

## KAFFIR CHARACTER AND CUSTOMS.

Read by the Author before the *Natural History Association of Natal*,  
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SOME months ago I had the pleasure of endeavouring to interest the members of this Association in a peculiar Kaffir custom, which I had reason to believe was not known to many. And in writing of that Institution—for such it is—I mentioned *en passant* the laws, habits, and modes of thought and speech of the Kaffirs. To-night I will try, as best I can, to explain some of these to you; and it is my wish, if possible, to combine with this explanation something which may be useful to masters and mistresses in their treatment of their native servants.

There can be no doubt about it, that, if you *understand* a man, it is easier to deal with him, and this applies equally to your friend or your labourer. It is with the latter class I have to-night mostly to deal, though I think it perfectly possible to have a *friend* amongst the natives. There are many of them as thorough gentlemen in their way, as we are in ours.

I do not know that I can do better than refer you to my former paper on "*Hlonipa*," and request you, when you hear this one, to bear in mind what I have there spoken of. I said that I thought it would take a lifetime to make one thoroughly acquainted with their modes of thought, their peculiarities of speech, their untranslatable idioms, and their superstitions, and I also mentioned the customs connected

with the conduct of children to parents, and of parents to children—the laws of inheritance as regarded cattle, goods, daughters, wives, &c.—the proper forms of politeness observed amongst themselves, both to strangers and relatives—the rules by which they went in marrying and paying for their wives, and much more, that it is impossible to compass in one paper, but as much of which, as I can, I shall endeavour to make plain to you as I go on.

### THE LABOUR QUESTION.

We continually hear the cry of “want of labour;” and there is no doubt whatever that this same want has a baleful influence upon the progress of the Colony. But we must remember that these people, amongst whom we live, are independent of us; they are our peasantry, not our serfs. It is not an absolute necessity that they should work. At home this would be hailed as a healthful sign, and wages increased accordingly. Here, by some reason or other, it is decided that because there are 17,000 whites who require labour, and cannot afford to pay more than a certain sum, the 250,000 blacks ought *volentes volentes* to furnish it!

Many people say that it is a shame to see so many thousands of able-bodied blacks amongst us so lightly taxed, that they can afford to work a very little, and rest a great deal, whereas we are fainting for want of the labour which they can supply; that after they have bought a wife, they can sit down for the rest of their lives, and live on the produce of that wife’s labour; and their only remedy for this anomalous state of things seems to be—double or treble the hut tax, and compel them to come out.

I agree that it is sad to see this state of things, but it

cannot be altered in a day. We must either take their children and educate them, so that the next generation shall have some idea of the principles regulating labour and taxation, and so imbue the natives with new habits and knowledge—and this can be done, if gradually and carefully done by Government—or we must carry things with a high hand, force them into civilization, and be prepared for the preliminary war which will infallibly break out. The natives might pay something more—grumble and pay—and we might for a time be a little easier as to labour. But as the cultivation of our land increases, the lack would surely come again, because the Kaffir will only work until his own simple wants, and his requirements for paying his taxes, are satisfied; then go to his kraal as before. To rectify this, we should have again to put on more taxation, and the ignorant uneducated savage would look upon us as the horse-leech's daughter, whose constant cry was—"Give, give!" It is not generally known, but I think I may say, without exaggeration, that hundreds of heads of families are at this time going back into the Zulu country, rather than submit to the restraints and taxation now imposed upon them. These people are out of our control; are disaffected towards us, and leaven the tribes around with their disaffection; and herein lies an increasing danger, which must be carefully watched and guarded against, for it is a serious one; and we must be careful not to ignore it and "live in a fools'-paradise" by shutting our eyes to it.

A Kaffir, although fond of money, and perfectly well aware of the power and luxuries that money brings him, will not sacrifice all his old habits for the sake of the 10s. or 12s. a month he gets from his master. In time those habits and traditions may be cast aside, but that will only result

from education, and from a careful, "steady," honourable policy towards them. It must be the dropping water which will wear away this rock. A strong current will only cause turbulence, breakers, and danger.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR GOVERNING THE KAFFIRS.

