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Crisp
Bechuana of South Africa

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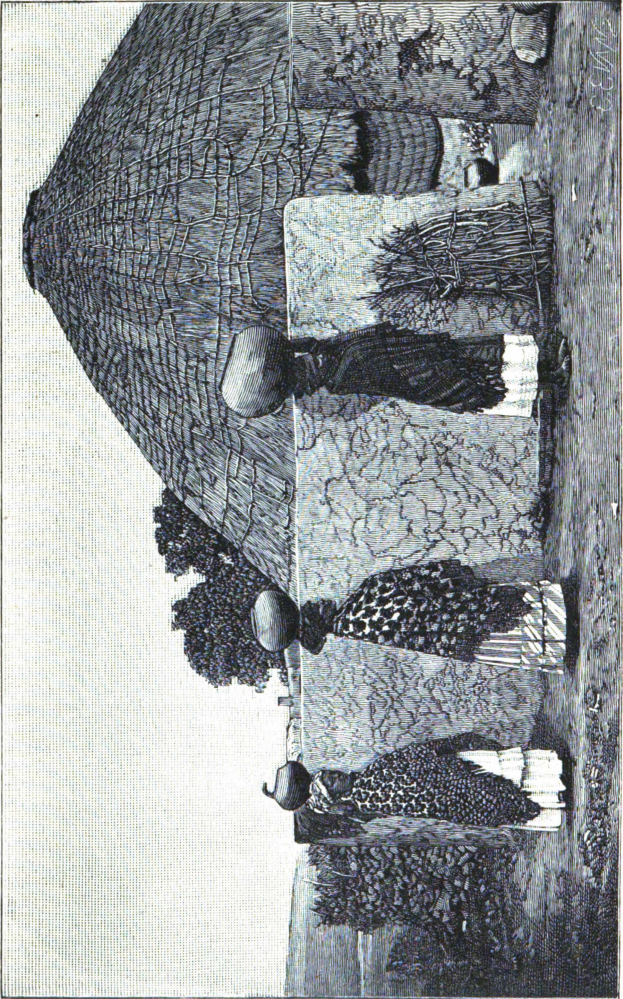




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A BECHUANA HOUSE.

THE BECHUANA
OF
SOUTH AFRICA.

BY
WILLIAM CRISP, B.D.,
ARCHDEACON OF BLOEMFONTEIN.

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THE BECHUANA OF SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN white men first found their way to South Africa, the country was inhabited by three races—the Bushmen, the Hottentots, and the Kafirs. The untameable disposition of the Bushmen, and their predatory habits, led to their virtual extermination; small-pox decimated and broke up the Hottentot tribes; but the Kafirs, a far hardier people, remain to this day, and largely occupy the south-eastern and midland territories.

The word “Kafir” is a nickname. It means “unbeliever,” and is said to have been contemptuously given them by the Mohammedans of Mozambique. Roughly speaking, it is used by colonists to describe the swarthy native races of South Africa, whether they may be the Amaxosa and Fingoes of the Cape Colony, the Zulus of Natal, the Swazies who have been recently annexed to the Transvaal, the Basuto in the country to the east of the Orange Free State

and in the north of the Transvaal, or the Bechuana who live in the west and north-west of that Republic.

The tribal names given above by no means exhaust the list which might be given. Each of them might be divided and subdivided, and differences of tribal customs, of language and traditions, described. But, just as English, Dutch, and Germans, despite their strongly marked national peculiarities, are all included in the great Teutonic race, so do all the native tribes above referred to belong to the same stock.

Because of the word *nto* (man), which in one form or another is common to their languages, philologists have called them Bantu, and as this has certainly a nicer derivation than Kafir, when we have occasion in these pages to speak of them generically we shall use it.

Many hundreds of years ago there seems to have been a great wave of emigration to the south from Northern Africa, from the direction of Abyssinia. Very little can with any certainty be known about it; but the Bechuana, the Bantu race which we desire especially to describe, have a firmly-rooted tradition that their forefathers, ages ago, lived in a country north of the Equator, or, as they put it, in which, when they looked to the East, the sun was on their right side, instead of as now upon the left.

The pictures of women on Egyptian ruins, nude figures except for a doubly-pointed apron around the loins, exactly portray the Bechuana women of to-day.

We shall speak later on of their proverbs and fables, but mention may here be made of the noteworthy fact that a story which may be put side by side with that of the Judgement of Solomon is found among them.

“She is the mother of the child ; she snatches at the knife,” is a proverb used when one of two claimants asserts pertinaciously a right and rejects all compromise. You ask what it means, and are treated to the following version of the familiar story :—

Two women had each an infant son ; the one overlay her child, and before the other woke up exchanged it for the living child. When morning came, the fraud was detected and a fierce quarrel arose. The matter was brought before the chief. Each disputant stoutly maintained her claim, and while the case was proceeding, *they both laid hold of the living child and pulled it backwards and forwards* ; the one determined to obtain, and the other to retain it. “You’ll kill that child between you,” said the chief ; “here, bring me a knife, and I’ll cut it in two, and give half of it to each of you.” “A fair decision,” said the false claimant, carried away by her anger ; but the real mother caught

passionately at the knife, crying out, "What! will you kill my child?" "She is the mother of the child," said the chief; "she snatches at the knife."

The above is no mere Bible story, which has found its way into native traditions since missionaries translated the sacred Scriptures into their language. The detail printed above in italics is sufficient to show its originality. The native version of it is given in singularly terse and old-fashioned language, and aged Bechuana will assure you that it is one of their most ancient bits of folk-lore. Without presuming to dogmatize upon it, one may pardonably urge that the visit of the Queen of Sheba shows that the fame of King Solomon's wisdom had reached the countries of Northern Africa, and gained the admiration of their inhabitants.

There is another bit of their folk-lore which is strikingly tinged with Israelitish history. The neighbourhood of a powerful hostile tribe (so the story runs) had made the nation determined upon flight. They set out secretly, and made their way safely, until they came to a river the flooded state of which made progress for the while impossible. Just then, thick clouds of dust from the direction in which they had come told them that their flight had been discovered and that the foe was in pursuit of them. A cry of despair burst from them. Their destruction seemed inevitable, but from the midst

of the wailing people an old man, their leader, stepped down to the banks of the river, and smote the waters with his *kaba* (a cow's tail mounted on a handle and used as a fan). At once the flood divided, and the people, rushing forwards, gained the opposite side, before their enemies could overtake them.

Still another noteworthy circumstance is the rite of circumcision, which seems to be common to the whole Bantu race, though portions of it, the Zulus for instance, have discontinued it.

CHAPTER II.

A BECHUANA VILLAGE.

THE Bechuana are less courageous than the Zulus, less industrious than the Basuto, less virile than the coast tribes of the Cape Colony, but they excel them all in domestic qualities; they build better houses, make themselves better clothes, and prepare their food more carefully.

From a distance, a Bechuana town looks like a collection of bee-hives: on closer acquaintance, it is seen to contain a number of quite commodious dwellings.

If you will come and help, we will build a Bechuana house, and then you will know all about it.

