

THE BLACK POPULATION OF THE BRITISH COLONY
OF NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA.

A PRELIMINARY SKETCH.

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THE British Colony of Natal lies on the south-eastern coast of Africa, about eight hundred miles beyond the Cape of Good Hope, and reaches upwards to within a little more than two hundred miles of the southern tropic. It is a strip of land included between the high Drakenberg step of mountains, which forms the threshold of the great continent, and the Indian ocean. Its sea-board is one hundred and fifty miles long, and its depth from the sea to the mountains, an extent varying from one hundred to one hundred and forty miles.

Natal, thus placed, is the very middle of what Dr. Livingstone and the geographers have termed the "Kaffir zone" of climate, as distinguished from the Bechuana and Namaqua zones beyond the mountains. This zone was inhabited, before the land was visited by Dutch, Portuguese, or Englishmen, by a distinct race of people, whose direct descendants now form the black population of the Colony. The land was first seen by European eyes on the 25th of December, 1497, when the renowned Portuguese navigator, Vasco de Gama, touched at it on his first voyage to India round the cape, and named it the "Terra Natalis," in honour of the day. The soil was first trodden by British feet in the year 1683, when a crew of men who had been shipwrecked further north, near the spot now known as Delagoa Bay, made their way through it to the Cape of Good Hope. Three years subsequently a Dutch ship was wrecked where the Port of Natal is now established, and the stranded crew spent twelve months on the shore, and at last built a small vessel from the fragments of the wreck, and sailed away for the Cape of Good Hope, leaving, however, three Englishmen and a Frenchman behind. These were finally taken away, after a longer residence, by a Dutch vessel visiting the coast; but they carried with them reports of the place which led to the Dutch forming a settlement there in the year 1721. The settlement, however, was maintained for only a brief period, and then abandoned. In the year 1823, Lieutenant Farewell of the Marines in the progress of a surveying voyage, visited the site of the old settlement. On the following year he led



ZAGLUI CHIEFS

back a band of twenty Englishmen, who proposed to acquire territory there, through friendly negotiations with the native chiefs. These pioneer settlers maintained varying relations with the natives in the subsequent years, sometimes retiring southwards to avoid the consequences of disagreements, at others returning to the neighbourhood of the Bay now known as the harbour of Durban. Twelve years after their first arrival a party of Dutchmen came down from the mountains in the interior and joined them. Their successors founded the towns of Durban and Maritzburg in the year 1839, and from that time until the year 1842, there was a period of dispute and strife between the Dutch immigrants and the British Government, which claimed allegiance from them in consequence of their being emigrants from the Cape Colony. The dispute was finally adjusted in this year, and in the year 1845, the first British Lieutenant-Governor was installed in Natal.

When the Portuguese and Dutch first visited Natal they found the land thickly peopled by a black race of friendly and gentle temper. The race was divided into separate communities, which lived in a quiet orderly way under distinct chieftains. When Lieutenant Farewell came to Natal, in 1824, matters were greatly changed. A warlike chieftain to the North had drawn together many separate clans under his dominion, and formed them into an army of aggression. With this army he had moved down towards the south, subjugating the land, and either carrying away the remnants of the conquered tribes, to incorporate them among his followers, or driving them before him as scattered fugitives. The tribe which first began this career of conquest and absorption, was a small clan located some distance to the north of the Tugela. It was then known as the Zulu tribe, and accordingly in its aggrandized state it still kept the designation of Zulu. The warlike chief who struck out the bright idea of extended rule bore the name of Chaka, a name which remains a potent spell among the Kaffirs even at the present time. Wherever there was black mail to be levied, or an independent clan to be eaten up, this warlike chieftain led the short javelins and stealthy steps of his disciplined warriors, until by degrees his sway extended from Delagoa Bay in the north to the great river of St. John in the south, and Zululand became a wide kingdom five hundred miles across. When Lieutenant Farewell landed his small expedition in Natal, Chaka was at the summit of his power, and had a large military kraal on the banks of the Umhlali, twenty-five miles within the boundary of what is now the colony. A few fugitives of the original Kaffir tribes lurked in concealment in the bush, as the sole representatives of the once teeming population; culti-

vating small patches of maize in hidden ravines, or living upon wild roots and shell-fish. Beyond the military posts of the Zulu conqueror the entire country was a desert.