It perhaps may be that the discussion of matters touching on the Government of the Natives would be out of place in an Institution of this kind; but everyone who knows anything of native character and habits, will know how difficult it is, in speaking of them at all, to avoid touching on this question; and if I were addressing an audience in another country, who were only interested ethnologically, I might content myself with an ethnographical paper. But here—where everything connected with the races amongst which we live concerns us deeply, and nothing more so than the proposition as to how we are to do good to them, and receive benefit from them, which I take to be the essence of good Government, when the educated man is the governing power, the savage the governed—I think I may be pardoned if this controversy creeps in. In civilized nations it is now allowed that the very essence and refinement of governing is to interfere as little as possible, or not at all, with the liberty of the subject—not even to restrain him from doing evil to himself, or to compel him to do himself good, but to trust that to his own nature, to his surroundings, or to the influence of public opinion. It is only when what he does, causes damage or loss to his neighbour, that the law steps in, protects the sufferer, and punishes the ill-doer. In a homogeneous nation benefits are of a necessity reciprocal; injuries equally so.

If a man becomes rich he has more money to give away, or spend, thus benefitting in a greater degree the objects of his charity, or those with whom he deals. If he loses his money he has less to spend, and those whom he has aided, or those with whom he dealt, feel, in their different proportions, the injury he has suffered. To go to higher illustrations. The genius who has created a noble statue, or a splendid painting, receives benefit in fame and wealth; but he gives to those who can appreciate his creation, and who give him his money and his celebrity, that "joy for ever" which they receive from gazing on a "thing of beauty,"—a magnificent work of art. An author does this in a still higher degree, inasmuch as a painting may be destroyed, a statue broken and forgotten: but a moral sentiment, a noble thought, has immortal life, and although the work in which it occurs is lost, yet it lives in the minds of the people, and endures for ever, fructifying and leavening "not for an age but for all time." When a poor man works for a rich one, the benefits are equalised. There can be no difference of interests in a nation like Britain, and, therefore what is good for one must be good for all, when we escape the snare of class legislation.

Here it is not so; for with us there is a decided antagonism. We, the dominant race, are insensibly led to feel that the natives ought to be our hewers of wood and drawers of water; and it is in the very nature of those we have to govern to believe, that we have no other object in view than to get as much as we can out of them, and on their part to evade, in every possible way, giving any return for the benefits they receive from us. There is no reciprocity here, simply because they do not see that what we propose for their benefit is really so. Therefore, there must of

necessity be class legislation ; and the essence of good government in this Colony would be, to do good to the natives, and to receive in return an equivalent benefit and no more.

To understand how to set about this work, then, and to give us the right to criticize those who are attempting it, it becomes necessary that we should know something of the laws, habits, and customs of the people amongst whom we dwell—something, in fact, of their character. If I know nothing about sugar, for instance, it would be presumptuous in me to say So-and-so was a bad buyer ; and if, repeating only what I was told, I should first find out whether my informant was himself qualified to judge. And if I knew nothing about the qualities and requirements of a coffee-tree, I should not be surprised if I got a bad crop. Therefore, if I am equally ignorant of the people who serve me, it would be more just to say, not that they are bad servants, but that I did not know how to manage them. Again, if I had bad land, and could get no other, I should have to be content with the crops it gave me ; but if I thoroughly understood its capabilities, I should not blame myself or the land, because the returns were disappointing, but should try and improve it. So with Kaffirs. You must rest content with what you can get from them ; but to know what that is, you must first *know them*. When you have acquired that desideratum, you may the more easily improve their working powers, their honesty and civility.

### MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

I will endeavour to-night to impart to you a portion of the little I have learned, during my rather intimate and

extensive intercourse with them, about the natives with whom we daily mix, with the hope that it may be of interest to you as members of this Association, as masters and mistresses of households and plantations, and as British people who hold in their hands the destinies of the savage nations of South Africa.

I think I may reasonably begin my endeavour to delineate their manners, temperament, and customs, at those connected with marriage, as it is a good starting point for an exposition of Kaffir character.

It is a mistake to imagine that a girl is *sold* by her father in the same manner, and with the same authority, with which he would dispose of a cow. There may be a few instances of such things being done, but they are the exception, not the rule. Amongst people of high rank it is not etiquette for the girl to choose her husband. She will take a pride in saying that such as she has no choice; and that she is of sufficient position to be compelled to go where the chief or the King sends her. Amongst the middle class the young men have always their sweethearts, whom they know will marry them immediately they are in a position to claim the fulfilment of their promise. They are, as a rule, faithful to them; and if any other richer suitor send a couple of friends, with one or two young heifers, to the father, to "*Tubula*" (i.e., "shoot the daughter"), if she refuses, they are quietly sent back. Perhaps a more literal translation of this phrase would be "hit her hard," as the interpretation "shoot" has only been applicable since their knowledge of fire-arms. The word is here used in a joking sense. The heifer is the "arles-penny," which, if accepted, clinches the bargain—*ergo*, he has shot, winged, crippled her, so that she can't get away from him. I know of many men, with plenty

of cattle, who are obliged to remain bachelors because they can't get a girl to accept them.