First we must get a stout pole, the trunk of a tree will be best, some ten or twelve feet high, and forked at the top. When this is firmly planted in the ground, a circle of some twelve to fifteen feet in diameter must be traced around it, and a series of poles about seven feet high planted, about four feet apart, the tops of which must also be forked. Outside of them, at a distance of some three feet, must run another circle of posts, at least five feet in height. Now for the rafters. Anything will do which is long enough to reach from the top of the centre pole, be fixed in the fork of it, and secured to spars fixed horizontally upon the forked heads of both the outer circles of posts. There must be no spaces between the rafters. As we shall see when we begin to thatch, the whole roof must be filled up with branches of trees bound together with a strong rope made of twisted grass. As to the walls, they are easy enough to build, for they are only a screen; the weight of the roof does not fall on them, but on the two circles of posts; wattle and daub, or a rough masonry, will do. They must run along the inner circle of posts, for the outer is to form a verandah which will screen the walls from rough weather. So far for the framework, now for the thatching. Bundles of stout grass must be pitched on the roof. As it is well covered with branches, they will lodge securely and stay in their place with very little tying. In

a couple of years' time, what with dust blown into them and rain upon them, they will form a fairly solid roof, and then they will be covered with a neat thatching, surmounted by a network of grass roping, and culminating in a crown above the centre pillar of the house.

Such a house, round though it be, and without windows, and though, as there is no chimney, the smoke has to find its way out as best it can, is a dwelling in which the writer of these pages has often made his home with a feeling of keen satisfaction.

But we have by no means finished our work. The big house is all very well for use in the daytime, and to keep this or that in. The children, too, may sleep in it at night, with an old person to look after them; but sleeping-huts must be provided for the grown-up people. These will be built at the back of the house. If the town is situated in a wooded country, and so material be at hand, they will be small editions of the larger house; but if not they will consist of long reed mats fastened to a semi-spherical framework of rods or bamboos. When a double set of mats is provided, you would be surprised to find how impervious such huts are to wind and rain.

Now we must enclose the whole demesne. This may be done at the back by a wall of piled stones; but in front of the house, where the material can

be had, nothing will do but a high fence, made as neatly as possible of reeds or brushwood, enclosing a semi-circular courtyard. This is really the place in which the day is spent. All the cooking and eating is done in it, except on the very occasional rainy days; and the verandah round the house is always at hand for shelter from the sun. Where reeds are unobtainable, and where there are no bushes, a wall of clay has to suffice, as shown in the frontispiece.

But we have forgotten one very important thing—the corn-bin. This is a large earthen vase, capable of holding from 20 to 30 sacks of corn, and it must stand inside the chief house. It is made of clay, and sun-dried, and very often its manufacture precedes that of the house, so that it may the more easily be baked by the sun. It has apertures which can be easily closed with rough clay cement at different depths from the top, so that, full or less full, corn can easily be extracted from it.

Before commerce with Europeans brought woollen and cotton materials within their reach, the clothing of the Bechuana was made of the skins of sheep or of wild animals. But this does not at all mean that they were rough, hastily constructed garments. On the contrary, however crudely, the furrier's and tanner's craft was carried on among them with great care. Even now, though systematic hunting is rendering skins more scarce, and im-

ported clothing has so largely been adopted, if you were to go into a Bechuana *kgotla*, or courtyard, in which a chief or headman transacts his business, you would probably find many men employed in the preparation of skin mantles, or *karrosses*, as they are called in South Africa. One might be simply braying a sheep's skin for a child's karross, another scraping a cow's hide to form a skin to sleep upon, but others would be intently engaged upon a jackals', or perhaps a leopards' skin karross. These are composed of many skins, sewn together with sinews by means of a sharply-pointed awl. Great taste and judgement are shown in the selection of the skins. Tiny holes or weak places which they may have are carefully cut round, and patches inserted so neatly as to be indiscernible. The heads of the animals are so arranged as to form a collar, and the karross is bordered with strips of skin beautifully sewn upon it. The preparation of one of these often takes months to complete, and when finished it forms a handsome, graceful garment. A husband will show his affection for his wife, or a chief pay a compliment to another chief, by the manufacture of one of these garments with extraordinary taste and care.

If one is taken aback to find the clothes of the household made by the husband, and is inclined to think this to be an unmanly occupation, one must remember that the men had to catch their

hare before they jugged it. Especially before the introduction of firearms, when the arrow-headed spear and the club were their only weapons (for the bow and arrow, though used with marvellous dexterity by the Bushmen, seem not to have been Bantu weapons), the chase of wild animals was an occupation calling for considerable exertion, and exposed to many dangers. The skins procured with so much effort are jealously regarded by the man as his special property, and a wife who presumed to give away however small an one of them would have to prepare herself for considerable domestic unpleasantness!

But the wife has her own strictly-marked domain, and it turns things still more topsy-turvy to know that the most important feature of this is the cultivation of corn for the household.

In olden times the women had no better implement for this than a heavy oval-shaped hoe, attached to a long handle, weighted with a knob at the end. With this they laboriously picked the ground for sowing, and with it they still weed their crops of millet or maize. It seems hard that such toilsome work should have fallen to the woman (for not only did they sow and weed, but harvesting, threshing, and garnering all fell to them), but it had some corresponding advantages. If the skins were the man's, the corn was the woman's property. After she had provided enough

for the supply of porridge and beer for the household, the rest of the crop was hers to do as she pleased with.

The advent of the plough has changed all this. An enormous quantity of corn is now grown in South Africa by the native races for the purposes of commerce. Only the weeding now falls to the woman, and that by no means exclusively. She is eased of her burden, but she has also lost her perquisite. The husband now apportions to her so much as is required for food; the rest is his to sell.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOOD OF THE BECHUANA.

THE disinclination of people whose wealth is in cattle to slaughter them for food is well known, and the Bechuana are no exception to the rule. The presence of a distinguished guest, a marriage, or some other festivity, may call for such a sacrifice; but, as a rule, the only meat eaten is that of animals which have died a natural death, or from some accident, or of game killed in the chase.

Porridge is their staple food, made either of millet (the small, round corn, indigenous to the country) or of maize. The latter, which is known as *mealies* in South Africa, has been introduced

into the country ; but it has proved so suitable to it that its cultivation throughout the land is a matter of course.

There is porridge and porridge. The simplest form of it is plain meal boiled with water. This is healthy and sustaining food enough, no doubt ; but the wife who provided it as a regular dish would certainly meet with remonstrance !

To make good porridge, the corn must first be purled, *stamped* we call it, by means of a rude kind of pestle and mortar. It is a pretty sight to see a group of girls engaged in this ; keeping time as, one by one, the pestles fall, and accompanying their work with one of their weird native melodies.

The husk removed in this way, the corn must be ground, and afterwards boiled with leaven ; the natural flavouring of a people among whom no sugar or spices grow.

If you wish to make a very rich dish, you will add to it some thick sour milk ; or if you desire to vary your dish, you will leave out the leaven and boil the meal with sweet milk.

