

# **SOUTH AFRICA.**

BY  
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
VOL. II.

# Table of Contents

THE TRANSVAAL. SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I. THE TRANSVAAL.—NEWCASTLE TO  
PRETORIA.

CHAPTER II. THE TRANSVAAL.—ITS HISTORY.

CHAPTER III. THE TRANSVAAL.—ANNEXATION.

CHAPTER IV. THE TRANSVAAL.—PRETORIA.

CHAPTER V. THE TRANSVAAL: ITS CONDITION AND  
PRODUCTS.

CHAPTER VI. THE TRANSVAAL.—PRETORIA TO THE  
DIAMOND FIELDS.

GRIQUALAND WEST.

CHAPTER VII. GRIQUALAND WEST—WHY WE TOOK IT.

CHAPTER VIII. THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

CHAPTER IX. KIMBERLEY.

THE ORANGE FREE STATE.

CHAPTER X. THE ORANGE FREE STATE.—ITS EARLY  
HISTORY.

CHAPTER XI. THE ORANGE FREE STATE.—PRESENT  
CONDITION.

CHAPTER XII. BLOEMFONTEIN.

NATIVE TERRITORIES.

CHAPTER XIII. THABA 'NCHO.

CHAPTER XIV. KRELI AND HIS KAFIRS.

CHAPTER XV. THE BASUTOS.

CHAPTER XVI. NAMAQUALAND.

CHAPTER XVII. CONCLUSION.

# THE TRANSVAAL. SOUTH AFRICA.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE TRANSVAAL.—NEWCASTLE TO PRETORIA.

THE distance from Newcastle to Pretoria is 207 miles. About 20 miles north from Newcastle we crossed the borders of what used to be the Transvaal Republic, but which since the 12th August last,—1877,—forms a separate British Colony under the dominion of Her Majesty. The geographical configuration here is remarkable as at the point of contact between Natal and the Transvaal the boundary of the Orange Free State is not above two or three miles distant, and that of Zulu Land, which is at present but ill defined, not very far off;—so that in the event of the Transvaal being joined to Natal the combined Colonies would hang together by a very narrow neck of land.

Of all our dominions the Transvaal is probably the most remote. Its Capital is 400 miles from the sea, and that distance is not annihilated or even relieved by any railway. When I left home my main object perhaps was to visit this remote district, of which I had never heard much and in which I had been interested not at all, till six months before I started on my journey. Then the country had been a foreign Republic, not very stable as was supposed, and assimilated in my mind with some of the South American Republics which so often change their name and their condition and in which the staunchest lovers of the Republican form of

Government hardly put much faith. Now I was in the country and was not only assured myself as to its future security,—but was assured also of the assurance of all who were concerned. Whether Great Britain had done right or wrong to annex the Transvaal, every sod of its soil had instantly been made of double value to its proprietor by the deed which had been done.

Here I was in the Transvaal through which at a period long since that of my own birth lions used to roam at will, and the tribes of the Swazies and Matabeles used to work their will against each other, unconscious of the coming of the white man. Now there are no lions in the land,—and, as far as I could see as I made my journey, very few Natives in the parts which had really been inhabited by the Dutch.

I cannot say that the hotels along the road were very good. By the ordinary travelling Englishman the accommodation would have been considered very bad;—but we did find places in which we could shelter ourselves, and beds of some kind were provided for us. A separate bedroom had become a luxury dear to the imagination and perpetuated by memory. We were a week on the road from Newcastle and pulled off our clothes but once,—when we were under the hospitable roof of Mrs. Swickhard, who keeps a store about half way at a place called Standers Drift. At one or two places there were little Inns, always called hotels, and at others we were taken in by farmers or storekeepers. Sometimes the spot on which we were invited to lie down was so uninviting as to require the summoning up of a special courage. Twice I think we were called upon to occupy the same bed,—on which occasions my age preserved me from the hard ground on which my younger companion had to stretch himself. He had stories to tell of nocturnal visitors to which I have ever been inhospitable and

