Dark Johannesburg

BY

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CHAPTER I.

PODAWSKY.

Behind the large, dirty window sits Podawsky, "Practical Shoemaker, saddler and dealer in all kinds of leather", as the board above the door indicates. You require to look at it well if you wish to ascertain his qualifications, for his friend Mr. Lewis, who calls himself "Practical Painter," has written it thereon with shoe-blacking, and rubbed a little oil over it to counteract the effect of the rain. Podawsky has adopted the name "Goldfriend" because it is customary with his people, but he answers to both names when you address him. He also answers to the name "Old Jew,"—it's all the same to him.

Podawsky sits stooping with bent back on a condensed-milk box. He is a small mannikin with high shoulders, whiskers, and heavy, dark eyebrows. His head is covered with a little black skull-cap, and his eyes are hidden by a pair of blue spectacles. His greasy beard nearly touches the heel of the old shoe, which he is working at, and whenever he has stuck the awl in, he automatically gives a lick

at the horsehair at the point of the thread, and then thrusts it in, and with a big swing draws the thread through, this being the only motion that opens his old chest a bit. When he has finished working with the needle he holds the little bit of iron in the flame of the piece of candle, and then he hunts for another candle-end amongst all the tools on the little table, wherewith to make the thread smooth.

It is now nearly dark, and Podawsky has now and then to hold the thread against the light, to see if the point is still on it. Alongside of him in the corner of the room stands a paraffin stove, with a little kettle on it, and a tin plate and cup by it. Those are his only kitchen utensils, for he has lost his old spoon by melting gold with it.

On the wall, to his right, a bracket has been put up, and on it there stand a couple of pairs of boots, whilst below hangs the tail-coat which he wears on "Shabbes." A few feet behind him is suspended a chintz curtain, which protects his bedroom from the eyes of passers-by. There stands the old stretcher, on which he sleeps, and under which he hides his food, because a kaffir had once stolen his tin of jam from the bracket, when he was away at the back.

Podawsky still keeps working, but he can scarcely

see any longer. For a moment he ceases working and looks out. It is fearful weather! He only sees the dirty gray mist of sand, which is still blowing about in great clouds in the narrow street in which he lives. The dust blinds the people, and they run hard to get home, but the wind stops them and turns them round with its gusts that make them rub their eyes, just like children who have had a caning.

Podawsky listens and, to be able to do so, places his fingers in his ears, for otherwise he cannot hear well, because the battery-stamps make so much noise, and then he only hears a sound like that of the great ocean across which he came not a year ago; but now he listens attentively, for he has found that this is the best way to enable one to hear.

It is still now, still for a long time. But when he uncovers his ears again, the stamps roar worse than ever and with redoubled noise, and for a while he listens to the sound. He knows what it means.

It is "gold, pure gold" that they are roaring. Before he had been a month in the country they had told him how the great masses of rock are taken out of the earth and ground to powder, and that gold, pure gold, comes out of them. Then he used to stand in the evenings looking at the big wheel as it began to revolve, and hearing the rock fall into the trollies which seemed

to run of their own accord. Then he would go home, and think, and think till his head ached. He, Podawsky, was dwelling in the midst of the gold. It was under him, and around him, and alongside of him, and yet he had none, and later on he heard of the gold still contained in the big heaps of debris, and so he thought out a plan to try and get some more gold out of them.

Then he had spoilt his soup-spoon and had nearly burnt off both his hands, and so he had given up the idea of contriving other methods of making gold. But it never left his thoughts. He was living in the midst of gold, and he had none!

When a newcomer in the land, he had gone about buying and selling old clothes, and had made a few shillings, with which he had hired a small shop, but business was slack and money scarce. There for a week past had stood a pair of shoes, and the owner did not come to fetch them, because he had no money. So he sits and thinks and gropes around for the matches, for he has put out the candle in order to light the old lamp, which hangs above the table.

He has just done this, when the door opens and his friend Lewis, *alias* Kagan, cautiously enters. Podawsky lights a fire under the little kettle, but does not say a word. Lewis, likewise, says nothing, but

lays hold of an empty paraffin case, sits down upon it, takes a dirty handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his eyes.

By the time he had performed this operation, his friend had taken up a shoe, and begun working as if there were nobody present, but suddenly he says "*No was haist.*" (Well, what's the matter?)

"*Man magt a leben.*" (One makes a living). "*Wen man magt a leben sol man sein zufrieden*" (If one makes a living he must be satisfied). Podawsky replies without looking up.

"*Ja, aber wen man magt kein lèben, kein leben, sol man sein zufrieden?*" ("Yes, but if one does not make a living at all, must he still be satisfied?".....)

All the time Lewis has never lifted his eyes from his friend, and now that the old fellow begins to complain of all his troubles and all his cares, it is as if some thought had struck him about a matter which has not yet been discussed between them.

"Yes," he says, "that is true. One can't make a living, and things are hard for us poor people, who are persecuted all our lives-long and never get any rest."

Lewis had first been—as has been said—a "Practical Painter," which means that he walked the streets with a big pane of glass on his back calling out in broken English: "Windows to paint." Later on he

had entered the "Soft-goods trade," and at that he still works.

He is a "traveller," and travels afoot. He visits all the small "shoppies" in the town, where his people sit working from early morning till late at night, bent double over old machines, at less pay than a Kaffir can earn. There he has to find purchasers for the goods of the firm of Lankowitz, which goods are then transformed into "Paris fashion" for the great firm "Berlin." The pay which Lewis receives for "travelling" is but small, and this goes against his grain. As a child he had been sent to a big school in his fatherland, but after two years' schooling his father had taken his whole family to England, to leave that free-land again as soon as possible, because he found that food was not "free" there. With that modicum of civilization Lewis had come hither, and had as a youth of eighteen started in trade as a painter. Now he is still in business and he does not like it. The trouble is that you can't be a socialist here. It doesn't pay. There in Russia it was all right. There you just took an oath to kill and destroy all rulers, and then the newspapers dilated on the oppressed Jews and the cruel Russians. But he has been bitterly disappointed in all his expectations both in England and in this country. There was nobody there to come and greet him as a martyr, and his

own people had only given him a few shillings wherewith to begin the "old clothes" business.

This had made him think, but those thoughts had carried him back to the anarchists of Russia, and again he came to the conclusion that this would not pay, and.... money he must make. So he has made a plan with some other people, but that is still a secret, and now it suddenly strikes him that he can make use of old Podawsky to carry out his scheme.

The old chap, he thinks, is "*masjoege*" (simple) and still cherishes foolish thoughts about Jerusalem and the Promised Land.

"Moshes," so he begins, "it is no use thinking that men like you and me can ever make a penny in this land of '*slemiels*' (heathens). It is no use to think of it."

"Noo ja," is all that Podawsky answers as he holds the bit of iron in the candle to make the sole shine.

"Look here," continues Lewis, "I have long wanted to speak to you about a matter, that will be good for both you and me. I have friends who will help us, but don't forget that you are an old man, and can do but little, but for all that you can share in the profits which will come from the 'business'."

"*Und was sol ich machen*—(what must I do?) I can....

"You must do nothing. You must just keep quiet," and he stamps on the floor, and when it sounds hollow, he goes a little further and says: "This old room of yours is just first-class."

Podawsky, who can only speak Yiddish, looks at him in surprise, and says, "First-class, *noo was?*"

"Look here, Moshes, all you'll have to do is to keep dark. One of these days you'll get a lump of gold in this here room of yours, that'll weigh a couple of hundred pounds, but you are to know nothing of it—you understand?"

Podawsky doesn't quite grasp his meaning, and asks: "Am I to sell it, and what am I to get for it?"

He has now put down the shoe, and listens with all his might, for is not this something unusual—a hundred-weight of gold!

"All you have to do," says Kagan, "is to keep mum, dead-mum, do you hear? You must keep quiet if we come here at night, and saw a hole in the floor."

"You must behave as if you were deaf and blind and understood nothing of it. You are not to say a word, nor ask a question."

The old fellow listens, but is not yet satisfied, and says: "I am to keep quiet when you break up my floor here and who is to pay me the damage?"

"You old fool," Lewis interrupts him, "don't you understand then, that you will share in the gold, that the money you will get is worth more than your ugly old shanty, and more than two such old things."

"Now listen well. We—I and a couple of friends of mine—have discovered a way of making gold, gold, mind you, real gold," he repeats, as he sees the eyes of his friend glitter, "but the government won't allow it. They say we must dig for it and not make it. Now we have already made a thousand pounds' worth, and we are looking for a place to hide it, and that's what we want your room for."

Kagan has now quite resumed the Jewish manner of arguing with frantic gestures of his hands. Moshes sits still and says: "*Noo ja*".....

Angrily Kagan interrupts him and exclaims: "*Noo ja, noo ja, was haist; wilst du nicht machen de gelt, wert ich fragen ein ander, sol er machen de messomme.*" (Very well—very well, what matters; if you don't want to make money, I'll ask some one else, and he'll get the coin.)

Podawsky cannot let the chance go by and says: "All right—you can come."

"Well, then drop your work, and come along with me," says Lewis, "but mind what I said to you, you are not to say a word and to make as if you were deaf, you understand."

The old fellow gets into his jacket, puts on his old round hard hat, and leaves the little street to catch the tram which runs from Turffontein to town. The weather is fine now, the stars are shining and Podawsky is sunk in deep thought; there is something that makes him uneasy, but he dares not say what it is, for Kagan is a smart chap and his own experience of things in this country is as yet but small. The old man gazes in the direction of Turffontein, and sees how the connecting pole of the tram emits little sparks against the wire, and how now and then small lights appear between the trees.

The old fellow is still thinking, and suddenly he grasps the arm of his companion and says:

"*Noo, was werd ihr machen?* You are surely not going to do something wrong? You shall not do so! you may not use me for such work."