After some preliminary negotiation, Chaka gave the English settlers permission to occupy territory at the Bay, and promised them his protection. One of the settlers, Mr. H. Fynn, was raised to the dignity of subordinate chieftainship. In the year 1828 Chaka's term of power came to a violent end. He was murdered at the instigation of his brother Dingaan, who thereupon proceeded to throw the royal skin over his own shoulders, and as one of the first acts of his rule, summoned all chieftains, who had shown fidelity to his brother, to appear before him. Mr. Fynn knew too well what this meant, to obey the summons; and retired with his followers beyond the Umzinkulu, until he was able to come to an understanding with Dingaan. He returned in 1831, and was then recognized by Dingaan as the "Great Chief" of the Zulu Kaffirs.

So early as the year 1827, refugee Kaffirs had commenced to return into Natal under the guarantee afforded by the presence of the pale faces. Some of these refugees came from the north, and some from the south. The influx now increased. In 1836 there were 1000 adult male Kaffirs in Natal, able to bear the shield and assegai, and paying allegiance to the English. Two years subsequently the white chiefs could muster a following of 2100 armed Kaffirs. The Kaffir population at that time numbered 10,000 individuals, men, women, and children.

It was in this year, 1836, that the party of Dutch emigrants, under the guidance of Jacobus Uys, Hendrick Potgieter, and Pieter Reiteif, descended into Natal by a central pass which Reiteif had discovered through the Drakenberg Mountains. From this time fresh accessions of Dutch rapidly flowed down, and a period of conflict between these Dutch pioneers, and the Zulu chieftain ensued; which, after a series of vicissitudes, ended finally in the year 1839, in the destruction of Dingaan, after a signal defeat of his regiments, and in the establishment of Umpanda, the brother of Dingaan, who had been for some time a fugitive in the Natal territory, as supreme chief of the Zulus. Umpanda assumed his seat on the principles of white alliance, and in the interests of peace. He paid a subsidy of 36,000 head of cattle to the Dutch when he began his reign.

The Dutch settlers in their turn became involved in disputes with the British Government, as has already been stated. When, in the year 1842, the Dutch flag finally went down before the British, and the Dutchmen within the Natalian territory became subjects of the British Crown, the friendly

allegiance of the peaceful chief Umpanda was transferred to the new masters.

Umpanda still sits in his big royal kraal beyond the Tugela River, which has been established as the boundary that separates the British territory from independent Zululand, surrounded by his wives and children, and by his flocks and herds; and sends ambassadors over from time to time to confer with the Colonial authorities, and get their advice on matters of delicacy and difficulty. But Umpanda's days have not been altogether roseate ones. Umpanda is now a very portly potentate, and a martyr to gout. He has to be dragged about upon wheels, and when he enters upon a journey his attendants take off the front wheels of his travelling waggon, and slide the royal body up; and then lift up the waggon by sheer force to re-insert the wheels upon the axle. Now, an invalid and obese king, thus absolutely dependent upon the care of his people, is very convenient and satisfactory to peaceable neighbours, but, in another sense, not altogether qualified to fulfil the cravings of a glorious tradition. Umpanda and his cart do not glitter in young Zulu eyes, when young Chaka has heard of the stride of the conquering Chaka, at the head of his light-footed legions. Since Chaka's time it has been the custom to band all male Zulus above adult age into regiments, and to bring these regiments in succession to the royal kraals for service. The ordinary service consists mainly in building huts and fences, and in milking and herding the cows belonging to the king. The captains and chief men of the regiments reside in huts appointed to them by the king, but receive their daily food from their own people. They have a claim, however, to certain gratuities of cattle as a guerdon for the service.