useless,—the only wild beast that has ever attacked me being the musquito. Of musquitoes in the Transvaal I had no experience, and was told that even in summer they are not violent. We were travelling in September, which is equal in its circumstances to our March at home. So much for our beds. On our route we banqueted at times like princes,—but these were the times in which we camped out in the veld,—the open field side,—and consumed our own provisions. Never was such tea made as we had. And yet the tea in all the houses was bad,—generally so bad as to be undrinkable. We had bought our tea, as other Colonists buy theirs, at Pieter Maritzburg, and I do not think that the grocer had done anything peculiar for us. But we were determined that the water should boil, that the proper number of tea-spoon-fulls should be afforded, and that the tea should have every chance. We certainly succeeded. And surely never was there such bacon fried, or such cold tongues extracted from tin pots. It happened more than once that we were forced by circumstances to breakfast at houses on the road,—but when we did so we always breakfasted again a few miles off by the side of some spruit,—Anglice brook,—where our horses could get water and eat their forage.

The matter of forage is the main question for all travellers through these parts of South Africa. Let a man sleep where he may and eat what he will, he can go on. Let him sleep not at all and eat but little, he can have himself dragged to his destination. The will within him to reach a given place carries him safely through great hardships. But it is not so with your horse,—and is less so in the Transvaal than in any other country in which I have travelled. We soon learned that our chief care must be to provide proper food for our team, if we wished to reach Pretoria,—let alone those further towns, Kimberley and Bloemfontein. Now there are three modes in

which a horse may be fed on such a journey. He may nibble the grass,—or cut his own bread and butter,—as horses do successfully in Australia; but if left to that resource he will soon cease to drag the vehicle after him in South Africa. Or he may be fed upon mealies. I hope my reader has already learned that maize or Indian corn is so called in South Africa. Mealies are easily carried, and are almost always to be purchased along the road. But horses fed upon them while at fast work become subject to sickness and die upon the journey. If used at all they should be steeped in water and dried, but even then they are pernicious except in small quantities. Forage is the only thing. Now forage consists of corn cut green, wheat or oats or barley,—dried with the grain in it and preserved in bundles, like hay. It is cumbrous to carry and it will frequently happen that it cannot be bought on the road side. But you must have forage, or you will not get to your journey's end. We did manage to supply ourselves, sometimes carrying a large roll of it inside the cart as well as a sack filled with it outside. Every farmer grows a little of it through the country; and the storekeepers along the road, who buy it at 3d. a bundle sell it for a shilling or eighteen pence in accordance with their conscience. But yet we were always in alarm lest we should find ourselves without it. A horse requires about six bundles a day to be adequately fed for continual work. "Have you got forage?" was the first question always asked when the cart was stopped and one of us descended to enquire as to the accommodation that might be forthcoming.

We travelled something over thirty miles a day, always being careful not to allow the horses to remain at their work above two hours and a half at a time. Then we would "out-span,"—take the horses out from the carriage, knee-hobble them and turn them

loose with their forage spread upon the ground. Then all our energies would be devoted to the tea kettle and the frying pan.

As we travelled most heartrending accounts reached us of the fate of my companions from Pieter Maritzburg to Newcastle, who had pursued their journey by the mail cart to Pretoria. This conveyance is not supposed absolutely to travel night and day;—nor does it go regularly by day and stop regularly by night in a Christian fashion, but makes its progress with such diminished periods of relaxation as the condition of the animals drawing it may create. If the roads and animals be good, four or six hours in the twenty-four may be allowed to the weary passengers;—but if not,—if as at this time they both be very bad, the periods of relaxation are only those necessary for taking up the mail bags and catching the animals which are somewhere out on the veld, hobbled, and biding their time. For the mail cart the road was very bad indeed, while by our happy luck, for us it was very good. They travelled through two days and nights of uninterrupted rain by which the roads and rivers were at once made almost equally impassable; while for us, so quick are the changes effected, everything had become dry and at the same time free from dust. From place to place we heard of them,—how the three unfortunates had walked into one place fifteen miles in advance of the cart, wet through, carrying their shoes and stockings in their hands, and had then slept upon the ground till the vehicle had come up, the mules had been caught, and they had been carried on a mile or two when they had again been forced to walk. They were at this period two days late and had been travelling on these conditions for four days and four nights with the journey yet unfinished before them. Had I been one of them I think they would have been forced to leave me behind them on the way side. On the road we



met their conveyance coming back. It had carried them to a certain point and had thence returned. It was a miserable box on wheels with two mules whose wretched bones seemed to come through their skin. They could not raise a trot though they had no load but the black driver, and I presume some mail bags.