Lewis gets angry and says in English: "Shut up, you old fool—come, there's the tram, just you come along, there's no danger."

They jump on, and the tram hums townwards, but Podawsky sits and half-closes his eyes against the light. He is lost in thought, and says not a word.

CHAPTER II.

JAN.

A yard opens upon a little back street, which is built all round with small rooms, in some of which lights are still shining through the grimy curtains or the dirty sheets that serve as curtains. The boards of the narrow verandah are rotten, and there are many holes in them, but the children of that neighbourhood know them, and play hide-and-seek in them. The verandah posts are old and stand trembling, if one ventures to touch them, and in some places old pieces of guttering hang down, which not a soul has ever taken the trouble to repair. There is not a single little "stoep" that is not damaged and the people have just collected some stones here and there, or put down an old paraffin tin, filled with sand to patch up the holes.

In the middle of the yard stands an old round tank that leaks a good deal when it is half full, and which is really meant for emptying slops into, but the people there have long ago grown tired of that affair, and prefer "chucking" their dirty water into the yard or on to the little back-street, as is evidenced by the small furrows, which have their sources at every little stoep and empty themselves into a large furrow, that issues at the back gate,

and where, even yet, the bluish water shines in the moonlight. The full moon illuminates half of the yard, and in the shadow of the old tank crouches a big black cat, which is being attacked by a lot of dogs that make a fearful noise. From one of the little windows there comes the soft tinkle of a guitar, with abrupt intervals, as if from some one who is still a learner.

The middle door on the shady side is ajar, and a narrow ray of light falls obliquely across the darkness.

At a small table sit a man and a woman, both leaning their arms upon its edge and resting their chins upon clenched fists. The small glass paraffin lamp shines upon their faces, the one pale and hollow-cheeked, the other regular and red, hardened by toil and weatherbeaten, but also marked with the signs of many troubles.

The big shadow falls on the old wall-paper behind him, the monotony of which is only broken by the sombre portrait of a woman in a black frame. From the corner of the chamber comes weak though regular breathing, and a few tears trickle through the fingers of the mother. Both rise for a moment, and stand bending over their sleeping little daughter.

The cheeks are still hollow, the little forehead

still somewhat wrinkled, and the tiny fingers very thin, but the danger is now past.

They sit down again; and across the table the man grasps the hand of his wife and whispers hoarsely: "Now, don't cry any more, the doctor says the crisis is past. Don't cry, my dear."

"Yes, I know, but there is something worse that troubles me! You know what I mean. About the child I am not uneasy any more, but I am about you, Jannie. You tell me nothing, but I suspect that there are wrong things going on, that ought not to be. You are in bad company, Jan! For I know you! You do things that are not right. Say now whether it is true or not?

"When I have been sitting up at nights with the poor little thing, and you were trying to sleep, you couldn't manage.

"You kept rolling about and getting up and my anxiety about the child was sometimes not so great as about yourself. I know you are not one of that class of Johannesburgers, who are too lazy to work; but I have noticed that the yearning to make money has laid hold on you too. Were we not very happy together with the crust of bread, which you earned honestly? Tell me, what is it! Tell me, cannot I perhaps help you? I had hoped that the illness of our little one might have turned you to better

things, but how I have deceived myself! The child is now barely out of danger, and there you go again without telling me what it is that drives you from home. This evening you came back tired and worn out, and I perceive that your troubles are perhaps greater than before. Are you not grateful then, that the child is getting better?"

All the time the man sat, looking straight before him without speaking a word, but now he raises his head and says: "Yes, I am glad, but what's the use? What good is it to us that the child lives and we have no food to give it, and if we are to see the child grow up and get big and then later on she just has to work like any Kaffir I think that perhaps it would have been better had she died. What's the use of living and having no money?"

The poor woman first looks at him in surprise, but when she sees that he is in earnest, she lets her head sink upon her arms and sobs aloud. He lets her weep without saying anything, and gazes before him with a sombre stare. Then he fetches some water and gives it to her. She drinks mechanically and returns the cup without looking at him. He stoops over her, and kisses her on her forehead, but she remains motionless. It is now nearly eleven o'clock. "Come," he says, "it is getting late, let us stop talking; it will be allright. You must'nt go and make

yourself ill. I have work to do which I can't tell you of, but you'll very soon hear all about it, and you will be satisfied. I must be off, there are some friends waiting for me."

She is used to it that her husband sometimes goes out late at night, and so she now shows no surprise, but sighs deeply as the tears stream down her cheeks.

He just looks at the child again for a moment, takes leave of her with a "so-long" and walks out of the little room and off the stoep, and by a path at the back enters the street, where the moon is now casting long shadows. He keeps to the dark side and walks along quickly in the direction of the city. In the next street the trams are rattling, but he keeps to the street which runs parallel to the broader one till he gets near to the market-square just as the post-office clock is striking half-past eleven. At the corner of the big building stand two men, who seem to be waiting. Jan first takes a careful look, and sees that they are his friends. One of them is a tall youth, and the other is no one else but our friend Podawsky escorted by Lewis. They stand there side by side without saying a word. As soon as Lewis sees Jan, he steps up to him and says: "Have you been waiting long?"

"No", replies Jan, "but who is that little fellow with you there?"—"Oh, why that is the old chap

who is to help us. Speak a little low, for I don't know what's the matter with him. It looks to me as if he isn't 'all there' to-night."

Podawsky now joins them, and they cross over to the other side of the market. Lewis talks in whispers to Jan, whilst Podawsky shuffles along after them.

Lewis informs Jan that they have been to Parktown to see the 'gentleman', who is taking part in their business, and that he wanted first to see Podawsky, because he had not yet met him and didn't know whether he could be trusted, but—says Lewis—as soon as he saw him, he just began laughing and said: "He'll do!"

Jan has listened attentively to Lewis' rapid talk, and is just waiting for a chance to have a say also. At last Lewis pauses and Jan says: "Yes, look here, you have now talked a lot, but how do matters stand now? What have I to do, and what must the old man behind us here do? And where does the profit come in? I don't like the look of things at all."

Lewis suddenly interrupts him and replies:

"See here, I thought you knew all about it. This evening, you know," he adds with a smile, "we are going to fetch the gold."

"When we have loaded it on to the cart you are

to go with a couple of kaffirs to the house of the old fellow behind us here, and you will take some iron-piping and some tools with you, to look as if you were going to repair a broken waterpipe. I shall go on ahead to tell the old man that the gold is coming. We unload the stuff at Podawsky's and you quickly make a hole in his floor, and the thing is done. To-morrow, or the day after, the fellow will come with his cheque and takes it away and we share the money. That's all!" Jan walks along lost in thought, and says nothing.

"I see," he says at last. "I take the gold with the kaffirs, and you go on ahead. If they catch me, then you are off, and that gent from Parktown is safe, for of course, he knows nothing about it, and then I and the poor old soul walking behind us here will get into trouble, isn't that so? I don't like it, I tell you. You are too clever a lot, but I don't want to get into prison for you and the other rogue, even though he does live in a grand house."

Lewis was evidently startled at Jan's argument, but he immediately recovered himself:

"You don't want to get into prison, don't you? You want to desert us at the last moment, and perhaps betray us?"

Jan places himself right before him saying: "You cursed Jew, you think that I, who fought to the last for

my country, will betray any one? I'll knock your brains out, if you say that again! I know that want has driven me to this miserable business, but I'll sooner twist your neck than suffer you to call me a traitor. Look at this poor old chap behind us here, you are betraying him. He knows of nothing and you are of his people, you rascal."

Lewis perceives that he has made a mistake, and that he must go on another tack.—"Look here," he says, "you mustn't take it so seriously. I didn't say, that you must do this. I only just talked! but you must be sensible. You talk of going to prison, and that is what will happen if you leave us in the lurch now. I know that you run no danger at all of getting into trouble, and that the risk here is but small. But otherwise you make sure of going to gaol. You know that the man who gave us that "tip" has helped you. How will you be able to repay him that money? That twenty pounds with the interest that has been long running? You'll never be able to pay that back. I know him well. He will not hesitate to throw you into a debtor's prison for a year.

"He'll just have you arrested, and how then? Where will your wife and child be then?"

The matter begins to look very black to Jan now. His wife and child, yes, that was it. Because he had

wanted to help them, was the reason why he had fallen into the hands of this crew, and in bitterness he exclaims: Yes, I wish the child had sooner died; then perhaps I would never have had need of you scoundrels.

Lewis says nothing, for he knows that he is sure of his man. The tram comes up and they are carried in the direction of Turffontein. No one utters a word, and soon they reach the spot where they are to get down.

Lewis walks ahead, and Jan and the old man follow him. At Podawsky's house they stop, and the old man opens the door, and lights the lamp. Lewis shows Jan where he is to make the hole in the floor. It must be under the table, and he gives further instructions how to act. Jan listens in silence, whilst the old man stands looking on, with half closed eyes. It is now near twelve, and Lewis says to Podawsky: "You mustn't go to sleep now, do you hear, we shall be here in about an hour, you understand?"

The old man says not a word, but nods his head. Lewis and Jan go off into the dark little street, and Podawsky is alone. Mechanically he takes up the shoe again, but he cannot work. From a little box alongside the table he takes a book with Hebrew print. He runs his dirty fingers along the letters

and reads as his lips move. He has replaced the black skull-cap on his head, and his grey hairs shine white along the rim. There are deep furrows on his forehead, and his lean hand trembles. He gazes into the light of the lamp and thinks. Then the whole affair seems to pass in review before him. The talk with Lewis, the visit to the fine house at Parktown, and the behaviour of that 'gent' there, who had not recognized him as a father in Israel, but had laughed at him, though he tried to conceal this under the pretence of laughing at Lewis. But Podawsky had felt it. Yes the great man with whom they had been, would surely be able to explain the whole thing to him, but he had been unable to understand him. What was the good? He feels that there is something wrong, but what can he do? What is it that's wrong? The old man lays his book aside, and stares into the yellow light of the lamp.