When the parties are agreed, great preparations are made. Both sides have new dances and songs, and it is a matter of emulation as to which shall excel. The bride has always ready a stock of mats, spoons, dishes, &c., which she has been preparing; and her father gives her a blanket, and cattle according to his rank. But no girl ever goes to her husband without one beast, which is ever afterwards looked upon as the ox of the "*Amadhlozi*;" the loss of which by death would be considered a token of desertion by the protecting spirits of her father's house; and the slaughter of which, in the event of any calamity such as disease or barrenness, is an acceptable sacrifice.

When the eventful day has arrived, the bride and party—the higher the rank the more followers—set out for the bridegroom's kraal; which, however, they will not enter until it is night, singing and dancing as they come. There are certain huts prepared for them, and "no one looketh upon their approach." If the pair live close together, the party of the bride will go straight to the spot appointed for the ceremony. If not, it is as I have stated above. Early in the morning they go down to some stream, wash and dress, and, about mid-day, come up and begin the dance, the bridegroom's party looking on. When both sides have finished, which may or may not be the first day, a beast, which belongs to the bride's party, is slaughtered by the bridegroom. At night the girl goes wandering about the kraal, with a following of her own sex, but relations of the man's. She is crying for her father's house, where she was well treated. Now she is coming into a strange household, where she may be ill used, and has the certainty only of



hard work and childbirth. She is supposed to be trying to run away, and the girls to be preventing her.

Next day the husband, his brother, sister, and friends, take their seats in the cattle kraal, and the second and last part of the ceremony, "*ukuhlambisa*," takes place. The bride comes in with her party of girls, carrying in her hand an assegai—which, by the way, she has carried all through. One girl bears a pot of water, and a calabash spoon; another some beads. The bride pours some water into the spoon, as also some beads. Then, coming up, singing and dancing, she throws it over her husband. She repeats this with her brother and sister-in-law, striking the latter at the same time, as a symbol that she from that time takes authority over the girls in her husband's household. Immediately this is done she breaks the staff of the assegai which she has all along held in her hand, and makes a run for the gate of the kraal as a last effort to get away. If she is not stopped by a young man appointed for the purpose, it is looked upon as a great disgrace, and the husband has to pay a beast to get her back. "*Ukuhlambisa*" means, to give wherewithal to wash the hands. I think it is a symbol that on that day she has washed away all her old life. The marriage rites are then finished. No widow when re-married breaks the staff of the assegai.

The principal idea in a Kaffir wedding seems to be, to show the great unwillingness of the girl to be transformed into a wife. When an English girl is married, it is incumbent upon herself, her bridesmaids, and all her female relatives, to shed tears abundantly, as if the great event of their lives were one of sorrow and woe! Just so with the Kaffirs. The whole ceremony is based upon this assumption. A modest girl will omit nothing, but fight tooth and nail for

all the observances. Hence most of the charges of cruelty we were entertained with some time ago; and which only showed ignorance of the native customs.

For some time after marriage the wife will not eat sour milk. She was paid for with milk-giving cattle, and she could not eat her own purchase price. She would be "*nesisila*"—would have dirt, would be defiled. But after a time she will go home to her father's, taking the broken assegai with her, and come back with a goat, a sheep, or a beast, according to the rank of the parties. This is slaughtered, and the "*isisila*"—the dirt or defiling principle—goes off the milk into the dead animal, and henceforth the milk may be eaten! In native metaphorical phrase—"she has cleaned her spoon." Each wife in a kraal has her separate hut, her independent household.

#### THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

It is part of Kaffir law that, if no children result from the union, the wife may be returned, or compensation claimed. The latter is often done; the former very seldom. It is also the case that if any of the cattle, which have been paid for her, die within the year, they must be replaced. This custom causes much litigation, as a man may, through prevalence of disease or a bad locality, have to go on paying for years. This is also the case in bargains amongst themselves. If a man buys a cow from another, or gets one given him by his chief, and she dies, the seller or the giver has to replace; but as this is no object to them, it may be years before this is done.