The sour milk of which we have spoken is a very important article of food. It is made by pouring, day after day, the milk as it comes from the cow into a large skin bag, made of the skin of a quagga mare, if this is procurable. At the bottom of the bag is a spigot, by means of which the whey is

drawn off. Very delicious indeed this sour milk is, when one has got used to its rough acid flavour.

Beer, too, is a considerable item of the diet of the Bechuana. It is made of millet roughly malted, then boiled and strained. It has an acid taste, and is grateful to the palate, but it does not quench thirst. If simply made it is comparatively innocuous, but if subjected to repeated boiling its alcoholic power is of course much increased. This is rarely done, however, when the beer is meant simply for domestic use.

All this cooking demands utensils. Now, iron pots and earthenware goods are plentiful enough among the Bechuana. But these are importations. In earlier times the pots were made of clay carefully chosen, moulded, and baked. Porridge is still served in large wooden bowls, which have been laboriously scooped out with little adze-shaped tools. Beer is handed to you in vessels made by extracting the pulp from a gourd having an exceptionally hard skin, cultivated for this special purpose; and corn, &c., are carried about in large open baskets neatly woven of long grass.

The Bechuana are cleanly in the preparation of food. They are careful to wash before engaging in it, and their vessels are cleansed with scrupulous care.

CHAPTER IV.

THEIR LAWS.

THE government of the Bechuana is patriarchal. In theory the chief is the supreme ruler; but a tribe comprises many clans, and the headman of each of these has an authority over it which is a reflection of that of the chief, and which may at times seriously limit his supremacy.

Most of these subdivisions are the outcome of polygamy. A man does not marry the woman of his own choice, but one who is selected for him by his family. A stipulated number of cattle are paid to the woman's father by that of the future husband, and she is regarded as the wife through whom the headship of the family, or in the case of royalty, the succession to the chieftainship, is to be continued. If she prove childless, it is no uncommon thing for one of her family to be taken into her house, any children borne by whom are looked upon as hers and entitled to all rights of priority.

The disregard of any preference on the part of the husband to be is more capriciously marked if he is the heir to the chieftainship. Dynastic and political alliances are then the only points considered. A chief has been known to choose for

his grown-up son the infant daughter of another chief. In accordance with the customary polygamy of his people the young man may take to himself one or more concubines. By the time that the little girl has grown to womanhood he may have a considerable family around him, but any children borne in the course of time by her will take precedence of all others.

It will be seen at a glance what a disintegrating effect all this must have upon a people. A chief may die leaving as his heir a mere child, who may be surrounded by grown-up half-brothers, obliged by custom to recognize his rights, but intensely jealous of them, and always on the look out for occasions to assert themselves.

What has been said about a chief applies in its measure to every clan and family. Polygamy has established a principle of jealousy among the Bantu races, and national coherence is correspondingly weakened.

We have often thought how much light all this throws upon the history of Joseph and his brethren. Rachel, according to Bechuana custom, was Jacob's first wife, not Leah. For her the equivalent of service was first rendered, and the substitution of Leah could not invalidate the rights of Rachel's children. The scene at Dothan, so far as the envious dislike of Joseph's brethren went, can be fully entered into by one who has lived among the

Bantu tribes; and the final disruption of Israel, headed by the house of Joseph, was the outcome of that inter-tribal jealousy which has brought about the dispersion of so many South African tribes.

Customary as polygamy is among the Bechuana in their heathen state, there are hints to be found here and there which show that, underlying the licence, is a recognition of its evil and of the natural superiority of monogamy. In sickness, no matter how great a favourite a concubine may be, a man will insist on being taken to the house of his chief wife. "You will die in the house of your concubine" is a taunt approaching in severity to a curse. "*Lehufa*" is the word for a concubine; interpreted, it is simply the word "jealousy." How uncompromising the family bitterness engendered by polygamy is is shown by the following native proverb: "*Lehufa* was cooked together with a stone; the stone came out well cooked; *lehufa* remained as hard as ever."

But, however circumscribed and interfered with by these tribal rivalries, the power of the chief to rule absolutely is theoretically and practically recognized by the Bechuana. He is the judicial and executive head. All causes decided by the headmen may be brought in appeal to him, and his voice gives the *fiat* in all matters of national concern. He is assisted by a council of elders, whom

he is more or less bound to consult, and there is an unwritten code of tradition which he is accustomed to respect. Before making any change in the laws, or embarking upon any important enterprise, he will commonly call his people together; the matter will be laid before them, generally by his most trusted councillor, and any one of the assembly may freely criticize and urge objections to it. These may be so numerous and influential as to make him stay his hand or modify his plans, but the right of final decision is recognized as his.

Still this absolutism is, in theory at least, patriarchal rather than autocratic. A chief is expected to conduct the government of the tribe in accordance with principles accepted by it in the past. He must preserve, too, its possessions with integrity. Its territory is so far at his disposal that he may for this or that cause remove a family or a clan from one part of it and locate it in another; but he may not part with any portion of it. If the power of ruling is in his hands, he is called upon to use it as a father, for the benefit of the whole family.

CHAPTER V.

LANGUAGE.

A MISSIONARY'S life involves absence from his friends, and withdrawal from much which in the past may have been of intellectual assistance to him; but life among a new people will afford sensible compensation in that it necessitates the study of their habits and modes of thought, and especially of their language.

It is startling at first sight, that nations who until within the memory of man have been shut off from intercourse with civilization, who have possessed no literature, should be found speaking a language not only fully equipped for the expression of thought, but in many ways able to do so with peculiar precision. So much may certainly be said of that of the Bechuana.

People who take a superficial view of them fasten upon such physical differences as the black skin, the woolly head, &c., and decide off-hand that the Bantu and other such races have an origin different from our own. If they will look below the surface, they will find mental parts held in common by us and by them which, if they are candid, will, we feel sure, induce them to change their opinion.

It is said that an English peasant uses a vocabulary of from 300 to 400 words. A Bechuana

shepherd uses at least 4,000. His language possesses a fecundity of terms and acuteness of idiom which will enable those who learn it to explain any problem and to convey any message upon matters which affect mankind in common.

The language is rich in substantives and verbs, but poor in adjectives, using participles in the place of them, and connecting both adjectives and participles with the substantive by a somewhat clumsy use of pronouns. The verb is its strong point. Over and above the fact that each action is represented by its own special verb, it has a marvellous provision of moods and tenses. The variations of tense are mostly affected by auxiliaries; but each simple verb, by changes which are principally inflexions, can be modified for the expression of purpose or design.

Take our old friend *amare* in its Bechuana dress, *Go rata* (to love). Change the final *a* into *ela*, and you get

the Relative, *go ratela*, to love for; into *ana*, and you have

the Reciprocal, *go ratana*, to love each other; into *isa*, and you have

the Causative, *go ratisa*, to cause to love: into *ega*, and you have

the Intransitive, *go ratega*, to be lovable.

Put the letter *i* before the simple form, and permute the initial *r* into *th*, and you have

the Reflective, *go ithata*, to love oneself.