How long he sat thus he knew not, but he was startled by the sound of cartwheels grinding heavily over the pebbles. He listens and it comes nearer, and halts before his door. He does not change his seat but suddenly the door is opened and Lewis enters.

"What," he says, "are you asleep already? Look sharp, we must be quick, there is no time to lose.

Come, push the table aside. Why do you look at me?"

Podawsky says: "But there is no danger, is there?" Lewis flings a savage curse at the old man as he remains standing in the middle of the room. Of a sudden he hears strange voices, and people running hard. He sees how the kaffirs rush past his door, and at the same moment a stranger enters, seizes him by the arm and makes a sign to him to accompany him. By the light of the lantern he sees Jan standing there handcuffed, and that behind him squat a couple of kaffirs also with handcuffs on their wrists. Jan looks at him and says, "Poor old man!"

Of Lewis there is nothing to be seen. He had perceived in time that there was trouble coming, and had escaped round the back of the house.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRISON.

It was "Visitors' day" at the gaol, which means that the family of prisoners, awaiting trial, may come and see their relatives. Jan's wife had gone for her permit three days before, and now she will be able to speak to him.

What she has endured during that time, is plain

from her hollow cheeks and her large eyes red with weeping. With his little one on her arm the woman is now standing before the heavy door of the fort, and she crumples up the slip of paper in her hand, before nervously lifting the knocker. The door is opened after the warder has peeped through the little shutter. She shows him the permit, and he takes it as he explains to her that another permit is not necessary, but that she has come to the wrong place. He shows her that she has to be behind the large stone wall, and she seeks until she finds the right place. Crossing a large square she comes to a door where she has again to show her permit. The warder points out where she has to go, and there, opposite her in the corner of a large open space, she sees a place just like a big bird-cage. Inside stands a man between two warders, and in front of the grating someone is talking to him. Going up to them, she sees that there are some more people waiting. After a few minutes one of the warders calls out "time is up" and one man is sent away immediately, whilst another takes his place within the narrow space.

The poor woman stands sorrowfully looking on at this. Another man enters from within, and before the grating stands a woman with a baby on her arm just the same size as her own, with two more

children holding on to her gown. She looks at the man and heaves an involuntary sigh of relief, as she mutters: "Fortunately this is not my Jan." She looks upon this man with that careless smile upon his lips, as a monument of degradation. She hears the harsh words of the woman, which pierce her like a knife, and at last when the time comes for the woman to leave, the tears spring into her eyes, when she hears the children crying for their father. The man's wife, angrily and with hurried footsteps, leaves the place, and she trembles at the thought that her turn is about to come. Oh, she had so longed for this hour, but now she dreads seeing her Jan again. When the day-before-yesterday she had received the note telling her that her husband was there, she had nearly fainted, but she is resolved to be firm now and not to reproach him. She knows, that he is there because he had wanted to provide for her better than he was able to do. No, she would be brave now, and prove that she did not wish to cause him more sorrow. With trembling fingers she hands over the note, and hears them call her husband's name. Her heart beats, for she knows not what he will say: one thing is certain, she will be calm, for she knows that it is no use now making reproaches. She clasps the little one closer and gazes at the door with strained eyes. Yes,

there he is! She wants to go to him, but there is the grating and on the other side her husband so greatly changed.

His figure is bent forward, his hair has turned gray at the temples, and he stares around with a startled air. "Jannie," she cries, "Jan, don't you know me then." He glances at her, but is about to turn away when the little one calls "papa." Like a man roused from a deep sleep, he raises himself.

They are not words of grief that he utters, nor words of harshness, but, just as if he had been considering the matter constantly, he at once starts telling her all that has occurred. He tells how that fellow Lewis had cheated him; how he had first met him in town and how he brought him to a man from whom he could borrow some money; that he had signed a promissory note, and then could not help taking part in the plot: that on the night on which he was caught a couple of kaffirs with a small cart had waited on the main-road, that Lewis had completely disappeared at the house of the old man, and that he and the old Jew who were quite innocent would now have to suffer for the rascality of those other fellows. "But," he added, "perhaps it will not be unjust to punish me, because I ought first to have enquired what the whole of that affair meant; but the old man is purely the victim of those two rogues."

His wife had listened in silence, and when he ceased speaking, she said: "Baby has got better nicely, Jan." He just glances up for a moment and replies: "Yes." The tears start to her eyes, when she notices that he is thinking of quite other matters.

"And what can I do for you?"—"What you can do for me?" he asks. "What? Nothing, nothing at all; what can you do?" The poor woman is now utterly at a loss what to say or do, and when the warder calls out: "Only five minutes more," she collects her thoughts. She hands the little basket, containing food and a couple of shirts, to the warder and makes ready to leave. Her husband is distracted. Suddenly he calls her back. "Maria," he exclaims, "can you ever forgive me for what I have done? I swear that I never knew what this thing meant, but now I am in this trouble through my own carelessness. I would not listen to you, and now you mustn't trouble about me any more."

At first the woman says nothing, but now she asks: "When will it be heard?"

"On Monday," is all he replies, for "time is up," the warder declares. They give the signal for Jan to retire behind the door, and the wife is left staring dazed as if in a trance. When she recovered herself, someone else was standing where her husband had stood.

She walks away unable to realize all this. What is the matter with him? What is this? He would have died for his child, and to her also he had always been a kind husband. What is this? She cannot weep any more, nor does she understand why this is so. She must do something, that is certain. That same evening she brings her child to a neighbour and dresses herself. Then she steps across to the house of Jan's brother, a fine house, which she had never before entered. She knew that this brother had parted from Jan, because he had married her and she had been but a poor girl. The brothers had never again associated with each other, and she would certainly never have gone to this place to ask for any favour for herself, but this was for her Jan, and for his sake she could brave anything.

What took place in that big house is not known to anyone. When after half an hour she came out again, her eyes were red from weeping, and she sobbed so that she had to wait a long time before she could fetch her child, for she did not wish her neighbour to know what had happened there.

Next day a gentleman came, who introduced himself as a law-agent who had been sent by her brother-in law. He informed her that he had been sent by him to watch the case; not, he emphatically added, because he deserved it, but because it would

damage the reputation of the brother-in-law, if people heard that there was nobody to defend him. She takes no notice of this, and listens to him in silence. The only thing that occupies her thoughts is the sad plight of her husband, and it matters little to her whether or not this help is offered for the purpose of saving the reputation of her brother-in-law. All that she cares for, is that he will now receive help. For a long time still, with her little one upon her arm she sits lost in thought over all that has happened, but now there is a ray of hope in the darkness.

Two days later she visits the attorney and learns that her husband's case will be heard next week. She obtains another permit, but leaves her child with her neighbour. Jan is very reticent, and when she tells him that someone will appear in his defence he is, at first, very angry when he learns that his brother is doing this. For the rest he makes no enquiry, and seems hardly to know her. This was the last chance there was of her speaking to him before the trial, but beg and pray as she might that he would confide in her, he keeps silence and it seems to her that he is glad when the warder announces that time is up.

The morning of the day on which the trial is to take place has come.

Jan's wife had not slept the whole night and had

called on the attorney twice on the previous day. He could tell her nothing particular, but yet it had been some consolation to her to know, that that man would appear on her Jan's behalf. She is aware now that her Jan had been concerned in illicit trading in gold, but the particulars are unknown to her. At the big government-buildings there is always a great deal doing of a morning between nine and ten. People, who are to give evidence, are gathered there, always much too early, and sometimes quite needlessly. On the stoep there sit the kaffirs who will have to come inside on that day to give their evidence.

There are the law-agents hurrying to and fro with big bundles of papers. There are the smart-looking policemen who have to keep order, and Cape servant-girls in gowns of many colours, each calculating the chances of her "boy" who has been taken up and confined three weeks ago for liquor-selling, and whose case will 'come on' to-day. In the offices themselves a couple of clerks sit talking over their cases or cracking jokes, without giving a thought to that unfortunate lot, who may soon be sentenced there for many months.

The nearer to 10 o'clock the more crowded the court-room becomes, and when at last the Magistrate enters, the policeman shouts with a loud voice: "silence," and all are silent.

Jan's wife had walked up and down the building looking about for him for half an hour, although she knew that it was hopeless. He was to come from the fort, out of the big black wagon, that ugly "Black Maria." At last it arrives with the policeman high-up above there, with another alongside of him, and at the back still another holding on to the strap right in front of the door. She is unwilling to look, but yet she looks. She goes round the corner of the building and then gazes straight before her. The thing stops and then the poor creatures come out of it. First of all three men, then two women, and finally Jan and also Podawsky, about whom she has already heard so much. Jan walks erect, but the poor little old Jew stoops as he walks, and looks to those who know him even smaller than he actually is.

It is but for a moment that she sees them, for between the row of policemen they quickly disappear through the passage leading to the yard.

Then she goes inside, and when at last the policeman cries "Silence," she waits with trembling lips for the coming of her husband. It seems to her as if it lasts for hours, so slowly does the time pass. Eventually his case is called. Jan seemingly dives up out of the ground and behind him follows the old man. The attorney informs the Magistrate that he appears to defend Jan; but the old man has no

one to plead for him. A Jewish interpreter comes and helps him to give his name, and to translate what he has to say. There are not many people in the Court this morning, and Maria can hear everything well, though her husband is unable to see her.

Now she hears the account of how it all happened. Yes, she had known well enough that he was innocent. The Magistrate can hear this for himself now. He had known nothing about the gold. They had asked him if he wanted a job, and he had taken it.

He had had no idea that it was wrong. He had had no suspicion that he would have to come at night. He had thought that this had to be done because the people had told him that it was a matter which the police knew about and that they did not wish to have it done publicly. To the question of the attorney, whether he did not think it strange that they should bring the gold or whatever it was to the house of a poor shoemaker, in order to trap thieves, he replies with a calm voice.