When a child is born, all in the kraal eat medicine, *i.e.*, something to protect them from any evil influence. They

do the same on the occasion of a death. The little one is for the first two or three days fed upon sour milk. It is not until the third day, at soonest, that it receives its natural sustenance. Kaffir children's training is a very hard one. They roll about in the sun or the rain, they scramble for what they get to eat, they sleep in the huts without covering, and the result is that only those of hardy constitutions survive. I never yet, even in a single instance, inquired of an old Kaffir woman who had had children, but I found she had lost one or more of them in this way.

When they become a little older, say about eight or nine, the boys' first duty is to herd the calves; and the girls to do any little odd jobs about the kraal which their mothers may desire—principally fetching water—and you will see a little thing tottering along, not much bigger than the pot or dish she carries on her head. How well and gracefully these Kaffir girls and women carry burdens in that way! I have seen them with a round clay pot, holding about six gallons, full of water; they twist a little grass into a ring of about three or four inches in diameter, place that on their heads, on it they place the pot, and away they go, up and down hill, and along broken ground; they will stop and turn, but never put a hand to it; and yet they never break or spill!

This I may safely say is all the training native children get. They learn other things, such as—the females, mats, dress, pot making, and hoeing; and the boys hunting and cow milking—of themselves. The natives have no idea of “training up a child in the way he should go.” If a girl or a boy refuses to do anything they are told, the parents simply say that he or she is not old enough yet; in a few years they will have grown up, and have more sense!

## THE KAFFIR CHARACTER.

The natives have no idea of morality whatever. A lie is useful in daily life; but they admit that it is awkward, if found out; if successful, it is considered rather a clever thing than otherwise. In trading with them, you may make up your mind that all they tell you is untrue, and act accordingly. Give no heed to their representations as to the age of a cow, or the value of any article. But yet, in "a deal," if you adhere to the truth, "it bothers them entirely." Your own natives, on the other hand, if they like you, will lie for your benefit as strongly as the opposite party against you; and both sides think it all fair trade.

The natives have been brought up in one fixed idea, viz., to do as little as they can for anybody. They have been used to work for the King and their chiefs without pay, and the shirking feeling has been bred in the bone; therefore, though we, with our notions of what work ought to be, cry out against the laziness of the Kaffirs, and grumble at the trouble they are to us, yet I do not really think that it is so much their fault as their breeding, which they cannot overcome in a day. The dislike to steady, constant work, is inherent in them. Hoeing from morning till night is especially irksome. For a rush of work and then a long interval of rest, Kaffirs are good; but for steady manual labour, as we understand it, they require constant supervision. But, again, this supervising is a difficult matter. It is not easy to get the right quantity of work out of a native and yet have him to like you. It is not to be done by constant "nagging," nor yet by the solitary system, which I have heard has been adopted in the colony; I mean posting them out here and there, so that they have

no opportunity of speaking to one another, and it is supposed they must therefore work; but it is only to be done by the constant presence of some one who can understand their language and their habits, who will neither bully nor joke with them, who knows how to put in a word of commendation when deserved, and, on the other hand, to give them a short, sharp admonition, when necessary, with a threat of punishment in case of repetition of the offence, which threat must always be carried out. It is a difficult matter to say what is the best form of punishment for a native, but I incline to the old plan, which I have heard freely described as "hitting him over the head with a hoe!" If you fine him, he suffers loss, and the punishment rankles, and he feels as if he had been injured; whereas if you thrash him, after it is over he is no worse, but would not like to have to go through it again. If he is in the wrong, twenty to one he will not complain. Never let a woman lift her hand to a Kaffir; it is a disgrace to him; I say nothing of what it is to her. Let her complain to some male relative or to a Magistrate; but—keep her hands off!

I have often heard people complain of the disobliging nature of the Kaffir. If you ask him to do the simplest thing, when he is not in your employ, the answer invariably is, "What will you give me?" Naturally so, I think. They are not our equals, neither do we live amongst them. We do not visit at their homes, and do them little kindnesses. The only relation, betwixt the generality of whites and blacks, is that of employer and employed. The one tries all he can to get as much as possible out of the other. There is no idea of reciprocity. I hear nothing but "tax as high as possible" on the one side, and "ask plenty wage" on

the other. We never attempt to teach them in any way. What they learn they pick up of themselves, and they do not often pick up much good. We try to get at their purses just now, because we are poor, and they are supposed to be comparatively rich ; but we ought to have the manliness to say that it is necessity which presses us on to this course. I never yet heard that protection to the exile, be he white or black, was a thing that he must pay for in Britain, or in a British colony.