In Chaka's time there was no difficulty about these gratuities; there was then constant war, and the spoils of the vanquished readily furnished the royal pay. Umpanda, on the other hand, has no extrinsic supply of this character to draw upon. He rules in the interest of peace, and has to rely entirely upon his own internal resources to meet the expenses of his state. Consequently, the chief men assembled at his place, commonly return to their kraals empty-handed, at the end of their terms of service. Some time since, as a measure of state economy, the king gave his eldest sons permission to found kraals of their own, and to go to reside in them. A natural result of this combination of circumstances has been that these kraals have come to be the resort of dissatisfied and disaffected men, who attach themselves to the persons of the young chieftains, and encourage them to set up on their own account. This is technically termed "living

under the tiger's tail." Through a series of years the parties of the young chieftains have been waxing in strength, and the old king has been left more and more to his gout and his old councillors. The young chiefs have, of course, been growing more jealous of each other as they have waxed in power, and more especially as it has come to be known that Umpanda has inclined to favour his younger sons in preference to his first-born. In the year 1856 there was a great fight between the party of the elder son, Ketchwayo, and that of the younger brothers, in which Umbulazi and five others of the younger sons were slain. Since then the fortunes of Ketchwayo have been in the ascendant. The person of the old king is respected, and he continues to live, surrounded by his old men, at his kraal; but it is understood that he is now too old "to move," and is only to do "the thinking." Umpanda is "the head" of the tribe, but Ketchwayo is its "feet." Two others of the younger sons of Umpanda escaped with their mothers from Zululand at the time of the great fight, and are now living as refugees in Natal under the British ægis. The brothers who remain on the Zulu side of the Tugela are considered to be adherents of Ketchwayo.

One important consequence of this curious passage of Zulu history is, that the 10,000 Natal Kaffirs of 1836, have grown into 200,000 Natal Kaffirs in 1866. Year after year, more and more of the men who had primarily sided with the younger brothers, and more and more of the middle-aged and sedate Kaffirs who have longed for quiet and peace, have passed over the border as opportunity served them, and settled themselves down among the black subjects of the British Queen. These refugees are required to enter upon three years' term of service, whenever their presence is recognized; but sooner or later they all become absorbed into the following of one or other of the petty chieftains who are distributed over the land. There are certain districts set apart as reserves for these clans, where they are allowed to live under the condition of paying a small yearly hut tax to the Government, and yielding obedience to the magistrates and laws. But many of them have built their kraals on the lands held by private proprietors, or on the lands yet in possession of the crown. In the former case they pay a small rent to the landlord, or furnish an equivalent in the form of personal service.

The black population of Natal thus consists of numerous small tribes, living under their own separate chiefs, and scattered abroad over the face of the land, either in reserves which are set apart by the Government for their occupation, or as squatters upon the crown land and private estates. These tribes are primarily formed of the original natives of the

district, who were driven away from their hill-sides at the time of the Zulu invasion, but who returned when the colony came under the protection of European occupation and British rule, and have since been largely reinforced by successive additions of refugees from Zululand, who were themselves for the most part, it will be remembered, originally drawn from the same aboriginal source. These people are now all liege subjects of the Queen of Great Britain, and already partake in a large measure of the advantages of British rule. But they are nevertheless still barbarians in the mass; and here, therefore, arises the most momentous and deeply interesting question, What is to be done with their black bodies and barbarous minds? what is to become of them in the future? There can be no doubt they will not remain where they are as barbarians. Nature herself, and the immutable laws of human existence, have decided that this cannot be; civilization and barbarism cannot continue to look into each other's eyes at close quarters. Whenever they have been brought face to face by circumstances, one of two things has always taken place—either the barbarians have disappeared from their place upon the earth, or they have been drawn within the civilized pale, and turned to account. Which of these fates is it, then, that is in store for these black tribes of Natal? Are they to find, under the altered circumstances of their land, and after their escape from the thralldom of a savage tyranny, extermination or a new life?

In endeavouring to catch the first faint whisperings of the answer to this question, the inquirer is met by a stubborn fact, which undoubtedly has its meaning. Up to this time the results of the meeting certainly has not been in the direction of the extermination alternative. The 10,000 Natal Kaffirs of 1836, are 200,000 Natal Kaffirs in 1866! Under the ægis of British protection, and in the face of European civilization, the black race of Natal has increased twenty-fold in thirty years. This certainly looks very much indeed as if there is no early extermination to be thought of. It looks, indeed, as if the other alternative is the thing that is in progress, and must be brought about.