Now his wife is quite sure, that he is innocent, "for everybody could hear this for themselves!"

When Jan's examination was concluded old Podawsky's declaration was interpreted. At first they were going to send Jan away, but the public prosecutor said that this was unnecessary since he did not

understand a word of English. The old man is the image of misery. His body is more bent than ever and his hair has grown much greyer. His gestures are no longer so spasmodic as was his way when he he was talking. He speaks as if in a dream. He declares, that he had been asked by a man named Lewis to store some gold in his little dwelling. He says that he had known Lewis for a long time, but not otherwise than as a 'traveller.'

Where Lewis lives and where he is, is unknown to him. On that night he had accompanied him on a tram to see a gentleman who knew about the matter, but he had not spoken to him. Nor does he know by which tram, nor where that person lived. There is in the simple tale the old man tells so much apparent truthfulness that the Magistrate listens to him with attention. He can see that the man is speaking without premeditation, and simply because he cannot do otherwise. He enquires about Podawsky's trade, and the detective testifies that the people in his neighbourhood know nothing against him. He is a most inoffensive man and never left his home. He has no friends, and is only absent on Saturdays to church. All who know him, speak well of him and refuse to believe that he could ever have anything to do with the police.

Jan's wife still stands listening there all the time.

She fancies that all will now soon be over, and is only waiting for the Magistrate to speak. Nor has she much longer to wait now. She sees how he arranges all his papers and begins to speak. At first she does not hear clearly, but every now and then she hears her husband's name mentioned. It is clear to the Magistrate that the old man has been the tool of a couple of rogues. He believes his statement and says that he will discharge him, but warns him through the interpreter never again to have to do with such people, and tells him that if he ever appears there again, he will not be let off so easily.

A policeman takes old Podawsky by the arm and leads him outside, where he first remains standing as if distracted, until he realizes that he is now actually free, and, with halting steps, he makes his way homeward.

The Magistrate continues to speak for some time longer, and at last pronounces sentence—"Six months' imprisonment for Jan, whose innocence the Court is unable to believe in."

Jan hears this unmoved. To the question whether he has anything further to say, he gives no reply. His wife has gone out, and falls down on the stoep in a faint, from which she awakes in the hospital, and from which she is carried to the grave a

week later. Her little one is in the Asylum for neglected children.

* * *

A couple of weeks later an old man with a few old vests and pairs of trousers on his arm is walking near the Fort. He stands still as the long row of prisoners file by him. Then he cries out with a tremulous voice "O, Clo!" One of the men in the long file looks up, and Jan and Podawsky recognize each other.

DARK JOHANNESBURG.

It was a dark evening. A keen south wind was driving a gray mist over the roofs of the irregularly built houses and blowing dust into people's eyes. On the Market Square there was light enough. The hotel "Move-on," which to-day is at a stand-still, was smoking and sending forth a lukewarm-sweetish odour, whilst the yellow glare of the copper reflectors behind the paraffin lamps, made the consumers of cakes half close their eyes, just like cats that are having a good time.

The lanterns of the cabbies shed a dim light, but cast rays which shone on the flanks of the sleepy horses. In the middle of the square stood the barrows of the vendors of hot sausages, with their little smoky chimneys, and shiny brasswork lit up by a huge lantern.

In the windows too, here and there, light yet shone, which, however, grew less each time that the tired attendant, after casting a last glance at his wares, turned off the connections one by one.—Then curtains were slowly pulled down, and a modest opening left for those who, even on Sunday, cannot throw off all earthly cravings.

The large face of the post office clock gleamed a dull-yellow, and the hands pointed at a quarter past nine. In the middle of the square a couple of cronies for whom it seemed hard to sever the bonds of friendship, stood saying farewell. With clasped hands, when the first verse sounded from high up in the air, they sang together feelingly: "Don't say good-bye," followed by yet another embrace. At the spot, where, in the daytime, one sees the shoeblacks at work, a man with the voice of Stentor stood shouting and gesticulating. But no one took any notice of him. A couple of kaffirs stood admiring his pertinacity, and his voice could be heard far up the straight-running streets. That man was working for the mission amongst the Jews, but he seemed to share the fate of Heemskerk and his men, "who cared not for results but took account only of their object." For on a Saturday evening the Israel of Johannesburg is mostly to be found at the theatre. The monotonous jingle of the trams still continued without cessation. Cabs rattled to and fro at intervals, and pedestrians began to mend their paces. The great crowds which usually collect in Pritchard street on that evening, and shoulder their way past each other, gradually grew less, and in the bars things began to get more lively. People talked, laughed, or joined in the singing when the usual Saturday-night concert rendered one

of the 'catches' of the week. Through the midst of this press of people the female soldiers of the Salvation Army wended their way, offering the "War Cry" for sale with an imperturbable smile.

They took no notice of the rude or indelicate remarks made here and there, and showed no anger if a semi-intoxicated man bespoke "a kiss into the bargain for next time." A polite "thank you" was all they said, and a certain indefinable respect was their safeguard against rough treatment.

It grew stiller outside. Far away one heard the incessant noise of the stamps, and the sudden shrill sound of a police-whistle, which, for a moment, caused a stir in the street. Excepting on the market square all around was dark. Though some light glimmered in the dark streets, it was precarious, as the dust of the day had dimmed the globes of the little lamps. The narrow Fox Street looked like a wide lane, dark and lonely, a place where people meet you with their hands on the stocks of their revolvers or swinging their walking sticks. The only part of this street that is lit up at nights is the wide and roomy charge-office, the preliminary abode of those who have actually—or are suspected of having—broken the law, and who have been conveyed thither by "bobby" and his coloured satellites.

The great wide door of this building is always open,

and through it, as the well-known Sankey hymn proclaims, there always—at least at night—is shed a "ray of light," though here it is not a sign of joy and jubilation.

The broad stairs lead you to the actual charge-office, which is likewise always open. There on the counter lies the charge-book, on which entries are filled in with imperturbable calmness. There stands the dreaded sergeant, who listens to the charge and sometimes decides whether the accused shall be given a night's lodging there, or whether he has been dragged up that high flight of stairs on insufficient grounds. There you may see the drunken man standing in the clutches of a couple of brawny Zulus, who, standing at attention in strict military style, lay their complaint.

Stiffly erect, whith their caps stuck against their ears and their white trousers spanning their thighs, as if glued on to them, they hold their prey with two strong fists.

The sergeant, inured to such things, twirls his pointed moustache and carelessly enquires:

"What's the charge?"

"Drunk, Sir!"

"Disorderly?"

"No, Sir; he lay in the street, Sir!"

"Did he come with you?"

"No, Sir, we pull him."

A card is thrust into the pocket of the unlucky one, on which his name, or (if that be not discoverable) his number is inscribed, together with the amount of the money that he has with him. Then he is removed through a large iron gate, that opens upon the winding stairs which lead to the cells. It may seem childish, but, when, under the escort of a friend, I for the first time descended these stairs, I could not resist a "creepy" sensation—and many a one has spent a night in that building, when next day it was discovered that it was simply "a mistake." A corpulent policeman, possibly employed on light work on account of his girth, immediately "fell in," and preceded us down the long passage between the thick walls, the monotony of which is only broken by heavy iron doors at regular intervals.

Small electric lamps light up the straight passage before us here and there.

"And now," said my conductor, "I shall let you see some types that may perhaps interest you; and to commence right at home, I'll introduce you to a countryman of your own." Before I had time to make a remark the door of No. 38 was opened, and suddenly a little lamp gleamed against the ceiling of the cell. On the ground sat Jan, an honest bur-

gher, who had for the last twenty years made his home in the Transvaal, and had for ten years carried on his calling as a carpenter. Association with British workmen had had as yet but little influence upon his Amsterdam dialect, as he would still have done honour to that old city as far as the purity of his accent was concerned.

That same afternoon he had, after having earned some money, been "enjoying himself a bit," and by now he had spent a couple of hours under that hospitable roof, for drunkenness. To describe the expression of Jan, who, half giddy from his deep sleep, began to sit up straight, would be impossible. With eyes as large as the proverbial soup-plate he stared at us, rubbing those organs with his fists, and looking up again he said: "What is it you want?"

"Stand on your feet," came the order, and he stood up.

"Can you stand on one?"—"What does he say?" Jan asks me (in Dutch), and when I told him that he was requested to stand on one foot, he said: "Oh yes, certainly, on two," but without moving he solemnly assumed the attitude of the stork. "Can you hop?" and when this question had again been translated, the man hopped along the smooth stones with so serious a face that the inclination to laugh was almost too much for us.

He was discharged with a caution, but the news that his wife was waiting for him upstairs, sobered him completely, and with a "many thanks, Sir." he passed through the gate.

We went further up the long passage, which leads into the room of a warder. Next to it there was a cell with the inscription "Drunk and Disorderly." When the door was opened we saw two men in a large room (for the cells are roomy). Under the dim light, which shone from above from a small lamp, a man with a bloodstained face lay asleep. His friend, a diminutive little chap, was standing with bent knees and the true drunkard's leer, swinging his arms about, evidently groping for his companion in misery. He was neatly dressed but his face had been in contact with the pavement.

"What have you two been up to?" was asked, but when the little fellow tried to explain to us how they came to be there, it took so long before he had uttered a word, that the door was closed again without our hearing anything more from him. "Well now," said my friend, "that is enough in that line. Now we shall go and see another sort. I'll show you a gentleman first. The charge against him was theft." When the door opened there stood before us a gent' in neat evening dress. His hands were stuck

into his pockets in a "don't care" fashion, and he looked like one who had been interrupted in a stroll through his room. "I have seen you here before," said my conductor, and the cool reply was "yes, I have been here before." And when he had answered a few more questions, he calmly said as he undressed: "If you gentlemen have no objection I'll go and sleep a while." With a smile my friend closed the door, saying, "a fine fellow, isn't he?" From the adjoining cell we heard someone singing softly, and not unmelodiously, but it sounded weird in those strange surroundings.