It is often said that the Kaffirs are arrant thieves : well, perhaps they are so, in a way. That they cannot be trusted with anything, I don't admit. If you show a native that you distrust him ; if you are constantly on the watch against theft ; if, on something being mislaid, you don't take the trouble to look for it, but, priding yourself on you own care and method, at once tax the Kaffir with having stolen it ; if you constantly express the opinion that your sugar is diminished, your wine lessened in quantity, your meal not so much as there was yesterday, and every day ask your Kaffir "Who has been at my wine, my sugar, or my meal?" why then you had better put everything under lock and key at once, because your native will most certainly steal some when he gets a chance. On the other hand, if you can raise courage enough to say, "Here, Tom, see this meal, sugar, &c., well, mind you look after everything, as I am going away," I think, without doubt, your goods and chattels would be taken care of. Trust him, and, as a rule, he will be faithful ; show that you distrust him, and he will give cause to justify the feeling. There is one thing, however, you may make up your mind to, and that is—there are few Kaffirs who will not leave the impress of two fingers and a thumb in the sugar-bowl ; for, like others, they have a sweet tooth !

Their moral principles are very low. A theft, a lie, or even a murder are all very well, providing the first two are not found out, and sufficient provocation is given for the last. The value they put upon life is so little, that the killing another is consequently not thought by them such an enormous crime as with us. If a man has given sufficient provocation, it is his part to see that he does not get killed for it.

The natives are not bound by their law to give up anything they may have found, which has been lost by some one else. The loser should have taken better care of his property, is their moral theory.

I have heard also of their cruelty. Yes, they are cruel, as we look upon it, but, like the dogs in Watts' hymns, "it is their nature to." We ought to try and teach them better, instead of vilifying them for what they cannot help—or, rather, for what they do not see the wickedness of. We might as well censure the alligator, for stowing away the man he has drowned, in his larder in the reeds, until he becomes properly tender, and then eating him. We shudder at the cruelty of the death, but we do not blame the reptile's *modus operandi*.

Again, I may refer to the many scenes of confusion and recrimination between the Kaffir and his master, which arise from a want of knowledge of the language; and I cannot give a better example of what I mean than the word with which a native often prefaces a speech wherein he has to express a difference of opinion. "*Amanga*" literally means "lies;" but, idiomatically, it is the most polite form of contradiction. It is equivalent to our "I beg your pardon, I must differ from you." How often have I heard a white man say, speaking of some conversation with a native,

“Why, the first word the so-and-so fellow said, was that I lied. Didn't I warn him! He won't do that again.” No, I should think not. You may take it for granted that a Kaffir will never be deliberately insolent without cause. If you speak to him properly he will answer you so, but if you habitually speak harshly, and in an angry voice, you will “raise his corruption,” and get insolence in return. People speak of Kaffirs being so far below whites, while they act as if they considered them of a higher nature; for, if Englishmen were spoken to in the way that many masters and whites generally speak to natives, it strikes me there would be a breach of the peace in a very short time; but then they are only “*adjectived niggers!*”

Every employer of Kaffir labour ought either to study, or have some one about him who has studied the customs, feelings, and nature of the natives. He would then know what to expect from them, and never be disappointed; because, on that knowledge he would base his calculations, and his conduct to them.

I say that the Kaffirs are—when you know them and they know you—notwithstanding all their shortcomings, a kindly, hospitable race; and in time, with good management, good training, and good treatment, will become good subjects, good workers, and faithful friends.