Before entering further upon the consideration of what indications there are that the civilization and utilization of the Natal Kaffirs, are possible and in progress, it is absolutely essential here to get some clear notion of what the uncivilized Kaffir is, upon whom the civilizing operation has to be performed. We must pause for a passing glance of scrutiny at the raw material before we entangle ourselves too deeply in the processes of the manufacture.

The Kaffir who is found in Natal, is, upon the average, of

somewhat lower stature than the Englishman ; but he has a well-proportioned and well-developed frame, of slim rather than robust dimensions, and, as a rule, more fitted for the exertion of activity than of strength. There is more of the Mercury than of the Hercules about him. He has black wool upon his head in the place of hair, and very commonly he has the large protruding mouth, thick lips, and broad flat nose of the negro type of organization, as shown in the accompanying very characteristic portrait taken from the life. But occasionally he has the narrow aquiline nose, straight lip, long beard, retiring chin, and square prominent forehead of the European.



BUST OF KAFFIR.

His eye is for the most part dark, soft, and twinkling with merry humour, and his face stamped with an open, gentle, and amiable expression. The few observers who made his acquaintance before the days of Chaka's military despotism always spoke of him as being gentle and amiable in character.

The small-boned and slender limbs of the Kaffir, already alluded to, at once distinguish him from his cousins of the negro variety of the dark skinned African family. In young individuals and among the boys, the tapering, delicate arms and hands, slim legs, and slight feet are so remarkable that they catch the attention of the most careless observer. In all probability he has some substratum of the coarse-grained,

light-hearted, and grotesque negro in his organization; but this organization obviously vibrates between that fundamental and some nobler type. His habits and tastes point to this conclusion as forcibly as his frame. His propensities are pastoral and nomadic. He loves to have fat oxen and grazing goats about his kraal, and to wander from hill side to hill side. A stroll of fifty miles is pastime to him in a fine season. He has an inherent impatience of constraint in any form. Chaka could never have made his invading and conquering armies out of negroes.

In his wild, free state the Kaffir goes entirely naked. He has no other garment than a bunch of strips cut from the skin of a sheep, a wild-cat, or a goat, and suspended from a slender girdle as a kind of diminutive apron. He wears, however, an apron behind as well as in front, and indeed deems the posterior one the more essential covering of the two. If he has had the good fortune to win distinction in the eyes of his chief, he puts on a collar of merit upon his neck, composed of the teeth and claws of the lion and leopard, or of the claws of the eagle, and circlets of bright brass upon his arms. In some instances a necklace of fragments of certain kinds of roots takes the place of the teeth and claws. He pierces the lobes of his ears with wide gashes, which he then ornaments with knobs carved out of fragments of bone, or uses as the depository of his snuff boxes constructed from tubes of reed. He hardly ever moves from his hut without having his buckler of ox-skin upon his arm, and a bundle of five or six assegais, and a knobbed stick, or club of hard wood in his hands. Most probably this habit was primarily due to the risk he was exposed to of having to encounter some fierce wild animal at any instant. At night he lies down on the floor of his hut, and there wraps himself in a well-greased ox-skin, now often exchanged for a woollen blanket of English manufacture.

Although the wild Kaffir has so scanty a wardrobe for the ordinary purposes of life, it must not, however, be supposed that he is indifferent to the graces of personal adornment. He has plumed and furred robes of considerable complexity for ceremony and for war. Our plate gives a portrait, from the life, of the Natal Government chief Ngoza, with four of his men, in heavy war costume, in front of his hut. Ngoza is sitting in the middle. His head-dress is made of circlets and pendants of furred skins, with a crane's feather on the crest; his breast-plate is a tippet of tails of monkey-skins. His apron is mingled goat-skin and monkey-skin, and his greaves are fashioned from the skin of the white ox. The tall plumes of the attendants are of the feathers of the crane. The shields are dried ox-skins very artistically stretched on wooden frames,