"Well, here's a case for you," said my conductor when the policeman, after having opened the door with due formality, stood back. On the ground in the middle of the cell there sat on his one brown blanket an elderly little man. He was clothed like a beggar and looked very dilapidated. His gray hair and short beard were unkempt and his little eyes glistened under his scanty eyebrows, which he raised high when he saw us enter. As soon as he had taken a good look at us he began to enquire, what he owed the honour of this visit to. He said that he was just rehearsing an opera, as he had been requested to come and sing next evening, and he was expecting a very large audience. The only thing that troubled him was that he had

not yet been able to find a suitable hall that could contain all the people and, in words that bespoke a man of education, he added, "I must thank you, gentlemen, for giving me the opportunity of having a quiet place to rehearse; really the streets are too noisy,"—and he sang

"Wenn ich so sasz bei einem Gelag
"Wo mancher sich beruehmen mag," etc.

There was something comical, and yet so much that was saddening in that old figure, that I didn't know whether to laugh or to shed tears, and when the door was closed behind us, I asked, "Is he out of his mind?" "Don't you know him?" was the response. "That is baron Zegelstein, a real one, mind you, but now the title is all he has left. He went wrong in his youth through going upon the stage, and now he still fancies that he is a great singer. He has been run in for loitering in the street, and we just put him in here now and then when he becomes too much of a nuisance. Of course, we never make a 'case' of it.

"He is a little bit 'dotty' but not so mad as he looks. I should not be at all surprised if he addresses you some day, for he has been taking a good look at you. He noticed that you understood what he was singing, and now he will probably be wanting to tell you his biography, which will mean about

half-a-crown and two drinks. Better keep out of his way. This door," continued my friend, as we passed another cell, "we won't open, for that fellow is troublesome. He once tore the clothes off my back when he was here. A night's rest will do him good."

And so we passed along. One card drew my attention, and at my request he opened the door. In the furthest corner of the cell there lay some one fast asleep on a small heap of rolled-up clothes. He was wakened, and at once stood straight up before us. When he saw me, he turned his face away. It was a youth of 19 years, a youth whose history I knew to be a long tale of sorrow—from the day of his birth until now. "Selling liquor" was the charge against him. I said nothing, but when we left the cell, my friend remarked: "He seems to know you." "Yes," I said, "he is one of my old pupils." "Not much credit to you, old chap," said my conductor, tapping me on the shoulder. I kept silence, and was about to re-ascend the stairs, when he held me by the arm, saying "As we are here, you must first see the ladies' quarter."

The ladies' quarter is on the left side of the stairs. The female warder preceded us. One would be apt to imagine that such a person would naturally be a big heavy woman, with stern features and something very masculine in her appearance.

This woman was small rather than large, had a round friendly face, and wore the simple dress of a hospital-nurse, a very appropiate dress indeed. She had been doing this sort of work for years past, and opened the cells as if she were opening a fine cupboard, with an expression unlike the serious one of our previous attendant.

In the cells for coloured people, there are wooden benches placed along the wall, which are to serve as resting places. In the one first opened lay a Kaffir woman, more like a wild animal than a human being, very drunk. In the next lay seven coloured women, two of them with babies at their breasts. The women just raised their woolly heads for a moment, and then fell quietly asleep once more.

"What have they been doing?" I asked, in surprise.

"All found in the possession of liquor," was the reply.

"But why are these little urchins here," I again enquired. "Oh, those they carry along with them to disarm suspicion, but we know their dodges well enough."

The quarter for white women was empty, excepting one cell. In that one was Sarah Samkowitch, charged with selling liquor and something else.

Moreover Sarah was, according to the nurse, who

was German, slightly *angeheitert* or—to use the English equivalent—a little bit "on," which was evident enough when the door was opened. She lay on the bed, but at once sat straight-up. Her hair hung loose about her head and her clothes were in tatters. What she said, I cannot repeat, but at all events it was not good English. "Isn't she a beauty?" asked my friend, when the door was closed again. At first I said nothing, but just when we were about to ascend the stairs again I asked him: "Doesn't it make you sick to have to do with such people day after day?"

"Well, you see," he replied, "it's like this now. In the first place it is part of our work to get hold of them. And when we, sometimes, after a great deal of trouble, do catch them, well then I look upon them in the same way as a doctor would upon his patients. If it's a drunken man, well then in my eyes that man has a cold.

"If it's a thief, then I call it a fever, which is proportionate to the degree of his crime, and so forth, you know."

"But you can do so little to prevent these things," I said. The gate was just then being opened for us again, when my friend said: "Just put on your overcoat now, and I'll take you where much is being done in that direction, and where the best friends of the police dwell."

The clock was just striking eleven when we, preceded by one detective and followed by another, entered dark Marshallstown on our way to a rescue-house of the Salvation Army.

Dancing, flickering little lights against the swiftly fleeting clouds; grey strips of mist hurrying along and followed by straight streaks of cloud out of ghost-like mine chimneys; long, thin columns of dust rising like evil spirits of the fairy tales, and then scattering again in a dim-coloured mist. The wind did not howl, it growled and clattered against rickety doors and windows, shaking the loose hoardings till the thin posts cracked and groaned.

It swirled over the city, and drove the white sand of the mines along the tops of the high hillocks till it glittered in the dim light like a giant glow-worm. Over the ridge, where its force was broken, it spread itself over the broad streets; but out beyond them the long rows of trees still stood bending low before the blast. Here within the town it had lost its force, and only swept up the sand angrily, making the Kaffirs, who still sat together in open yards, rub their eyes. They shouted aloud to be able to understand each other, as, clothed in their coloured blankets, they conversed excitedly, making gestures with their hands. The flaming coal-fire from a paraffin tin at intervals lit up their dusky

faces, which in the midst of the darkness looked like nothing but black spots with tiny sparks on them: the tips of their glowing cigarettes.

Through this gray dust-cloud the tram-lights shone dull and dim. The clatter of these vehicles soon died away again, and the grating and scraping of wheels along the street corners sounded doubly harsh. The ever-sombre Marshallstown was darker than ever, and the streets under repair, with their earthen embankments on either side, looked like so many fires around a besieged city's trenches. Here and there glimmered an oil-lamp, and their heavy odour floated oppressively over the streets. The blood-red little flames danced up and down, and at short intervals lit up the noisome groups of houses, past which Kaffirs without passes or nameless Chinese skulked along. In most of the houses it was dark, but here and there shone a dim light through a dirty curtain, and a chair-back rocked to and fro, or a human shadow glided by. The dust still blew about, and in spite of the lateness of the hour one came near choking in those close streets. The Salvation Army shelter was just as dark, and, in the light of an electric torch, resembled an old chapel with its small gothic doors. There was a lantern above the large entrance, but the light had been blown out, and in the little "office," where the wanderers receive their tickets for

the night, there burnt a twilighty old lamp.

The large dormitory was as yet almost empty, and the dim reflection from the one big lamp in the middle of the room made the blinds above seem white, and made the few faces there look ghostlike upon the bright and clean sheets. Little smoke-clouds curled upwards from a few of the beds, and plaintive snores broke the silence now and again.

Old Gurt, a regular visitor at this house, had turned round again and inspected all the beds with the eye of an expert, to see whether all his friends were present, and, disappointed, he searched in his trouser-pockets for the last shreds of tobacco. Gurt was in reality Gert Human, but they only knew him there as "Gurt," and he knew himself by no other name.

When he was sober—and that was always when he had no money—he used to say, that he was a son of a "voortrekker" who had cleared the country, and he would describe his lions and tigers to fellow-rest-takers in such a strenuous manner that they were filled with admiration. When in a muddled state he was a "true Britisher who had fought for his Queen and Country." Where he came from, no one knew; but he had allowed himself to be "converted" one evening when he was much in want of it, and after having for a while been busily en-

gaged in street-preaching, had relapsed into his old habits. A hundred times he had promised to mend, but always the hospitable door had been opened for him. That bed he had begun to regard as his own, and that house as one he had hired to sleep and to take his meals in. His small head with its short, bristly hair now stuck out a little above the dark-red of the blanket. He had to wait till his mate arrived, who was to bring a match along. His little dark eyes winked as the light of the big lamp nearly opposite fell on them, and he brooded over the events of yesterday. It had been agreed between him and his "pal", that they would go to the new church, where people are cured by immersion. He would make a speech, as he had done formerly in the early days of his "salvation," and then, he thought, they would surely be "tipped" something. But it had proved a disappointment. He had spoken, and the brethren had listened with attention, but when he had hinted at worldly goods, he was informed that those were not at his disposal, and with a "demmit" he had walked out of the church.

Then they had gone together and stood at the door of another church, and without the policeman noticing them, had begged a few shillings, and gone with them to a Kaffir eating-house to buy a "tot" by a round-about way. He had lost sight of his

friend, and, only half sober, had returned to the house whence, on account of his age, he was not turned away. And at nights he was mostly very subdued, for generally members of the police paid visits there then, and although they knew all about him, yet no one was ever "given away" in those "barracks" for they knew everyone, and if he sheltered there, it was allright. Gradually the large room began to fill. Tired, careworn beings lay themselves down noiselessly and covered their faces with a blanket. Out-of-works with the firm conviction of having to return next night without having earned anything, people who labour in digging up the streets, and knew of no other resort—with their pay—than what one expressively called "the old home."

In a distant corner there lay at rest a young man, the true type of that numerous class well known as "market-agents," who describe themselves as Greeks and British subjects, but who are entered on the police registers as "suspects." He slept reposefully, and one might have looked upon him as a picture of innocence, but some strangers had that night been seen about the little house in Mini Street, and so he had thought it wiser to seek refuge in the "home" whence no helpless one is turned

away, without suspecting that his history was being related not a yard away from where he lay. For if there *is* a chance, that chance is given, and the man knew not that he could have been taken from his bed there and conveyed to a less pleasant night's lodging.