Nor was any one to blame for all this,—except the late Government. For two years and a half the Contractor had done the work without receiving his pay. That he should have gone on and done it at all is the marvel;—but he had persevered spending all that he could make elsewhere upon the effort. When the annexation came he was paid his arrears in lump,—very much no doubt to his comfort; but then there were new tenders and a new contract and it was hardly to be expected that he should lay out his happily recovered money in providing horses and conveyances for a month or two.

I was assured, and I believe truly, that this special journey,—which I did not take,—was the most unfortunate that had ever occurred on this unfortunate road. The animals had of course gone down the hill from bad to worse, and then had come the heavy rain. It seemed to be almost a direct Providence which had rescued me from its misery.

As I passed along the road I took every opportunity that came in my way of entering the houses of the Dutch. I had heard much of the manners of the Boers, and of their low condition of life. I had been told that they were altogether unprogressive,—that the Boer farmer of this day was as his father had been, that so had been the grandfather and the great grandfather, and that so was the son about to be; that they were uneducated, dirty in their habits, ignorant of comforts, and parsimonious in the extreme. These are

the main accusations brought against the Boers as a race, and they are supported by various allegations in detail;—as that they do not send their children to school; that large families live in two roomed houses, fathers mothers sons and daughters sleeping in one chamber; that they never wash, and wear their clothes day and night without changing them; that they will live upon the carcasses of wild beasts and blesboks which they can shoot upon the lands so as to reduce their expenditure on food to a minimum;—that they are averse to neighbours, and that they will pay for no labour, thus leaving their large farms untilled and to a great extent unpastured. And added to all this it is said that the Boer is particularly averse to all change, resolving not only to do as his father has done before him, but also that his son shall do the like for the future.

The reader will probably perceive that these charges indicate an absence of that civilization which is produced in the world by the congregated intelligences of many persons. Had Shakespeare been born on a remote South African farm he would have been Shakespeare still; but he would not have worn a starched frill to his shirt. The Dutch Boer is what he is, not because he is Dutch or because he is a Boer, but because circumstances have isolated him. The Spaniards had probably reached as luxurious a mode of living as any European people when they achieved their American possessions, but I have no hesitation in saying that the Spaniards who now inhabit the ranches and remote farms of Costa Rica or Columbia are in a poorer condition of life than the Dutch Boers of the Transvaal. I have seen Germans located in certain unfortunate spots about the world who have been reduced lower in the order of humanity than any Dutchmen that I have beheld. And I have been within the houses of English Free Settlers in remote parts of

Australia which have had quite as little to show in the way of comfort as any Boer's homestead.

Such comparisons are only useful as showing that distance from crowded centres will produce the same falling off in civilization among one people as among another. The two points of interest in the matter are,—first the actual condition of these people who have now become British subjects, and secondly how far there is a prospect of improvement. I am now speaking of my journey from Natal up to Pretoria. When commencing that journey, though I had seen many Dutchmen in South Africa I had seen none of the Boer race; and I was told that those living near to the road would hardly be fair specimens of their kind. There was very little on the road to assist in civilizing them and that little had not existed long. From what I afterwards saw I am inclined to think that the impressions first made upon me were not incorrect.

The farmers' houses generally consisted of two main rooms, with probably some small excrescence which would serve some of the family as a sleeping apartment. In the living room there would be a fire-place, and outside the house, probably at thirty or forty yards' distance, there would be a huge oven built. The houses would never be floored, the uneven ground being sufficiently solid and also sufficiently clean for the Dutchman's purposes. There would seldom be a wall-paper or any internal painting of the woodwork. Two solid deal tables, with solid deal settees or benches,—not unfrequently with a locker under them,—would be the chief furniture. There might be a chair or two, but not more than one or two. There would always be a clock, and a not insufficient supply of cups, saucers, and basins. Knives, forks, and spoons would be there. The bed room of course would be a sanctum; but my curiosity,—or diligence in the performance of the

duty on which I was intent,—enables me to say that there is always a large bedstead, with a large feather bed, a counterpane, and apparently a pair of sheets. The traveller in Central America will see but little of such decencies among the Spanish farmers there.

