899—I learned that a facsimile of it was being made for the Paris Exhibition.



From a] THE VOOR-TREKKERS ALMANAC. [Photograph.



From a] A TYPICAL BOER CHAIR. [Photograph.

Here is an old Boer chair, which once adorned a stoep on some farm, in which the fat old farmer or his vrow sat, drowsily drinking the eternal coffee, and grunting to his slaves. Its size is not exaggerated, and calls up visions of "Tant Sannie," so graphically portrayed by our "only green Olive."

The next is a melancholy reminder of a sad story, which sheds little glory on British discretion or Boer honour. It is the

revolver of the brave Colonel Anstruther, who was shot at Bronkhorst Spruit on December 20th, 1880. Our brave fellows were shot down, after a "two minutes' ultimatum," before they had time to get their rifles. They were unaware that they were in an enemy's country, and had marched into a deliberately planned ambush, and although some may argue that Colonel Anstruther was indiscreet in not heeding the warnings sent to him, that revolver in Pretoria stands a mute witness to an incident which we all wish we could forget.

Next to Bronkhorst Spruit, Potchefstroom stands out a name of sorrow in the dark annals of the War of Independence. Here is a hymn-book,



From a] COLONEL ANSTRUTHER'S REVOLVER. [Photograph.

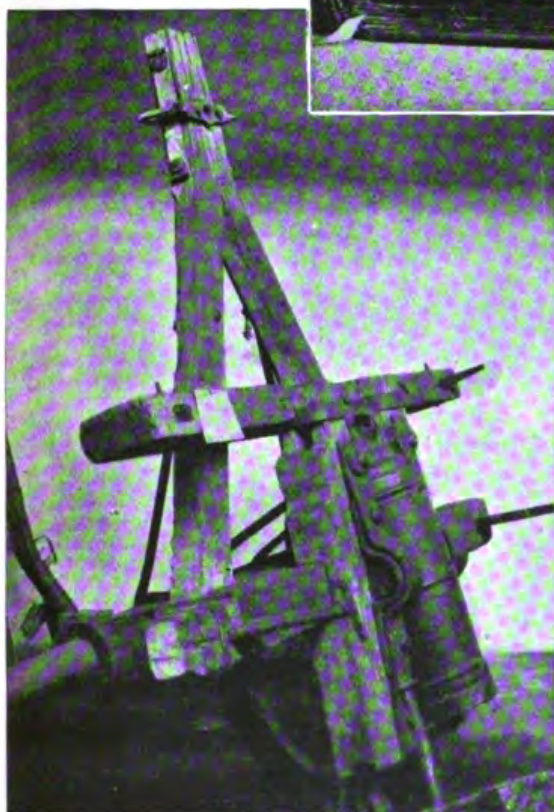
showing a bullet-hole, found in a house after the siege.

At the commencement of the present war President Kruger threatened that he would "stagger humanity." At any rate he has succeeded in surprising his enemy, by the amazing excellence of the Boer artillery and the



HYMN-BOOK WITH BULLET-HOLE FOUND AFTER THE SIEGE OF POTCHEFSTROOM.

From a Photograph.



From a] "OLD GEIKIE." [Photograph.

mounted on a portion of a waggon, and was used at the siege of Potchefstroom in the war of 1881. "Every time Old Geikie was fired the recoil sent her flying backward over the waggon," said my interesting and courteous informant.

A still more wonderful witness to their military skill and ingenuity is shown in the next photograph. It is an old cannon which was actually made

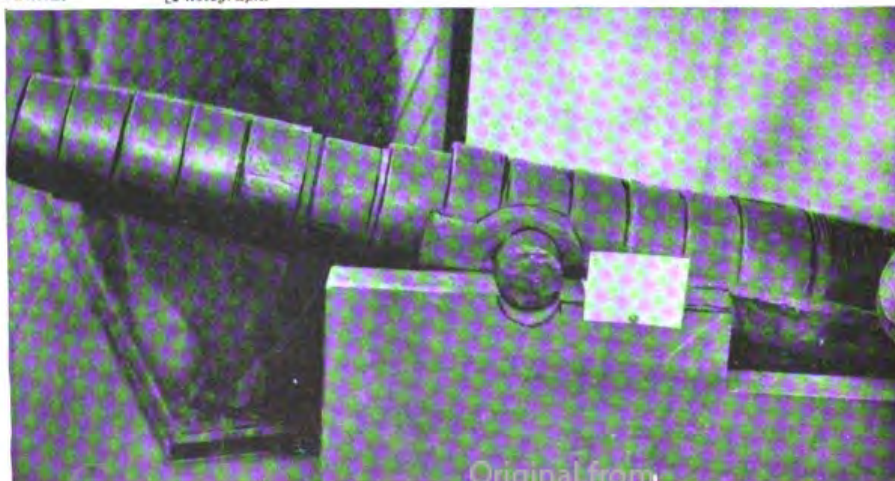
taken from the hubs of their waggon wheels. How they managed to weld them together is a mystery, and still more mysterious is it how they succeeded in firing the extraordinary piece of artillery. But there it stands, in curious contrast to their "Long Toms" and Maxim-Nordenfelts which, while this is being written, are barking forth defiance and death at our brave troops.

The next shows a group of guns in the Museum. The large mitrailleuse was presented to President Burgers by the German Emperor in 1870. The others are on the retired list—now, we know why!

Of the wars waged by the Boers against native tribes, the most important during recent years have been those against Malaboch and Magato. The war against Malaboch was one of the most deliberate and wicked

undreamed-of perfection of their arms.