and diversified by the natural white, black, and brown patches of the hide. Ngoza has a plume of scarlet ostrich feathers in his wardrobe, which he prepared on the occasion of the visit of Prince Alfred to the colony, at a cost of thirty pounds. Ngoza is not an hereditary chieftain. He has won his spurs by faithful service to the British Government. He was placed over a heterogeneous assemblage of refugees some years ago, and now lives in a large kraal within sixteen miles of Maritzburg, and assembles a considerable following under his command whenever any special service is required by the Government. He appeared before Prince Alfred with four thousand armed men, and entertained him with an exhibition of the native ceremonial dance on a very imposing scale.

The Kaffir women are certainly of inferior organization to the men. Occasionally young girls of a comely presence are encountered. But as a rule they are far more coarse and repulsive in their aspect than the men, and they always shrivel and wither at a very early age, unless when they take to the scarcely less objectionable proceeding of turning themselves into unwieldy bundles of fat. I incline myself to think that the life of inferiority and drudgery to which the native woman is born acts through successive generations upon her frame, and brings about a real degradation in her physical organization. The Kaffir is fond of his women, but he is fond of them in very much the same fashion that he is fond of the cows, for which he barter them away. The men reserve their thews and their energies for war and for the chase. They take care of the cattle, milk the cows, build the huts, and cut down timber with the axe. But with the exception of these light tasks, which are all honourable and dignified occupations in their eyes, they engage in no kind of labour. The women do all the real work of life. They till the ground, and sow and reap the grain; prepare the food; fetch the wood and water; keep the house in repair; and carry all the burthens. It is a matter of quite common occurrence in the open country of Natal to meet a young lord of the black creation marching along the path with an erect head and a jaunty step, his ankles encircled with little fringes of white skin,—that look as if they must necessarily soon bud with winglets to establish beyond all cavil his kinship to the messenger of the old classic Olympus,—and his hands filled with assegais, while immediately behind him march in single file three or four naked women bearing on their heads the load of his household gods; rolls of his sleeping mats; pots filled with beer; bundles of tobacco, and other prime necessaries that need to be transported in his steps. The young girls in their wild state go even more naked than the men. At festive times they are adorned with necklaces and

anklets of beads, and with broad fringed belts of beads that are arranged not untastefully across their hips. When they become wives and mothers they adopt a matronly costume, which consists of a short petticoat extending from the waist to the knee. With advancing years the petticoated wives and mothers pass rapidly into petticoated hags.

Such, in general outline, is the nature of the raw material; such is the Kaffir of Natal in his wild state, and in his simple bodily aspect. There is something more to be said of what lies a little deeper than the outward skin, for barbarian as the wild Kaffir naturally is, he is nevertheless subjected to the influence of a certain kind of culture and training even in his most savage condition. His education properly begins even before he falls within the sphere of the white man's operations. This topic, however, must be reserved for a future occasion.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE.

The engraving represents the group of Ngoza and four of his attendants, alluded to at page 191. The background is formed of the chief's principal huts, in a large kraal near the Maritzburg Table Mountain. The engraving is made from a photograph by Mr. Bowman, of Natal, and is therefore a very exact representation of Kaffir military costume. The tails of the dress are formed of strips of furred skin, often spirally curled after they have been cut. The feathers have necessarily lost some of their distinctness and splendour in delineation, in consequence of movement communicated to their light pinnæ by the wind. The greaves on the chief's legs are not altogether up to the mark. The right thing is that they should be formed of the actual tails of white oxen! It is probable that oxen are not now slaughtered upon quite so large a scale in Natal as when hostile raids and war were more the order of the day; and hence even wealthy chieftains are put to some shifts to keep up a due appearance in the altered state of affairs. Ngoza has, as mentioned above, one head-dress, which he provided, on the occasion of Prince Alfred's visit, at a cost of £30. It is principally composed of ostrich feathers, dyed crimson. He did not chance to be wearing this particular piece of costume when the group of the engraving was taken.