Things in the Boer's house no doubt are generally dirty. An earthen floor will make everything dirty,—whether in Ireland or in the Transvaal. The Boer's dress is dirty,—and also, which is more important, that of the Boeress. The little Boerlings are all dirty;—so that, even when they are pretty, one does not wish to kiss them. The Boers are very prolific, marrying early and living a wholesome, and I think, a moral life. They are much given to marrying, the widow or the widower very speedily taking another spouse, so that there will sometimes be three or four families in the one house. The women have children very early in life,—but then they have children very late also; which seems to indicate that their manner of living is natural and healthy. I have heard them ridiculed for their speedy changes of marital affection, but it seems to me natural that a man or a woman living far apart from neighbours should require the comfort of a companion.

I am quite convinced that they are belied by the allegation which denies to them all progress in civilization. The continued increase in the number of British and German storekeepers in the country, who grow rich on their trade with the Boers, is sufficient of itself to tell one this. Twenty years since I am assured that it was a common thing for a Boer to be clad in skins. Now they wear woollen clothing, with calico. I fancy that the traveller would have to travel very far before he found a skin-clad Boer. No doubt they are parsimonious;—it might perhaps be more fair to call them prone to save. I, personally, regard saving as a mistake, thinking that the improvement of the world generally is best furthered by a

free use of the good things which are earned,—and that they who do not themselves earn them should, as a rule, not have them. It is a large question, which my readers would not thank me to discuss here. But there are two sides to it,—and the parsimony of the Boer who will eat up the carcase of a wild beast till it be rotten so that he need not kill a sheep, and may thus be enabled to stock a farm for his son, will have its admirers in Great Britain,—if not among fathers at any rate among sons. These people are not great consumers, as are our farmers. They wear their clothes longer, and stretch their means further; but that the Boer of to-day consumes very much more than his father there can be no doubt;—and as little that his sons and daughters will consume more.

As to their educational condition I found it very difficult to ascertain facts. The distance of these homesteads one from another makes school teaching in many instances impossible. In some cases I found that great efforts were made, the mother or perhaps the mother's sister teaching the children to read. Here and there I heard of boys and girls who were sent long distances,—at an expense not only for teaching but for boarding. It has, however, to be acknowledged that the education of the country is at present very deficient. The country is now ours and when the first rudiments of stability have been fixed, so that laws may be administered and taxes collected, then I trust that the rulers of the Transvaal may find themselves able to do something towards bringing education nearer to the Boers.

I have heard the Boers spoken of as a dishonest people. I was once among certain tradesmen of the Transvaal who asserted that it was impossible to keep them from pilfering in the shops, one or two of them alleging that no Boer would make a considerable purchase without relieving the grief which was natural to him at

parting with his money by pocketing some little article gratis,—a knife, or a tobacco pipe, or perhaps a few buttons. It was an accusation grievous to hear;—but there arose in the company one man, also a dealer and an Englishman, who vindicated their character, alleging that in all parts of the world petty shop-lifting was so common an offence that the shopkeeper was forced to take it into account in his calculations, and asserting that the thieving Boers, few though they might be in number, would leave more impression on the shopkeeping mind than the very many Boers who would come in and out without perpetrating any dishonesty. I have heard the Boers also charged with immorality,—which always means loose conduct among the women. I am inclined to think,—though I believe but few will share my opinion,—that social morality will always stand higher in towns, where people are close to each other and watch narrowly the conduct one of another, than in far-stretching pastoral districts, where there is no one to see what is done and to question a neighbour's conduct. I do not suppose that feminine delicacy can stand very high among the Boers of the Transvaal. But on the other hand, as far as I could learn, illegitimacy is not common; and surely there never was a people more given to the honourable practice of matrimony.