Not only is each of these forms a perfect verb, with every capability of mood and tense, but each of them is capable of numerous developments. So *go ithata* (to love myself) may become *go ithatela*, to love myself for; *go ithatisa*, to cause myself to love, and so on. Indeed, if we were to give you an instance of the tortuous combinations of which the Bechuana verb is possible, we should produce a metamorphose which would rival the old puzzle of making "King Jeremiah" into "little cucumber."

The permutation of consonants, of which (in *ithata* formed from *rata*) an instance has been given above, plays an important part in the language. Again and again it comes into operation, always in accordance with fixed rules, and closely following those known in philology as "Grimm's law."

But perhaps the most striking speciality in the language is what is known as the euphonic concord; a principle of alliteration, which while it secures great precision of utterance, renders it soft and pleasing to the ear. Take the following examples, and notice how in the first the letter *s*, and in the second *b*, recur again and again in connecting the different words:

Selo sengoe sa me se itumelela seshaba se ke agileng mo go shone.

(Anything of mine which is good gives pleasure to the people among whom I dwell.)

Batho ba bancho ba itse go tlotla bagolo ba bone.

(The black people know how to honour their elders.)

Many of the Bantu languages are disfigured by clicks, which are thought to have a Hottentot origin, but these are quite absent from that of the Bechuana.

Missionary work among such a people of necessity involves that of translating. There are, of course, no books ready to hand. The Sacred Scriptures, the Prayer Book, a Hymnal, and many other books have to be provided. The work is a fascinating one, but it is charged with serious responsibilities. How easily may the religious sense of a nation be dwarfed in the future by the careless choice of words inadequate to express the truth, or even misleading and erroneous. On the other hand, how delightful is the thought that the work accomplished may bring light to darkened hearts, and lead those who are now afar off to the knowledge of God.

CHAPTER VI.

PROVERBS AND FABLES.

THE proverbs of a people are an epitome of what experience has taught them, and, on the lines of what has been said in the previous chapter, it is surely interesting to know that those of the Bechuana may be ranged side by side with the wise saws of European nations.

"If it were a bear, it would bite you," we say. "If it were a rhinoceros, it would pierce you," say the Bechuana. "If the cap fits, put it on," we say. "When you mention a miops," they say, "it's time for the one-eyed man to get in a fume." "A blacksmith has no knife" is their version of our saying about "the shoemaker's wife."

They tell an amusing story about a monkey, who, prowling about the rocks, saw a stone very curiously poised over a hole. "There's something under that," said he, as he lifted it up. No sooner was it removed, than a python reared itself up out of the hole, and angrily demanded what business the monkey had to disturb him. Profuse apologies on the part of the monkey were offered, but unavailingly, and the snake was on the point of strangling the monkey, when a jackal came on the scene. "Sir," pleaded the monkey, "do not kill me unheard; here is our cousin the jackal; let him try the case." The python consented, and the jackal put himself into a judicial attitude. "To estimate the extent of the injury," he said, "I must see what happened from the beginning. Let the python curl himself into the hole again; then let the monkey put on the stone, and I shall be able the better to judge." This seemed reasonable to the python, and he was winding himself into the hole, but in the process left his head for a moment over the edge of it. The jackal had his own

grudge against the snake ; he nudged the monkey, who saw his opportunity. Down went the stone, leaving the snake fixed in a trap. "Cousin," said the jackal to the monkey, with a grin, "I think the case is over." The proverb which the Bechuana illustrate by this story is their version of "Let sleeping dogs lie."

They have a saying which is the equivalent of "The race is not to the swift," and they connect it with the following fable. A steenbok (one of the fleetest of antelopes) was poking fun at a tortoise, and mockingly challenged him to a race. To his surprise the tortoise accepted the challenge, but stipulated that the race should not take place till the next morning. During the night he got together some of his companions, and stationed them at certain distances along the course. In the morning the steenbok, full of confidence, took his place with the tortoise, and on the signal being given, dashed off at full speed. On reaching a given point of the course, he pulled himself up, and exultingly called out, "Where's the fellow whom I'm racing with?" "Here I am!" said one of the hidden tortoises, poking his head out of the long grass. This put the steenbok upon his mettle, and he dashed on again. Another point reached, he pulled himself up again, and called out as before, but only to be answered by another of the tortoises. Perplexed by this, he rushed off again at a speed beyond

even his power, and before the goal was gained fell down dead.

Our readers will remember the English story about the organ-blower, who when the organist declined to acknowledge his share in the performance, got his way by refusing to go on blowing. The Bechuana have a similar one. They tell of a blind man and a cripple, who being left alone by the flight of the rest of their tribe, agreed to combine their forces; the cripple climbing on the blind man's back, and adding his power of sight to the other's stronger limbs. Perched up thus, the cripple saw a number of vultures, and made sure that a dead antelope was their attraction. By his guiding the blind man, they both got near the carcass, when a dispute arose as to who had had the chief share in obtaining the supply of food. Neither would give in, and it ended in their dissolving partnership, until the blind man, unable to find his way to the booty, acknowledged his inefficiency, and took the cripple on his back again to lead him to it.

One of their stories is so quaint and entertaining that, though it does not pointedly serve to illustrate the common thought of Bechuana and Europeans, for which those already narrated have been given, we venture to tell it.

In days long before firearms were known to them, two men armed with spears (assegais, as they are

called by colonists) went a-hunting. They were an ill-assorted couple, for the one was as venturesome as the other was timid. Presently they came upon a lion lying asleep under a bush. The venturesome one, to his comrade's consternation, crept up to it and caught hold of its tail. "Come along," he cried, as the lion woke up and struggled forward, cat-like, to free itself; "come and kill him." But he called in vain, for his friend had already taken to his heels, and was on his way home. The next morning the timid one said to himself, "Of course my poor friend has long ago paid the penalty of his rashness. It is a pity, though, that his assegais and karross should lie there for any passer-by to take; I'll go and get them." What was his surprise on reaching the spot to find his friend still alive, and still holding the lion fast by its tail! "Ah, you've done well to come back," he called out; "he's very tired now; come along, you can kill him easily." "Oh, indeed," thought the other, "and I shall be able in future to boast that I have killed a lion." So up to it he went, and had already poised his spear, when his friend called out, "Man, that's not the way to kill a lion; you'll have him turn wounded upon us and do for us both. Here, come and catch hold of his tail, and I'll kill him outright." So said, so done; the exchange was made, and when the timid one was realizing the unpleasantness of the situation, his companion said

to him, "Aha, my friend ; you ran away and left me this morning, didn't you? Now I'll let you see how pleasant it is to hang on to a lion by its tail! Good-bye, old man ; I'm going home!"

Five-and-twenty years ago, the present writer was present at a great gathering of a Bechuana tribe. There had been a political complication between it and some European neighbours. The matter had been referred to arbitration, and the legal expense of this had come to a good round sum. The time for payment had come, and the chief had called the tribe together to lay his need before them. "My children," he said, "I have caught hold of a lion by its tail."

Here is another of their stories, and one which gives a thrust at vanity as to personal appearance.