It is curious to turn from accounts of the recent battles describing the latest and most perfect guns to the photographs of the old cannon used by the Boers. The one most treasured by them is "Old Geikie." It is



AN OLD BOER GUN MADE OUT OF THE IRON BANDS OF WAGGON-WHEELS.

From a Photograph.



From a]

GROUP OF CANNON USED BY THE BOERS BEFORE THEIR RECENT ARMING.

[Photograph.

injustice, both in its instigation and in its conduct. Many a Britisher felt his blood boil with indignation over the affair. Only those on the spot could rightly measure the iniquity of it.

Here are the war-drums captured from Malaboch and Magato. The former, by the way, is supposed to be still languishing in Pretoria Gaol, or was, at the commencement of the war.

Transvaal and FreeState money is not of much value at this moment. Thirty odd years ago the Treasury must have been in a bad way, judging from the paper money — “papier-geld” — shown opposite. A bank-note for sixpence and “Good Fors” of the Orange Free State for three-pence are among



From a]

WAR-DRUMS OF MALABOCH AND MAGATO.

[Photograph.

the treasured mementos of those pre-Rand days — before the Uitlanders' enterprise swelled the coffers and disturbed the Arcadian peace of Pretoria or Potchefstroom.

In June, 1795, an expedition from the English Government cast anchor in Simon's Bay, and presented a mandate to the authorities of the Dutch East India Company demanding a surrender of the

garrison and forts at Cape Town. There was considerable delay and some diplomacy to be got through, but after one or two half-hearted engagements, in which the Dutch were driven back from Muizenburg to Wynberg, they capitulated, and on September 16th, 1795, the Dutch troops marched out of the quaint old Castle in

Cape Town with drums beating and colours flying, and laid down their arms to the British, and thus ended the rule of the Dutch East India Company in South Africa, after an occupation of 143 years.



BOER PAPER MONEY OF THIRTY YEARS  
From a                      AGO.                      [Photograph.

It is curious to us to-day, engaged, as we are, in repeating history as well as making it, to turn to a letter written in the year 1795 by one of the sturdy old standard-holders to his "Dear and

Then after a few other particulars of the prospective campaign the father pushes the warrior aside: "Take good care of our children as a mother in case I may not come back . . . ."

Was he an Absent-Minded Beggar?

How often, during the hundred odd years since that pathetic epistle, now crumpled and yellowed, was written, have the stolid antipathies and dogged resistances of it recurred, smouldering under conventions and treaties—only now to burst into a flame which is devastating the sunny land of the South!

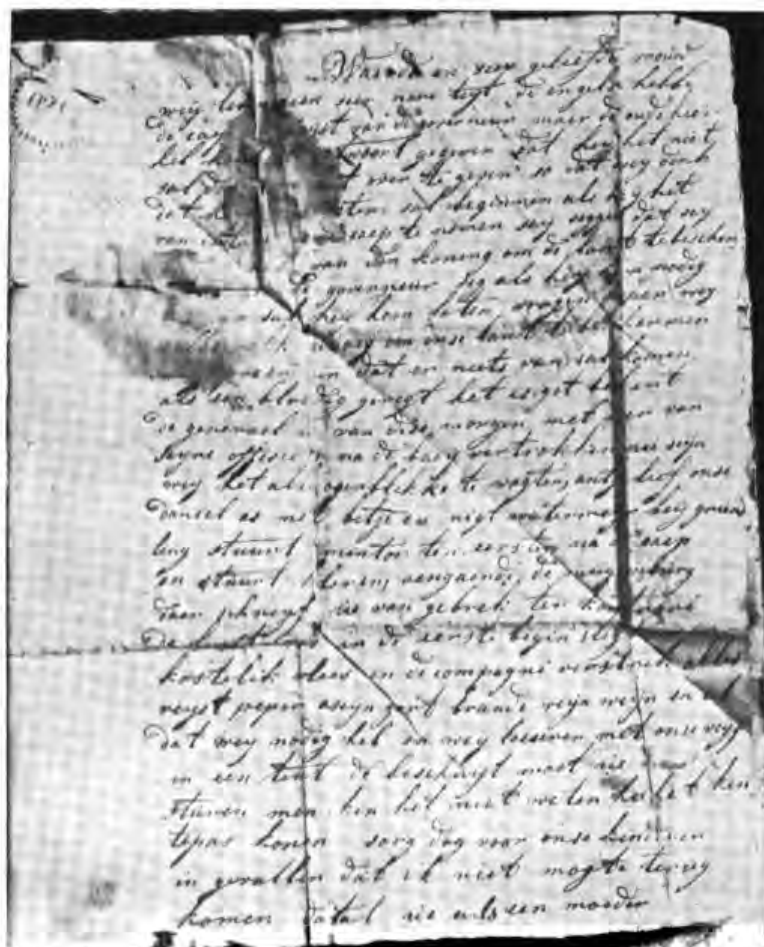
When will that flame be extinguished? Will blood quench it?

Just at this moment, however, we may state that the clever and courteous Dr. Gunning, whose appeal heads this article, is busy with new duties. He has been placed in charge of the British prisoners of war in Pretoria. The unconscious humour, the grim irony of it—to hand over British soldiers to the Hollander Superintendent of the Pretoria Museum!

But not for long.

much-beloved vrow," residing near Swellendam. The opening words might have been written to-day from Pretoria to Krugersdorp. Says the plucky old warrior:—

"We live in a critical time. The English have sent a demand for surrender, but the old Governor has replied that he will not do it . . . . so we think that nothing will come of it but a bloody fight. It is well known that the General left this morning with one of his officers for the bay — Simon's Bay. Now we expect fighting every moment."



From a                      LETTER FROM A BOER TO HIS WIFE, WRITTEN IN 1795.                      [Photograph.