I fear that the Boer families have but few recognised amusements. In the little towns or villages the people are given to dancing, and when they dance they are very merry; but the Boers do not live in the villages. The villages are but few in number over a country which is as large as Great Britain and Ireland put together, and the Boer's daughter who lives six or eight miles from her nearest neighbour can have but little dancing. The young people flirt together when they meet in the Transvaal as they do in all the parts of the world which I have visited. Their manner of

flirting would probably be thought to be coarse by English mothers and daughters; but then,—if my readers will remember,—so was the manner of flirting ascribed to those most charming young ladies Rosalind and Celia. We can hardly be entitled to expect more refinement to-day among the Boers of South Africa than among the English of the time of Queen Elizabeth. They are very great at making love, or “freying” as they call it, and have their recognised forms for the operation. A most amusing and clever young lady whom I met on my way up to Pretoria was kind enough to describe to me at length the proper way to engage or to attempt to engage the affections of a Boer’s daughter. The young Boer who thinks that he wants a wife and has made up his mind to look for one begins by riding round the country to find the article that will suit him. On this occasion he does not trouble himself with the hard work of courtship, but merely sees what there is within the circle to which he extends his inspection. He will have dressed himself with more than ordinary care so that any impression which he may make may be favourable, and it is probable that the young ladies in the district know what he is about. But when he has made his choice, then he puts on his very best, and cleans his saddle or borrows a new one, and sticks a feather in his cap, and goes forth determined to carry his purpose. He takes with him a bottle of sugar plums,—an article in great favour among the Boers and to be purchased at every store,—with which to soften the heart of the mother, and a candle. Everything depends upon the candle. It should be of wax, or of some wax-like composition; but tallow will suffice if the proposed bride be not of very high standing. Arrived at the door he enters, and his purpose is known at once. The clean trowsers and the feather declare it; and the sugar plums which are immediately brought forth,—and always consumed,—leave not a shadow of doubt. Then the candle is at once offered to the young

lady. If she refuse it, which my informant seemed to think was unusual, then the swain goes on without remonstrating and offers it to the next lady upon his list. If she take it, then the candle is lighted, and the mother retires, sticking a pin into the candle as an intimation that the young couple may remain together, explaining their feelings to each other, till the flame shall have come down to the pin. A little salt, I was assured, is often employed to make the flame weak and so prolong the happy hour. But the mother, who has perhaps had occasion to use salt in her own time, may probably provide for this when arranging the distance for the pin. A day or two afterwards the couple are married,—so that there is nothing of the “nonsense” and occasional heartbreak of long engagements. It is thus that “freying” is carried on among the Boers of the Transvaal.

At home in England, what little is known about the Boers of South Africa,—or I might perhaps more correctly say what little has been told about them,—has tended to give a low notion of them as a race. And there is also an impression that the Boer and the English Colonist are very hostile to each other. I fear that the English Colonist does despise the Boer, but I have not found reason to think that any such hostility exists. Let an Englishman be where he may about the surface of the globe, he always thinks himself superior to other men around him. He eats more, drinks more, wears more clothes, and both earns and spends more money. He,—and the American who in this respect is the same as an Englishman,—always consume the wheat while others put up with the rye. He feeds on fresh meat, while dried or salt flesh is sufficient for his neighbours. He expects to be “boss,” while others work under him. This is essentially so in South Africa where he is constantly brought into contact with the Dutchman,—and this



feeling of ascendancy naturally produces something akin to contempt. There is no English farmer in South Africa, who would not feel himself to be vilified by being put on a par with a Dutch farmer. When an Englishman marries a Boer's daughter, the connexion is spoken of almost as a *mésalliance*. "He made a mistake and married a Dutchwoman," I have heard more than once. But, nevertheless, the feeling does not amount to hostility. The Boer in a tacit way acknowledges his own inferiority, and is conscious that the Briton is strong enough and honest enough to do him some service by his proximity.

The man whom the Dutch Boer does hate is the Hollander, and he is the man who does in truth despise the Boer. In the Transvaal a Hollander is the immigrant who has come out new from Holland, whereas the Dutchman is the descendant of those who came out two centuries since. The Dutchman is always an *Africander*, or one who has been born in Africa from white parents, and he has no sympathy whatever, no feeling of common country, with the new comer from the old country of his forefathers. The Hollander who thus emigrates is probably a man of no family, whereas the old Colonist can go back with his pedigree at least for two centuries and who thinks very much of his ancestors. The Hollander is educated and is said to be pedantic and priggish before those who speak his own language. And in the matter of language these new Dutchmen or Hollanders complain much of the bad Dutch they hear in the Colony and give great offence by such complaints.

The Boers are at present much abused for cowardice, and stories without end are current in the country as to the manner in which they have allowed themselves to be scared by the smallest opposition. You will be told how a posse of twenty men sent to arrest some rebel turned and fled wildly when the rebel drew forth

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