A wild cat was one day watching an antelope, and contrasting its well-shaped face with his own protruding cheeks. A jealous thought stuck to him and gave him no rest, and he determined to see if by surgical aid his appearance could be improved. So he sought out a doctor. "Father," he said, "I'm very ill ; help me, I implore you!" "What's the matter?" asked the doctor. "It's my head," said the cat ; "just look how my cheeks are swollen." "Yes," said the doctor, "there does seem to be something wrong ; but I shouldn't like to subject you to treatment unless the members of your family were present. Go and call them, and

I'll see what can be done." Off went the cat, and gathering a large number of his relations, returned with them. They all sat down; the patient taking the seat in front of them. "Well," said the doctor, "you've come, have you?" "Yes," they replied. A second glance on his part showed him that each and all of them had the same protruding jaw. He went up to one of them, and asked, "Are you sick, too?" "Sick! no, not I," was the answer. Then the truth dawned upon him, and he scattered the crowd with much indignation.

CHAPTER VII.

PROVERBS (CONTINUED).

To return to the proverbs: some of the following will explain themselves; others will want a word or two of comment.

"A lion keeps its spoor (or trail) in regular order when it is alone; when it has cubs, all is in confusion."

"In the dark, men catch hold of one another's clothes."

"Many hands, I like them when work is going on; but I don't care about them when a bowl of food is the case in point."

"A roundabout road does not cause you to sleep abroad." (Compare this with our saying, "The longest way round is the shortest way home.")

“Don't buy a pig in a poke.”

“Where there is only one eye, the mote is sure to make for it.”

“Goings out and comings back are among the things unknown.”

“A good milch cow does not always bear a calf which is a good milker.”

“I have burnt myself in pulling something out of the fire.”

“The ant has made an errand-boy of the elephant.”

“In the darkness, the cow which lows gets milked.”

“Eating won't hinder you ; to go on working will.” (The equivalent of “Mass and meat hinder no man.”)

“Crippled first does not mean die first.” (Compare this with our saying about “a creaking door.”)

“The young bird sings as it has heard its parents sing.” (Used when a child lets out a secret, or repeats some disparaging remark about an older person.)

“That which is seized by two dogs has no chance.” (Cf. “Between two stools,” &c.)

“Yesterday's word does not kill an ox.”

“Don't heed the outside gloss of the berry ; inside it is bitter.”

“The fountain ahead of you is not to be trusted.” (I. e. “Drink while you are at a spring ; the one

you know of further on may be dry when you reach it." "A bird in the hand," &c.)

"Would you send a blésbok to the country where they abound?" (I. e. "Coals to Newcastle.")

"The steenbok which has too long a neck stretches it out to meet blows that were not meant for it."

"Don't mix yourself up with family quarrels."

"Nobody weeps for the man who wounds himself."

"The dwellings of fierce men become ruins amid ashes; the meek live quietly by reason of their meekness."

"The lynx says, 'I am fleet-footed'; but the plains say, 'We are wide.'" (Meaning: You may escape me this time, but I shall catch you when you least expect it.)

"Don't laugh when a man falls; there are slippery places ahead."

"You will mourn both for the hartebeest and the hide." (A man was going along carrying an undressed hide. Seeing a hartebeest, he put down the hide and gave chase. The hartebeest got away from him, and when he went back for the hide he could not find it.)

"An awl which is pointed at both ends pierces both the karross and the sewer."

"The rhinoceros which has no calf makes its feet muddy." (Meaning: One who has no child has to do her own dirty work.)

"The man who ate with him has killed him."

"The winter lair of the tortoise is known to the one who put the tortoise there." (I. e. "He that hides can find.")

"The bustard has seen the bait, but not the snare."

"The chicken may die in the egg; when once hatched, it looks out for itself."

"If you despise the doctor, despise the sickness also."

"The fire which is going out may yet flame up again: that which is burning so brightly now may go out later on."

"A small swarm of bees makes honey; when the swarm is a big one, each bee leaves the job to his neighbour." ("Everybody's business is nobody's business.")

"You were not called by man, but by God." (The Bechuana's way of saying, "When you talk of one he's sure to appear.")

"I am bitten by the dog which I brought up."

"A twig may be bent while it is still green."

"When the sun shines, sit and bask in it; remember, it will go behind the cloud again."

"Are you trying to teach a monkey how to climb?"

"Medicine cures when it is bitter."

"That which sets everyone talking only lasts one day." (I. e. "A nine days' wonder.")

"White teeth kill while they laugh."

“Riches and poverty lie together.”

“The calf which is licked very much is sure to break out with sores.”

“Clouds don’t always mean rain, but smoke is always a sign of fire.”

“The son-in-law of the monkey eats what the monkey eats.”

Bechuana infants are slung behind their mother’s backs in a well-prepared skin called a “thari.” Their version of the proverb about “counting chickens before they are hatched” is, “Are you braying a ‘thari’ for the child which is not yet born?”

The proverbs quoted above are some fifty in number. It would have been easy to have quadrupled them, but then one would have been compelled to have added so much in the way of explanation, since so many of the remaining ones refer exclusively to points of native etiquette or custom.

CHAPTER VIII.

IDIOMS, ETIQUETTE, ETC.

CARRYING on the line of thought which has been especially aimed at in the last two chapters, namely, the similarity of ideas between the Bechuana and ourselves, we may instance the common use of the names of colours to describe the moods

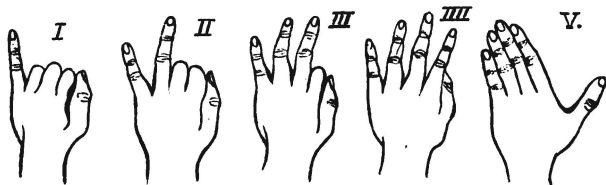
and tempers of men. In English, we speak of "a *green* and *yellow* melancholy," "*green-eyed* jealousy," "a *jaundiced* mind." In the same way, the Bechuana word for covetousness means a *yellow* heart, and that for liberality a *white* heart; while, despite the fact that they are a swarthy race, the word *blackness* is used to denote maliciousness. A *white* rain is the term used to describe a steady downpour, unaccompanied by thunder, and only beneficent in its effects. "*Green* people" is their description of uncouth persons, of manners and notions below the common mark.

Such sayings as "water bewitched," "by the skin of one's teeth," "crocodile's tears," have their correlatives in the Bechuana tongue. For the second of these they substitute "by the web of a spider"; and for the last, "weepers of spittle," the insinuation being that the apparent tears have been caused by wetting the eyes from the mouth.

They have many riddles, but all that we have heard are very poor and tame, but they have a puzzle which is the counterpart of our nursery one about the man who had to carry over a stream a fox, a goose, and some grain, in a boat which would only take one at a time; and they have an exercise which proposes the same difficulty as our old friend "Peter Piper." Here it is: *Kgomo e tiloli e na le loleme lo lolilolilolilolilolili*.

There is a curious fact in their way of counting

which seems to give a hint as to the origin of the V in Roman numerals. In counting upon their fingers, they invariably begin with the little finger of the left hand, and continue from it, holding the whole hand open to denote five, and so forming a V with the thumb and first finger, as shown in the sketch below.