In another, darker corner lay a man with very close-cropped hair. His back was turned towards us, but we could see his fingers moving nervously on the coloured blanket. When we had moved a little distance away, the caretaker of the "home" told us that this man had only that morning come out of prison. He had been expected, for a good breakfast stood ready for him, and with a word of encouragement he had gone out that same morning to try and find work, a search that seldom met with success. But always he would return there at nights to seek his bed, and always he would find it ready for him. "You see," said the caretaker naively, "we do grudge the police their customers." And when we got outside again my conductor told me that many discharged prisoners were received and taken care of by the Salvation Army. Very early in the morning they would come and fetch such people and give them food and lodging. Sometimes the relatives of the unfor-

tunate man repaid the cost of this first help, and he would remain there for some time, after which work was sought for him elsewhere. But very often such men remained for days a burden to these people, who, with much self-sacrifice, take up the cause of these poor ones.

When we got outside, the wind had gone down, but it was pitch-dark, and if the torches of two detectives had not afforded us light, we certainly could not have found our way between all those holes and hillocks, where only here and there a faint light shone through an old window frame.

"They'll kill you here for sixpence," was the encouraging remark I heard, but I had no time to mind, for suddenly one of our conductors seized hold of a Kaffir who had come straight towards us. He proved, however, to be one of the detective police, and gave us information about an opium den, which just then was enjoying the full privilege of being under police protection. "Set a thief to catch a thief," so some orientals are allowed to smoke opium in certain houses because the doctor considers it necessary for their health, *and* because the police deem it necessary for the welfare of the community.

The neighbourhood was a collection of old huts, a most likely resort for criminals. Before the entrance of a stone-flagged passage stood a Chinaman with his hands in his pockets, palpably acting as sentinel. When he heard us he went inside with the evident intention of reporting our arrival, but an assurance from the detective: "It's allright, Charley," made him pause, and we entered the passage, which led into a fairly large court-yard. Through a door behind a staircase the close smell of opium fumes met us, and at the back of the passage of that house there burned a small smoking paraffin lamp. In a room to the left was a place where the forbidden poisonous drug was being enjoyed. The room was square and not wider than 12 feet. There lay about sixteen Chinamen stretched out on couches, and between each pair of couches stood a little table with a tiny light which serves for lighting the pipe. One of these men lay on his back with his eyes half closed, apparently in a state of great exaltation. Another, half asleep, lay reading his hieroglyphics from a roll of paper. A couple of friends were playing a game of cards, in which much could be either won or lost, and on account of which, later

on, a murder might be committed. if the loser failed to pay up promptly.

We all remember from our young days the pictures of opium-smokers, and one of them, out of a well-known geography book, was still vividly recalled to my mind when I entered that den. It had always, when I was a boy, given me the cold shivers, the picture of that man there on the bench, half shrivelled up, with those deep sunken eyes and those bony limbs! And even now I expected to see nothing but a row of people partly or wholly skeletons. But in this I was disappointed. There was not a single one of these smokers who could even be called thin, and the majority were more corpulent than otherwise. The disgusting work of filling the pipes I shall refrain from describing here; but most surprising was the short-lived pleasure that is derived from it. Only one pull at the wide mouthpiece, whilst the bowl of the pipe, which is placed almost halfway down the stem, is held over the lamp, constitutes the sole pleasure of the "smoke." A very mellow face shone with satisfaction, whilst the pipe was passed on to a friend, and contentedly the man stretched himself out upon the couch. He was a great smoker. Ten, or sometimes thirteen pipes he could smoke

without its affecting him. "It was good for his health." And so he showed us the doctor's permit, and told us that all those people there had permits. This he no doubt did in order to find out whether our visit there had perhaps some ulterior object. On this point his mind was however made easy, and the "manager" himself let us out into the fresh air, which did us good after such a diversity of odours.

In that same neighbourhood there lived Mr. Raboniwitch, the second-hand dealer, whose shop stood open night and day for the reception of stolen goods. There were little rooms badly lit, inhabited by white and coloured women, the dens of prostitution.

In a room pointed out to me, we saw behind a dirty sheet the shadows of the heads of men who probably were planning murder and robbery, but although their names and their deeds were recorded on the "black list" they could not be seized, because they must first commit them, and it had first to be proved that they had transgressed, for that is the law, which though apparently so severe, is difficult to carry into execution.

We returned to the charge office along a more frequented road. All was quiet now. Only now and

again there sounded the shriek of a locomotive far away, or a belated cab rolled along. The stamps on the mines could be heard distinctly far off from behind the mounds of sand, but everything seemed wrapped in sleep when we again ascended the high stoep. There they were still busy. A man was being brought in, who had been kicking his four-year old little daughter black and blue, and a drunken woman stood staggering against the wall. I took my leave, and was glad to find a vehicle in which I could turn my back for that night on

DARK JOHANNESBURG.

POVERTY.

In rows of brownish grey, the old hovels fill a Fordsburg slum. Faded window-sills—grimy window-panes. Behind them, something that goes by the name of curtain but is, in reality, a rag. Open doors and unwashed brats, getting dirtier and dirtier in the whirling dust. The small verandahs harbour housewives, aprons turned up halfways, passing the time of day with a lazy gesture and a quiet nod, turning round occasionally with a jerk, as the dust blows into their faces. With slovenly hair and grey faces, they use the backs of their hands from time to time to wipe away the dust, with an impatient exclamation.

A butcher's shop at the street corner, with small pieces of red meat and a few dried-up sausages. In front of the big, dirty window, two unkempt lads are hanging about, philosophising on the subject of a small pigshead inside, its little ears erect, eyes tightly closed and nostrils caked with blood.

"Man, just look at 'im, shuttin' 'is eyes tight."

"Why, man, he's dead."

"What! His nose is bleedin'."

"They've gone an' stuck 'im."

"They cut 'is throat."

"You're mad."

"You are!"

"D'you eat pork?"

"I don't care for it, but when I'm hungry, I eat it all the same."

At the next corner a Greek fruitseller is polishing his entire stock of fine tomatoes till they shine, after which he arranges his naartjes, resuming this operation every time he has sold a tickey's worth of sweets or a sixpenny loaf.

An old man, leading a small child by the hand, cautiously steps down from one of the verandahs. There is fear in his voice as he asks a thin, young woman:

"No motors about, Annie?"

The hoot of a motor scared the old fellow one day, and now you cannot argue the belief out of his head that, some time or another, one of these vehicles will drive over him.

"No, pa, there ain't."

Painfully the old man totters along, dragging the child, who manages to keep pace somehow, one hand covering its eyes.

"Come along, Johnny, come on, my child, grandpa's goin' ter buy somethin' to eat."

He enters the butchery, drawing a deep breath.

He knows what's coming and makes ready for the fray.

"I see," the butcher opens fire, though not harshly, "you've come to pay off the old score? Good luck to you."

The old man gasps, and begins to tell him about the troubles at home, dis daughter's illness, his son-in-law's unemployment. He winds up by asking for sixpenn'orth of meat, because his daughter must get some soup.

Growling, the butcher picks out some scraps of meat, wrapping them in a piece of old newspaper, and passing them to the old man, saying:

"There you are! Seems to me, though, as if your two daughters've got lots o' money; they look just like fine ladies, they..."

Fiercely, the old man disengages his hand from that of the child; swinging his arm with wild gesticulation, he is about to speak, but he gets no further than:

"They...they...Come 'long, Johnny," he exclaims suddenly, "come 'long." And, without any thanks for the "big" piece of meat, he leaves the astonished butcher.

At home, in the little two-roomed house, behind which a small shack serves for kitchen, his daughter is waiting for him. On the large bed in the

back-room a man lies, snoring heavily.

"Pa," the delicate-looking woman says, "John has come back; he can't get the cab they promised 'im, an' he's been drinkin' a lot. He's asleep now. Shall I cook the meat, pa?"

The old man, dazed, falls into a chair.

"What's up?" the daughter asks, "was 'e grousin' about the bill?"

The old man shakes his grey hairs, gazing straight in front of him. His grandchild, noticing that something's gone wrong, tries to climb on to his knee, but is pushed away.

"What's the matter, pa?" the young woman asks anxiously.

"What the matter is?" and the old man rises, "the money's nothin', the money's nothin', but he spoke o' your sisters, o' those..., who 're bringnig my grey hairs...!"

He can get no further.

The poor young woman sinks into a chair, shouting rather than speaking:

"Ay, ay, didn't I tell you? The parson's fine talk don't amount to nothin', anyhow. They, ay, they're fine ladies, they're..."

Hysterical sobs prevent her from saying any more. The old man gets up, sits down next to her, and rests his tired head on her shoulder.

"Esther, Esther, listen to me. I know how hard yer life is. But never say die m' child. Listen to what the Book says."

Over his head, on a small shelf, lies a bible. Tremblingly he takes it down, looking for the 73rd Psalm. In a voice, half-smothered by emotion, he reads:

"But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

And on he reads, until he notices that his daughter has fallen asleep, despite hunger and misery.

The child has gone back to the verandah, playing with bits of glass. From the other room the stertorous breathing of the drunken man is heard. Outside, the wind is shrieking, turning the colour of the sky into gray, obstructing respiration.

One arm clasped round his daughter, the other resting on the Book, whose covenant he looks upon as a personal matter, the old man prays silently: "Lord, what have I done, that Thou triest me so severely?"

SUNDAY MORNING ON THE MARKET SQUARE.

A greyish haze is hanging over the town. The Market Square is deserted as yet.