#### KAFFIR ETIQUETTE.

Their forms of politeness are very strictly adhered to, and are many. When a stranger arrives at a kraal, he will most likely—if in the daytime—find the owner sitting out by the gate, and he will *kuleka* (salute); he will say *ungane* (literally “friend”), but it is a respectful salutation. If he is his



superior he will place his assegais at a little distance, advance, and sit down, saying nothing until he is saluted in turn. Presently the head man will say—*Saka bona*, abbreviation of *ge sa u gu bona* (literally, “I will see you,” equivalent to our “good morning!”), and all round, one by one, will give him the same greeting. He will answer to each one separately—*Yebo* (yes, I agree); after that, conversation may go on. If the owner is not at the gate, but in his hut, even although the visitor did not come to him, yet he will not leave without going up to salute him, as it might be said that he was sneaking about the kraal. If it is his chief, or any other chief’s kraal, he will find the captain or head man under the chief, and after saying “*umgane*” to him, will express his wish to see the great man, or explain his business. The captain then takes him up, and he “*kulekas*,” giving the chief his proper title, such as “*Zungu*” for the head of this tribe, or “*Ubtetesi*” for the head of that one (he is *the Zungu* or *the Ubtetesi*, just as a Highland chief was *the Macnab* or *the Macpherson*), accompanied most likely by *Baba* (father) and a portion of his “*isibongo*,” or name of thanks. If he is of sufficient consequence, the chief will salute him in return, and ask what has brought him there; if not he will sit outside the hut, nothing being said to him, until he sees an opening, when he will begin his business. I should like to explain the “*Isibongo*,” or name of thanks. It is a very curious custom. When a Chief or the King gives a man anything, or agrees that he shall do something that he wished to do, he thanks him. He will go outside, and walk up and down for perhaps ten minutes, shouting out all the praise he can think of. This “*Isibongo*” is taken from some trait or traits in a man’s character, from his bravery, his strength, or his comeliness. For instance, I can quote a portion of *one*

—“You who stick a man running.” [The word used is “*hlaba*,” which means to throw the assegai into anything, in contradistinction to “*gwaza*,” holding it in your hand and stabbing with it.] This does not sound like any very high praise, but the interpretation of it is that he is very liberal—that a man has not to stand and ask, but that, even as he runs past, he will throw him something of his own accord. When the native is brought into the presence of the King the same ceremony is gone through. He gives him all his titles, and sits down outside the hut. It is not etiquette for an inferior to stand in the presence of a superior. He must squat down. They reverse our idea. They say, “Is he to overshadow the chief?” When he takes his leave of any one he has been visiting, he says “*a usaleke*,” or “*eakake*,” literally “please remain and build;” but, inferentially, it means “remain healthy and well, extend your kraal, may you become great.” A curious piece of thanks from a native is, when he tells his superior to “*umana*,” literally stand still, or stand up, but it means that he hopes he will take root and grow, and always be in a position to give him presents or protect him as he has done that day. The Kaffir’s idea is, that those of high rank are the dispensers of bounty to those of lower position, for which the latter render them service. It is exactly our “work and wages” under another name. The chief is only supposed to give, not to pay, yet by custom, he is bound to do it.

It is not etiquette to give you beer, without first tasting it. I have heard many whites say, “Bother them, putting their dirty mouths into the pot;” but I think it a loyal custom, similar to the office of “taster” in the old feudal times; and it is meant to insure you against there being “death in the pot.” While any one is eating, you must not spit, but you

may blow your nose as much as you like; and there are no handkerchiefs amongst the Zulus!

To the King, or to his sons and daughters, the cook will never say that the meat, which he had cut up for him to roast, is all done. That would be a great breach of etiquette, and he would be asked "Are the King's cattle, then, all done?" He will say, "I am tired," or "I won't roast any more." With few exceptions, everything that is unpolite amongst us, is so amongst them. There are gentlemen and snobs amongst all nations; and to speak to a well-born, gentlemanly Kaffir, who has reason to respect and like you, is really a pleasure.

There is wit and fun amongst the natives, too, though I am afraid you will have to take my word for that. Being on Kaffir subjects, it would take too long to translate, so that you should understand. I will mention two instances, however. A hunter was boasting of what he had done against the buffalo, with his assegai, before he got his gun. He spoke of two or three doughty deeds, and at last said, "Go to such-and such a kraal and ask who it was that took the buffalo's eye out with his assegai." Of course, the answer to that was inferred. One of his hearers who had been staring at him, open-mouthed, said, "Was he coming at you, then?" "Look at this fellow!" said he, addressing the audience; then, turning, said, "Are the buffalo's eyes *behind* then?" Another:—In the roads we go in the Zulu Country, the waggon often sticks fast, and when that happens you naturally bully your driver, though very likely it is not his fault. The other day my old driver was on the Berea, and I pointed out to him the sea, on which I was soon to be journeying, saying, "That is my road now, Klaas." "Ah!" he said, "take care you don't stick fast there too." The

joke was, that the ship might get into a hole, and require a lot of pulling to get it out, like the waggon.