The thumb of the right hand is added to the opened left hand to denote six, the thumb and first finger for seven, and so on, until ten is gained by opening both hands. It is not easy to say how far they were able to count in former times, but the multiples of ten are provided for in their language, and they have a special word for one hundred.

Their powers of observation are astonishing. They have names for every plant and insect, and for many of the stars. Each month has its name, and it refers to some peculiarity in the season. So June, which is in the depth of the South African winter, is called "Don't travel at night." But how comes it about that though their months are lunar they have only twelve names for the yearly cycle?

It must not be supposed that a people shut out

from what is known as the civilized world has of necessity no code of manners. On the contrary, one of the first points of good behaviour, the respect to be shown by juniors to their elders, is most carefully observed. If the hedgerows of their society are fewer than with us, there are well-recognized distinctions between the upper and lower classes. But though this is so, a young man of the higher grade is not released from the duty of respecting those older than himself of lower rank.

Then there are little matters of etiquette. For instance: it is not thought hospitable to ask a man whether he will have food or drink. To do so is taken as though you wish him to decline it. Place a bowl of porridge, or whatever it may be, before him; if he is not hungry, he will take a little, and pass the remainder to some one else.

An old friend in one of the villages in Bechuana-land used every morning to bring us a bowl of milk. Before handing it to us he would take a sip of it; a custom which I suppose to be an assurance against witchcraft, or even poisoning.

It is thought bad manners, if you have not heard something said to you, to ask, "What do you say?" The question must be put in a roundabout way, which will be the Bechuana equivalent for "I beg your pardon."

There are certain recognized euphemisms which

enable you to allude without embarrassment to matters which, otherwise, it would be inconvenient to speak of. A foreigner may easily, from ignorance, make use of a word which in a different connexion is innocent enough, and be surprised to find that he has made a *faux pas*. It is not reassuring to know that his hearers will excuse him by saying to themselves, "He is a white man, and knows no better."

CHAPTER IX.

RELIGIOUS IDEAS.

THE Bechuana have not inherited a systematized religion, with definite objects of worship. They have an idea of a Supreme Being, whom they call *Molimo*; but they seem to regard him as capricious, able to do them good or evil, and quite as likely to do the one as the other. They have certain pious expressions which surprise you, until you get an insight into the motive of them. They announce a plan by saying that they will do this or that, "if God will." Their favourite answer when you inquire about a sick person is, "Oh, God will help him." But it only seems to mean that, for all they know, the Deity may be near enough to hear them, and if they do not speak well of him may do them a mischief.

They have an idea that God is under the earth,

and when they say anything in his praise, they will strike the ground with the palms of their hands. Some represent God as a one-legged being; others as one burnt on one side. The latter notion may be caused by their observing how systematically the sun keeps, in their part of the world, away from the south.

It is not easy to say whether *Molimo* is regarded by the heathen Bechuana as a Personal Being. Judging from an etymological point of view, one would not think so. There are two classes of substantives which possess the prefix *Mo*. One of these, which forms its plural by changing the *Mo* into *Ba*, is purely confined to words describing human beings; e. g. *Motho* (a person), *Batho* (people), *Mosali* (a woman), *Basali* (women). The other, which forms its plural by changing *Mo* into *Me*, is used mostly to describe inanimate things. Now *Molimo* belongs to the latter of these, and would change in the plural to *Melimo*. The same is the case with *Mooa* (spirit), plural *Meòa*. But the original meaning of *Mooa* (i. e. a breath, or a draught of wind) has probably been intensified by Christian teaching. The instances given above of the belief in the active interference of *Molimo* in the lives of men seem, however, to point clearly to the conclusion that he is regarded as a Personal Being. Such a proverb too as this, "God does not destroy on the sly," and the one given above, "You

were not called by man, but by God," give grounds for such an opinion.

In one of their sayings, the idea of future reward and punishment is hinted at. Ancestor-worship (if it can be called worship) holds a considerable place among their religious notions. Their forefathers, they believe, have passed into a sphere in which there are many possibilities of happiness, and in which they can even obtain benefits for their descendants who are still upon the earth. These ancestors are called *Balimo* (a word closely allied to *Molimo*). When a good man dies, they hold that he passes into the company of the *Balimo*, and rests with joyfulness. But a bad man is under a curse, and after death has his lot with certain red (? fiery) spirits, and has to quench his thirst from a filthy vessel.

Propitiatory sacrifice has a place in their religious ideas, but its exercise is accidental, called forth by the stress of circumstances. In sickness, a witch-doctor is called in. These men have, undoubtedly, much knowledge of herbal medicines, but it is their skill in occult arts which is chiefly relied upon. They live much alone, and deck themselves out with charms and ornaments which give them a weird appearance. They have certain dice-like bones, by the casting of which they work their divinations. As in ancient times a fitful power of clairvoyance, or of forecasting the future, was

evidenced by the heathen oracles, so, occasionally, the achievements of these wizards are surprising, and seem to betoken infranatural assistance. When called upon to work a cure, they generally demand a goat or an ox, the distinguishing marks of which they will distinctly describe. This must be sacrificed by them, and a portion of it, after mysterious preparation, is mixed with their medicines and administered to the patient.

The long droughts to which South Africa is liable are the witch-doctor's opportunity. He is eagerly sought after as a rain-maker. Trained powers of observation will often assist him, and very fortunate he is, and well rewarded, if his predictions are verified by a downpour. But if not, he is put to serious straits, and has to fall back upon desperate expedients to cover his failure. He will demand this or that as necessary for his success. He has been known to require that a baboon be caught and brought to him alive, and without a scratch upon it. It may easily be realized that the capture of so powerful and savage an animal cannot be achieved without considerable violence, and that bruises both to captive and captors are inevitable. Of course, the wizard often overplays his part, and the Bechuana have a proverb which says, "The doctor who does not travel is a dead man."

Charms which have been manipulated by the wizard

are much prized by the heathen Bechuana. A twig which has gone through the same process, perched on the top of the peak-shaped house-roof, is relied upon as a defence against lightning. This is very destructive in South Africa, and death from it is no uncommon occurrence. The Bechuana are convinced that it is caused by an unseen bird, of which they are terribly afraid.

Sickness and misfortune are attributed, as is commonly the case among uncivilized races, to the malice of witchcraft, and a state of apprehension and suspicion is thereby engendered which is fruitful in stirring up strife. The words, "They were afraid where no fear was," aptly describe the misgivings which do much to enervate their national character.