The fountain in the centre is at rest. A single drop, now and again, trickles lazily from a leaky tap, and a little kaffir boy, sitting on the edge of the trough, is amusing himself by holding his finger over the opening, just to see how far the pent-up water will squirt. Every now and then a diminutive dust-devil whirls up tiny clouds, resembling emaciated spirits that vanish as suddenly as they came. The iron gates of the market buildings are closed. This is the only day on which the lukewarm smell of fish, meat and vegetables is not wafted towards you. The floor has been scrubbed, for the little puddles under the empty tables have not yet dried up, and a refreshing draught of air is making its way through the low market hall. The outside covered stalls, the special domain of the Syrians, are deserted. The usual occupants can be seen in the waiting-rooms of the tram: dirty men, with hungry, well-nigh desperate faces. The jingling of tramcars breaks upon the silence from time to

time. At long intervals, a bus or cab clatters from its stand.

At the stroke of the hour the monotonous ditty of the great clock over the stiffly-built post office is heard. The hour is boomed out vigorously, deeply. Then, not to be behindhand, the smaller clock in Henwood's Arcade follows suit, its notes nervous and abrupt.

There are but few pedestrians, and those few gentlemen in "négligé" attire, rushing into the post office as if expecting portentous tidings—mostly turning back with a disappointed mien after having slammed the tiny doors of their post-office boxes with an angry gesture. A solitary old gentleman in a top-hat steps past with a lofty air, now and then gazing up into the grey sky, hugging his umbrella with his bent arm.

Fronting the post-office, on the other side of the street, an army of shoeblacks stands expectant: "old soldiers," Jews, Greeks, Syrians, an omnium gatherum of almost every nation under the sun, each next to his chair which, in his own way, he has tried to make as comfortable as possible to his customers. More than one is covered with a kind of canopy to protect you from the blazing rays of the sun. On some chairs the "Sunday Times" is by way of doing duty as a decoy.

A brush in one hand, a rag in the other, they crouch, looking for a victim like beasts of prey, casting their glances far out into the rectangular streets. They are warned of a customer's approach by a sort of instinct; think but of the dirt on your boots, and they will be conscious of it. An old man with a prominent chin, constantly working up and down as he chews his quid of tobacco, is laying down the law to his customer about the Egyptian war. He is smart enough to notice that the customer is reading something with great interest as to the latest events at or near Khartoum, and now takes the opportunity of airing his views.

"Yes, Sor," he says, "I knows a thing or two. I was in that there blessed battle meself." For a moment he waves the rag in his right hand. "Be Jove, Sor, ye should have seen the bloomin' niggers run!" And, after a short interval: "Be jingo!" And suddenly he sets to work, rubbing up the boot, using the rag as if it were a saw, and as strenuously as if he were about to make fire after the manner of our ancestors of the Stone Age. As he pockets his tickey, he carelessly waves his hand in the direction of the Square, saying "There's the bloomin' Army."

This remark refers to a young person with a big drum, which by this time he has carefully de-

posited on the Square. His scarlet uniform, trimmed with white cord, is that of the Salvation Army. His face proclaims him to be one whose cradle was not rocked by the "chill western strands." He has not long to wait, for soon another brother turns up, armed with a big trumpet, as well as another youth with a small drum. Shortly, the burly standard-bearer, the dark red and blue colours trailing over his shoulders, arrives, accompanied by a slender sister. A few more warriors with cornets and two or three more sisters make their appearance. The company is considered to be complete, and forms a circle.

Meanwhile, along the side-walk, where the shoeblacks have posted themselves, a row of people of the most heterogeneous description has collected. Loafers, eager for something to do—provided that "something" shall not be work—, workmen, taking a walk with their children because "it's a bit of all right, for once in a while, to have a look at the Army," as one of them told me. You just look on, Sir, he said, you just listen and it don't cost a cent. When the hat's passed round, well, then you don't twig. That's the tip, Sir, he added, warning Janie, whose hand he held, to be quiet.

You will see a couple of gentlemen, waiting for the car and having nothing better to do. There are

a few ladies, sniffing at a distance, but fond of listening all the same. In a semi-circle, on the Square proper, natives, Chinamen and Coolies are looking on, partly interested, partly indifferent.

Why don't they make a start? someone asks. As if in reply, the leader steps into the circle. "Wait a bit," one of the by-standers says, "that's the boss of the show, now they're goin' ter start."

Another fellow remarks: "He's got a blooming big horn, but he don't seem ter 'ave too much wind." "Shut up" is the response from several quarters, and the music starts. The familiar melody is a "catch," and several people supply a humming accompaniment. All kinds of remarks are passed, more or less respectful but all of them critical.

"Look at that thin girl; she wants a breakfast." "The old chap's belly is too fat for the big drum." My friend next to me opines: "Unless he takes care he'll lose his wind."

The tune is repeated several times and most of the audience join in the chorus. Then the address begins. I need not write it out. The main point is that a certain sum of money is urgently required if a certain lost sheep is to be brought back into the fold.

In glowing colours the speaker paints the forlorn state of the hapless fallen one. He mentions true

repentance and the contrite heart, likewise the help that must be given at once if the prodigal is not to relapse into his old ways. No more than ten shillings are required, but they are required urgently. His soul is saved, but his body stands in need of garment. And so, he concludes, what are you going to do for him? The "Big Drum" is ordered to shed his instrument, and the preacher personally passes his cap round. The result is a poor one: one shilling and two pence.

He exposes the coins to the gaze of the multitude. Regarding them with a rueful countenance, he says: This will not do, but we have time to wait. A sign to the thin girl makes her enter the circle. She intones a solo. This artistic effort does not escape without its meed of criticism, either. One among the audience thinks it "simply awful." A man near me considers the lady has a frog in her throat. When the solo is over, the whole Army joins in, but the songstress continues to take a leading part. Three verses are droned off in succession before the lady, evidently exhausted, resumes her place. Another word of encouragement follows, and the smallest female soldier now goes round with the leader's cap. Once more the contents are deposited on the big drum, but the result is not yet satisfactory. A little girl throws a tickey on to the

instrument. This incident serves as a text about the "little ones" setting the example to the adults. The audience are beginning to listen more closely. That bloke's allright, one of the shoeblacks says to his neighbour, I wish he'd take the shoe-business and I'd do the talking; I could blow the bloomin' trumpet as well as he.

The neighbour offers a quid with a "Shut up, you fool," which reproof is accepted with as much equanimity as is the "chew." Some more singing—a less popular tune this time. When this is over, the leader makes a sign to one of the sisters. The company uncover, and, with eyes tightly closed, as if to shut out the world entirely, she prays. The silence soon becomes general. In spite of the suspicion of "business," attaching in the minds of many to this public prayer, there is a feeling of reverence for that delicate-looking creature, pouring out her heart in the fulness of religious fervour, proclaiming the needs of her congregation with unmistakable intensity. At a distance her words are inaudible, though her lips are seen to be moving. One might almost turn pensive but for the peripatetic cap, the activities of which, after the "Amen" has been repeated by all, recall one's attention to the ten shillings. Once more the needs of the fallen are enlarged upon, and again those of the but recently

rescued are emphasised.

By Jove, that chap's sticking to his ten and six, one among the audience calls out to his mate, and on the spot all thoughts of higher things flee from us. Another hymn, another disappointed reference to our shortcomings and to the saved sinner, and at a signal from the leader the Army marches off in double file, followed by a dozen kaffirs, towards the temple where the service will be continued.

We get just another glimpse of the blue-and-red standard; one more boom of the big drum is heard amidst the shrill voices of the women, and then all is drowned by the clatter of the tramcar, by the tinkling of its bells. There is no after-consideration, for the impression made by the Army is but that of a passing barrel-organ. The audience disperse into small groups. The Square is emptying itself once again. The wind has risen, blowing up great clouds of dust. The loafers, huddled up, continue to occupy the waiting-rooms. Large drops of rain make blotches in the loose sand. Four men are sitting in one of the waiting-rooms, closely packed together, for it is cold. Their only comfort, a pipe of tobacco, hangs loosely across unshaven chins. For a moment all is still but suddenly, far away, churchbells sound.

"I say, George, you irreligious beggar, go to

church, don't you hear?" George apparently does not relish conversation, and keeps silent. "What about a meal?" asks another. "Or about a bloomin' drink," interrupts the first speaker.

Number four is a small, wizened old chap. His beard is a few inches in length. His cheeks are hollow. His peaked cap is drawn down low over his forehead. His long hair straggles in the direction of the collar of his tattered jacket. He sucks at a small pipe, the contents of which have long since been reduced to ashes. His chin rests on his clenched fists. With a vacant stare from half-closed eyes he gazes before him.

"Hullo, uncle, what are you thinkin' of," one of his pals shouts into his ear. No answer. When he gets a dig in the ribs, his only remark is "Leave me alone." "What's he saying?" asks the man. "He wants to be left alone; he's half dotty, you know, don't tease him."

Suddenly the old man starts. "I must be going," he says, "the time is passing. I must be off." Without another word, he walks away, through wind and rain, tottering towards the covered vegetable-market, where he squats on one of the empty tables, still sucking at his pipe, and staring in front of him, listlessly, the image of desolation.

Rain is falling in torrents. Not a living being

moves on the Square. Under the verandahs a few people await the arrival of cars. With sharp jerks the motormen stop their cars, tilting their heads for shelter against the piercing rain. An open window, upstairs, leaves a passage for the strains of the "Old Hundredth," played on a piano:

"All people that on Earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice."

The big bell suddenly starts its hackneyed tune. Twelve strokes resound through the murky air. The smaller bell squeaks a response, but hardly anyone takes any notice, for Sunday morning is past and done with!

SIMPLE FOLK.

I.