There is poetry in their natures. Many expressions of theirs have struck me, and I will quote two or three of them to prove what I say. A man was boasting to another that he never had had a day's illness in his life. "Ah!" said his friend, "the spirit of your father has been watching over you so far; but, when he turns about, he will beckon you to follow!" A girl sings a song, the burden of which is, "You have put a heavy burden upon my shoulders—a greater one than I can bear." The burden is envy—envy that they should have sweethearts and she should have none! The stars they call "the children of the sky, born by her to her husband the sun!" Am I not right when I say there is poetry among them?

#### KAFFIR COSMOGONY.

There are many other matters of interest in Kaffir character, laws, and customs, but they must, if worth while, wait for another day. Meantime I have given you so much which is dry and hard of digestion, that I think I had better end with something lighter in the shape of a Kaffir tradition as to the origin of men and animals, and the habit of eating, and how people came to be born and to die. It appears that first of all there was one *Umvel'nqanki*, which, being interpreted, means "the one who first made his appearance." It is said that he came out of the *Uhlanga*, which is literally "reed;" but it is understood as a custom, or the origin, time of origin, or place of origin of all things; as in the case when *Inkosi Uhlanga* is spoken of, it means that he is the representative of a line of kings from the

beginning. This *Umvel'nganki*, after coming on the scene himself, *brought out*—whether he *made them* or not is not stated—men, women, animals, corn, and all the fruits of the earth. At first, and for a time, it is related that black humanity lived without eating or drinking, without multiplying or dying. Corn and pumpkins grew and reproduced their crops, without tending by man. The people saw them growing in large gardens, but did not know that they were eatable. Feeling no hunger they never attempted to use them as food. Cattle, sheep, and goats roamed wild, with all other beasts of the field; no man tended, no man paid any heed to them. People lived happily, without wants, and never died. This innocent and unsophisticated state of affairs went on for a long time, but how long is not stated. All were happy and without fear of anything. At last, however, to the great consternation and dismay of every one, there appeared upon the scene *a little baby!* This was something out of their experience. While ill in her house, the mother of the child complained of a curious feeling, a gnawing pain in her stomach which she had not felt before. Those around knew not what to do, but at last another woman said, “I will give her some of that stuff growing out there,” meaning corn and pumpkins. This she did with the idea that she would kill her, because of this strange thing that had happened. She did give her food, and, after a while, the sick woman, instead of dying began to grow well, and even fat; then the people first learned that food was good, and they ate of it. After a while they found, or killed (I am not sure which) some beef. This they also found was good to eat, and so they set to work, to try and bring the beasts of the field into subjection at their kraals. The buffaloes and all wild animals, however, were too many for

them, and remain in the bush to this day. Cattle, sheep, and goats alone, allowed themselves to be driven and herded.

I am aware that what I have written is rather confused, as far as regards my first having said, that the people *never die*, and then that the woman gave the other food with the idea that she would *kill her*. But I must tell the story as it was told to me. And, again, I know how greatly it would add to the interest of this tradition if I could say the popular belief is that it was in consequence of *Umvel'nyanki's* anger at the child-bearing and food-eating that the following messages were sent. But there seems to be great uncertainty on this point. The only portion firmly rooted is what I have related, and what follows:—

When *Umvel'nyanki* had finished his work, and saw that it was good, he sent two messages: one by the "*Entulo*," or little stone-lizard often seen—some blue and some flame-coloured; and one by the "*Unwabo*," or chameleon. The first message was by the latter, and its purport was that the people should not die but live for ever, or, as some say, that "they should die, but rise again!" The "*Entulo*" he sent afterwards to tell them that "they should die and *never* rise again!" The chameleon started, but loitered by the way, eating a little purple berry (*ubkwebesane*), and the "*Entulo*," who came on behind, passed him and delivered his message. When the chameleon came with his, the people, not knowing how sore death was, refused to listen to him, saying they had accepted the word brought by the "*Entulo*." And it so happened, through the slowness of the chameleon, and the alacrity of the lizard, that death came to all men! There is a great deal in this Zulu tradition, that is like, and yet unlike, our Bible history of the Creation and Fall of Man.