Many of the heathen practices are of a nature which cannot be described in these pages. Some of them are cruel, such as the killing of one of all twin children and of children born deformed, and the mutilation of their enemies killed in war. The kingdom of darkness is one in which confusion and division are predominant. Social purity and domestic virtue have, as Christianity has influenced them, slowly made their way among them; but they have had to encounter strenuous opposition, and to conflict with traditions which have for ages been regarded as national duties, the neglect of which, it was held, would surely bring about calamity.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

ROUGHLY speaking, the years between 1815 and 1835 were those in which the Gospel was first brought to the Bechuana. They were years of violent commotion ; of intertribal war, with its accompaniments of famine and pestilence. Jealousy, intensified among the Bantu races through the prevalence of polygamy, seems at all times to have kept them in a state of unrest. Raids, with the object of seizing each other's cattle, tending of course to reprisals and deeds of violence, were normal incidents of their tribal existence. But at the time of which we are speaking, two terrible invasions occurred, which spread a wave of devastation over the country between the Drakensberg mountains and the Khalagali desert. The course of both of them was from east to west. In the country now known as the colony of Natal, a Zulu chief named Tshaka established a military despotism, training a vast army to a discipline which has been rarely excelled. The wars in which they engaged aimed at nothing less than extermination ; and it is thought that a million of human beings perished before the advent of the white man, and the more settled governments established by him, proved an effectual barrier to these massacres.

A fugitive horde, fleeing from Tshaka, and known as the Mantatees, were the first to fall upon the Bechuana, and they were succeeded by a portion of the Zulu army itself. This latter was headed by Moselekatse, one of Tshaka's most skilful generals, who, having incurred his displeasure, fled with the regiments under his command to found an independent empire in the interior. The Bechuana were no match for these terrible enemies. Their power broken, they were driven hither and thither, and when, between 1835 and 1840, the Dutch farmers, emigrating from the Cape Colony, founded what are now the Orange Free State and Transvaal Republics, they found the country in which they settled almost destitute of inhabitants.

Tshaka's military methods are said to have been matured by him when, a fugitive, he had taken service under a Chief who had formed an army on lines borrowed from what he had seen of a military expedition conducted by the British forces of the Cape Colony. Later on, in 1879, under his descendant Cetywayo, the formidable Zulu army was to meet with its decisive defeat at the hands of the same British forces at Ulundi, but not till after it had inflicted on them the terrible massacre at Isandhlwana. So, too, with Moselekatse. The Matabele, as the Bechuana called his Zulu followers, after being for many years the scourge of the tribes along the Zambesi River, were, under his successor

Lobengula, to have their power broken by the soldiers of the British South African Company.

In the settlements which the fugitive Bechuana at length formed, they were harassed by another set of enemies, the Koranas and the Griquas, people of lighter colour than the Bechuana. In point of numbers they were not formidable, but they had acquired firearms and horses, and the defenceless villages and cattle-posts of the Bechuana were an easy prey to them.

The Griquas were less offensive and more civilized than the Koranas. They were a mixed race, the progeny of runaway slaves from the Cape Colony, intermingled with half-breeds and Europeans who had drifted northwards and cast in their lot with them. Christian missionaries were to be found among them. The Colonial Government had recognized the Griquas, and encouraged them to form themselves into orderly communities. At Griquatown, near the junction of the Vaal and the Orange Rivers, and at Philippolis higher up the latter stream, missionaries had for some time been working, and under their guidance no small amount of civilized rule had been established.

Reports as to the benefits accruing from the presence of these Christian teachers, and of the advantage derived from their touch with the white man's government, seem to have been carried by traders and hunters to the Bechuana tribes, and to

have made the settlement of missionaries among them a less difficult matter than it would otherwise have been. Indeed, in many cases they were not only warmly welcomed but eagerly invited.

We have often wondered whether, in the absence of these auspicious circumstances, the introduction of Christianity would have met with open persecution. True, the Bechuana had no definite system of religion on behalf of which to be zealous, but they had customs and traditions to which they were firmly attached. Some of these were immoral; while others, being based upon fetichism, were intolerable to the Christian Church. Even under the circumstances described above, the faith has not been established without a struggle.

In no case which we know of has violence been used towards a white missionary. They have sometimes been expelled from a country; indeed, this has happened to the present writer; but we know of no instance in which bodily hurt has been inflicted. Still, even in cases in which a missionary has been placed with a tribe at the solicitation of its chief, he has often had to encounter a stealthily planned opposition by which his efforts have been undermined, and as far as possible nullified.

For instance, admiration for Dr. Moffat's personal character induced Moselekatse to permit the establishment of a mission among the Matabele, and

Lobengula sanctioned its continuance. During its earlier years, at least, the people were bidden to attend the services, but it was well known that any one of them who avowed himself a convert would incur the chief's severe displeasure, if not (for the Matabele are a people of fiercer passions than the Bechuana) the punishment of death.

In cases where native Christians have not had the protection of a white missionary, the persecution has been more open. They have been called upon to plough a field in connexion with the witch-doctor's rain-making, or to comply with some immoral custom, and their refusal has led to the spoiling of their goods; but never, to our knowledge, to the loss of their lives. Among families many unkindnesses and even cruelties have been resorted to to shake the faith of a newly-converted member. Refusal to join in the degradations of the circumcision, or of the corresponding female rite, has been visited by keen persecution. Though resistance "unto blood" may not have been demanded, much patient courage and readiness to bear affliction have, from time to time, been shown by the Bechuana converts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE
BECHUANA.

THE early missionary records tell of the indifference and callousness which had to be encountered, and in some cases for a long time to be patiently borne with, before any serious impression was made. The people were willing to learn from the missionaries anything they could teach them of secular advantage, and to obtain from them commodities of which they saw the usefulness; but the effort to rouse them to a conviction of sin, or to teach them anything of "the life of the world to come," met with ridicule and contempt. Very slowly indeed did the preaching of the Gospel make its way. But the time came at last when first one and then another listened to the truth and sought for the peace of God.

In no case has there been a national conversion: the acceptance of the faith by a chief and his people, followed by the eradication of heathen customs and the remodelling of the tribal laws in accordance with the new teaching. Polygamy alone has been sufficient to prevent this. In some cases a chief has become a convert. This has set the door more widely open for evangelistic effort, and gained for the missionaries a steadier support; but

it has not led to the submission of the rest of his people. Even in the notable case of Khama, the Bamangwato chief, the Toussaint l'Ouverture of the Bechuana, the earnest acceptance of Christianity seems to be a personal rather than a tribal conversion. It has, of course, influenced the whole character of his reign, imparting to it a fearless, Christian sense of justice. But the noble efforts which he has made towards the establishment of righteousness among his people have come from his own exalted sense of responsibility, and have met with opposition at their hands.

Had it been otherwise, had the faith been received collectively rather than individually, would it not have given to them a political coherence, and a vigour which would have enabled them to take their part in the new state of things which civilization has established around them, instead of becoming absorbed by it as an item of small importance? As it is, Christianity has had to take the place of an *imperium in imperio*, and has, however unwillingly, often been a disintegrating element instead of, as it has earnestly desired to be, the means of national advancement.

Still, the little leaven has somewhat leavened the whole lump. Heathen practices still assert themselves, but heathenism has received its death blow. From time to time strenuous efforts are made to replace it upon its former pedestal of

supremacy, but these are death struggles. A standard of right and wrong has been set up essentially different from that which prevailed in the time of ignorance.

We have chosen the word "a standard" advisedly, for it need hardly be said that the principle of right and wrong, however obscured, is to be found as a radical idea even among the heathen. The first missionaries had not to teach the Bechuana the commandments which describe our duty towards our neighbour. As has been said, they recognized fully the honour due from the younger to the elder. They knew that murder was essentially a crime; that adultery, and theft, and falsehood were wrong; and they showed their appreciation of a contented mind by the epithet ("a yellow heart") with which they stigmatized covetousness. Naturally much misconception as to the moral law prevailed, but the principle was there. The conscience was darkened, the moral sense benumbed, but however dense the gloom it was not impenetrable; the sickness was not unto death.

In contrasting the semi-civilized state of the Bechuana of to-day with the uncouthness of eighty years ago, one must not overlook the important influence which acquaintance with the appliances and methods of European life has had upon them. The plough, the wagon, the horse, and the gun

have changed the tenor of their lives. The desire to possess these and other such things has made them bestir themselves. The native races are not yet an industrious people; still, the unskilled manual labour of South Africa is entirely in their hands. Many thousands of them are in constant employment, and no inconsiderable portion of the produce which finds its way to the market is raised by them.

At the same time we have often thought that the change came too rapidly. The transition from so crude a state of life to that of contact with Europeans at a time when our own character was being affected by the rapid changes which steam and electricity have brought about—the being ushered all at once into a knowledge of the conveniences and habits of civilized life—was a very severe strain. We have tried to imagine how far a more gradual introduction to these new ways and things might have given them a surer footing than they have as yet attained.

It must be remembered, too, that the low standard of Christian life, the greed, nay, the vices and sins which we white men have displayed, have discouraged them, and given them a sad object-lesson as to the effects of our religion.

Drunkenness, too, so sadly increased among the coloured people (though less, we think, among the Bechuana than among some South African races)

by the strong liquors which we have brought to them, has done much to nullify the good which Christian efforts were producing.

Great care has to be taken in teaching such a people as the Bechuana to avoid mistaking their mere acquiescence in Theism for acceptance of Christianity. As we have said, they have always (however imperfectly) recognized the existence of a God. The elevation of this recognition from superstitious to conscientious regard; the acknowledgement of a great and good Spiritual Being, and some degree of trust in His beneficence; these are steps upward in their religious apprehensions; but it need not be said that they fall short of the conviction of sin and sense of the need of a Saviour which evangelical religion asks for. Often, and very painfully, a missionary has to retrace his steps and begin his teaching afresh, recognizing that the creed has only been assented to as a more formal setting of the Theistic truth which even before the preaching of the Gospel had been naturally apprehended. Even the story of the Cross has been received as witnessing to a Father's love without the appreciation of a sinner's need.

Sometimes in missionary work an event occurs which shows how powerful even a fragmentary knowledge of Christianity is in giving light and comfort to a soul in pain. The following instance of this occurred in the course of the present writer's

ministry, and he ventures to narrate it in very much the same words which he has once before used in a less public statement.

Nearly twenty years ago it was my lot to be sojourning, in company with a brother priest, in the territory of a chief who was much opposed to Christian teaching. Towards the close of a Sunday afternoon, news reached me of a poor leper girl, of some eighteen years of age, of whom I had not heard before, who was thought to be dying.

This terrible disease finds many victims among the natives and half-castes of South Africa. Generally, it first attacks the fingers and toes, beginning with sores which grow more and more virulent, until, joint by joint, these members become eaten away ; but in its later stages it affects the face and other parts of the body. Apparently, its victims do not suffer much pain, but the sadness which is always written on their faces marks their sense of the loathsome nature of the disease.

I went at once to see the poor girl, and I shall never forget the sight. She was in a little hut which had been built for her—a living skeleton, the skin only just drawn over her slender frame. The fearful disease had so fastened itself upon her mouth, that it was only through others more accustomed to her that I could understand what she said. She was so worn out by the day's pain that I could only say a few words of prayer for her

then, but next morning I spent a long time with her, talking to her every now and then at long intervals; for her weakness was very great. It was wonderful to listen to her. She said, "I have longed so to go to the church, and I have thought how happy those were who could go. But I have listened when others have told me what they had heard. — (naming an elder sister, not herself a Christian) has often told me about the Word. I have thought it so wonderful about Jesus. He was so kind! It was so good of Him to heal the man's ear who had come to take Him in the garden. I used to pray to Him till lately, but now my head is so bad; I forget so much; I have no strength." I need not spoil the story by adding what I said to her; what could I say to one whom the Master himself had taught, on whom the pierced hand had been laid upholdingly? I told her about baptism, and taught her one or two words of prayer. She wished to be baptized when she heard what thereby the Lord would do for her. All she wanted, she said, was that when death came to her she might go to Him. I recollect hesitating about her baptism, thinking that she might linger, and that I might teach her more. And then I remembered myself. Who was I to "forbid water"? I baptized her that evening, naming her "Katherine." Next morning, very early, her brother came to the wagon in which I was sleeping and told me that

she was dead. They had heard no sign from her during the night. In the morning when they went to her, they only found the poor wasted body, which would never more know pain nor weariness—"And was carried by the angel into Abraham's bosom."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUTURE OF THE BECHUANA.

THESE pages are being written at a time which is fraught with both hope and anxiety. The territory in which the Bechuana are living has passed, or is passing, out of their immediate control. This need not be to their disadvantage. On the contrary, if it is attended by efforts towards their improvement, it may be of much benefit to them. They are a capable people. What is needed is a patient attempt to fit them for such positions as they are able to fill. They will make good mechanics, if properly trained. One of their tribes, the Bahurutshi, was in times past distinguished as a race of blacksmiths. The Bakgattha were notable makers of wooden utensils. Reference has been made to the skill and taste displayed in their manufacture of karrosses. A doctor in Basutoland once told me that the native orderly told off to him as a police officer had learnt to dispense medicines

accurately, and could be trusted to do simple ambulance work with readiness and skill.

Something has been done by missionary institutions to train members of the Bantu race in handicraft, but it is a work which seriously burdens our resources, and is surely one which can more properly be undertaken by Government. If this is done, the present writer feels hopeful that it will be attended with success.

Before the coming of civilization, intertribal war and its concomitants thinned their ranks and prevented extraordinary increase of population. The strong arm of the white man has put a stop to this state of strife, and the marked augmentation of the Bantu race is year by year becoming a more serious South African problem. What is wanted is a statesman of sufficient ability and sense of responsibility to face it. In a colony there are no ancient institutions to fall back upon. All has to be provided. Changes occur so rapidly and effect so much in so short a time. It is not to be wondered at that, with so much constructive work to be done for the well-being of their own race, colonial politicians should content themselves with a hand-to-mouth treatment of native affairs. But such a course is none the less imprudent. The evolution may be slow, but there are signs which show that the natives of South Africa can and will endeavour to fit themselves for a higher position

than that of hewers of wood and drawers of water. To develop their powers and teach them how to use them rightly, is a task which, if it should be wisely taken in hand, would bring about much good, and perhaps prevent much ill, in the future of South Africa.

Note.—According to the orthography adopted in books written in their language, the word “Bechuana” would be written “Becoana” or “Becwana.”

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