Erf No. 300 and odd, 47th Street, Vrededorp, is occupied by a "tin" shanty. The erf is 50 by 50, and belongs to the widow Viljoen, but it is heavily mortgaged. The house does not boast a verandah. At the back, however, there is a decent-sized fowl-house, the three lean inhabitants of which prospect for their daily sustenance in the public street. The fence is broken; many trollies laden with forage pass the door, and so they live. The old woman cannot afford to buy mealies. Life is enough of a struggle as it is. She is all alone in the world, except for her daughter Maria, a shorthand- and typewriter. Her husband disappeared during the war. She never heard another word as to his whereabouts, or concerning his being still in the land of the living or otherwise. It was he who had built the house. He had made the bricks himself—fine, brown clay, sun-baked. The only assistance he had in building the house was that of a kaffir. People say the old man

purloined the galvanised-iron plates from the Netherlands Railway yard when shifting coal, but they lie.

When it was just built, the house was a comfortable sort of a place: two rooms and a bit of a kitchen. Viljoen bought a bluish wallpaper, and managed the walls himself. For the windows nothing would do but a brave coat of red paint. The roof, too, got a touch of colour, and after that he set about constructing the fowl-house, for it was his ambition to become a poultry-farmer. He bought quite a quantity, but most of the fowls got stolen at some time or another, and the three specimens aforementioned are all that remain. They have passed the laying stage, and the old woman is for killing them, but somehow she does not. They are the only companions she has left, she says. She used to possess a little mongrel, but the dog-catchers took him away, for he was minus a ticket, and now the poor thing is dead. She cried, poor soul, for he was her sole companion in the house itself.

Maria is going on for twenty. She goes about a good deal, and dresses like a lady. Her "ma" she allows one pound a week—clothes run away with a good deal of money. Ma, moreover, makes a tidy few shillings by taking in washing, and if

the old woman will just take care not to let the flatiron burn her fingers, Maria says, she can make a very decent living indeed.

"You know," Maria tells her friend, Miss Jones, (who talks English to her father but Dutch to Maria) "the old woman is so silly; she makes a mess of everything she touches."

"Ay," says Miss Jones, in Dutch, "you've had a lot of trouble with the old woman," and, changing into English: "How old is she now?"

"Fifty-two, I think," says Maria.

But the old woman is by no means as old as all that, really, whatever the register may say. She's hale and hearty though, to be sure, rheumatism plays the very deuce with her, and her limbs will get as stiff as the shirts she has been ironing. At sunrise she gets up to make Maria's breakfast. After that, she wraps the bread-and-butter—called "tiffin" by Maria—in a piece of paper, which is put into a bag and suspended from the handle of Maria's "bike." And after that, again, she dusts the machine for, says Maria, you have to look decent when you get to the office. As often as not, the girl is very grumpy and taciturn, especially when she has got hold of a collection of blood-and-thunder stories. You won't get a word out of her on those days.

Of an evening she often walks out with George. George is in the railway offices. He's a gentleman, after a fashion, says Mrs. Viljoen, but Maria is not exactly engaged to him. When her mother asks her about the young man's intentions she gets quite cross, saying: "Don't worry," and "Don't bother me, ma." Once in a blue moon George will call at night to stay and talk when Maria doesn't feel like a stroll, but on those occasions the old woman thinks she'd better go to bed, for Maria is apt to say: "Ma is sure to be very tired," or she will put the matter even more pointedly.

Early in the evening George talks shop. He tells her all about his "responsibility" which is "on account of the luggage" coming by train. Or he will expatiate on the big officials just basking in the sun and making lots of 'oof. But he isn't going to stand it very much longer. He'll show them what he can do, and he isn't going to be cheated out of a rise by those fellows. And then Maria will chip in by enquiring whether he hasn't been spooning altogether too much with the girls on the train. George smiles, and replies: "You know very well I'll never do such a thing; you know my inclination."

Ma is sewing; she understands only half of what

the young people are talking about. After a while she will get up and give them a cup of coffee with a slice of home-made cake. And then she is off to sleep. But every night, before she goes to bed, she prays: "Lord, do take the rheumatics away from me, and bless my child."

The young people keep up the conversation for a long time, and when at last Maria comes in, her mother keeps awake yet a while. She goes and looks to see whether Maria is covered up properly, and then she goes to the door to see about its being locked, for she dreads thieves and rogues. Maria is just dropping off, and, half asleep, will mutter "What are you hanging about for?" and her mother thinks to herself: The child is tired.

And that is the way these two women live together in the plain, little house, Ma always troubling about Maria, for she is her only child. Maria's thoughts are about George, because he is a fine young chap, and she is no longer in the first flush of youth. A good many girls who went to school with her have a family of three by this time, and she is as old as they are—which is not good enough. George would like to marry, but his job only brings him in £12.10.0, and he has dropped a bit on the racecourse lately, for his pal gave him the wrong tip. So they will have to wait

a bit, but George is quite confident about making a coup on the "home" races before long. He's already got a "dead-sure" tip, which will put him on his legs again.

II.

A couple of streets higher up Jannie van der Wal has his house. His name is Jannie but, when you address him, call him Mister van der Wal if you would be in his good graces. Frivolous fools have dubbed him "bos-apie" on account of his little, round beard and his habit of winking his eyes under a pair of bushy eyebrows. But, as you know, there have always been frivolous louts on this planet, and people can't all be good, as Mister van der Wal is fond of remarking. "You see," the old fellow will tell you, "my hands are black with coal-dust, and my face can't very well be clean because I have to handle dirty stuff but I'm glad to say," he continues, thumping his chest, "this 'ere is clean."

As he talks to you, he will walk in the centre of the roadway, leading his bay pony to cool him down, and filling his pipe. And then he starts off, and you have to listen to his opinion on a good

many matters touching his business. He scorns to discuss other people's affairs; that's "not his business." What does he care about the way Hans Meyer who lives in the next street treats his customers! Hans can cheat as much as he likes. He, Mister van der Wal, (oh, yes, you can enquire about him if you like) does not supply bags that are but partly full, as Du Toit of 30th Street does. But, of course, all that is their affair. He never troubles about that at all.

"Now, look at the old moke," Oom Jannie says (he's past fifty, so we call him Oom), just you look at the old thing. The horse is as 'cute as a human being. Yesterday, I inspan him and he shams lameness. I know he's pretending all the time. I says to him: wait a bit, you lump o' dirt. I'll show you. And with that, I give him what-for. Today he is a horse again. An animal is just like a man—give him a chance, and he'll jolly soon take it. I know my Vrededorp, I do. O, I know what's going on. I'm but a simple farmer, but there 're no flies on me. I know what's going on. It's a good job my three children are married. I'm shifting for myself, but, for all that, I know what's going on in the place. But ne'er mind. I load up my coal of a mornin', and when I'm finished in the afternoon, I can say to myself: Mr. van der Wal,

you're a man, you are. Your 'consence' is a bit of all right, as the English say."

Oom Jannie is a widower. His wife has been dead these many years. He lives in his own house together with his daughter Annie whose husband is eternally looking for a job on the mines; but, of course, "the English 'll take good care not to give a man a chance." His name is Gert van der Merwe. He was taught the trade of a fitter, but the village blacksmith made him do more work than he had stomach for.

He had a try on the mines but, you know, he had no blasting certificate, and the deep level was too dangerous, come to think of it. So you can understand that Oom Jannie leads a somewhat lonely life. At night, when he gets home, he just plays a bit with Annie's children after he's had a wash. Taking the two little mites on his knee, he will sing to them: "Simbam-banie, mama loves her childie"—all of which reminds him of the days when he played with his own babies, and when his wife was alive.

And one evening, as he was fondling the youngsters, and musing, a scheme came into his head. It had been a jolly hot day, let me tell you. The dust came up to your ankles in 47th Street, and the sun's rays stung you as if foretelling rain.

But the rain held off. The flies teased one into a bad temper. Mister van der Wal was dragging his old bay with the empty scotchcart along the street. He was trying to keep off the flies by striking at them with his handkerchief, but he was about as successful as the pony, which was wagging its little bit of a stumpy tail at them. The little pests would not be denied.

"Dirty things, flies are," says Oom Jannie; "they don't care a rap where they go. This minute they'll perch on a kaffir and the next they'll choose a white man. Sis! the filthy bounders."

Now a fowl, too, is a queer sort of creature if you only knew it. You'll never understand its character as long as you live. Oom Jannie had occasion to notice this as he got in front of Mrs. Viljoen's house. There were her three ancient hens just about in the centre of the street, half-buried in dust and sound asleep. Their heads just stuck out the tiniest bit, and a good job too, because the old pony would have trampled the life out of them if it hadn't been for Oom Jannie noticing a slight movement as the head of one of the trio stirred slightly.

He stopped the pony, lashed out with his whip, and off they went, cackling and scampering home. Now, it just so happened that Mrs. Viljoen was

standing in the doorway, looking on. She knew Van der Wal more or less, and said:

"My! but those things are stupid. Thanks so much for driving them away."

Oom Jannie had not moved on yet, and so had the opportunity of answering: "Ay, Mrs. Viljoen, they're a stupid lot, but a lot of people are just like those fowls o' yours—unless you drive 'em away, they go on till they're trampled to death."

"Won't you come in for half a minute, and have a cup of coffee?" the woman asked.

Well, Oom Jannie was rather fond of his coffee, so he led the pony into the shade on the erf, next to the house. He took the chair nearest the door, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. Mrs. Viljoen, in her little kitchen, was brewing the coffee.

Oom Jannie took in the contents of the room. The bluish wall-paper has assumed all the colours of the rainbow owing to the rain, but that don't matter. Over the door leading into the kitchen there is a likeness of the two Presidents, shaking hands. A photo of Mrs. Viljoen's late father hangs on one of the walls, with a bit of a looking-glass of Maria's below it. Flanking it on both sides there is a picture made of dried flowers. One of them bears the inscription "I am thy shepherd," and

the other "Come to Me." Facing these, on the opposite wall, are two prints, bought from a Jew pedlar, and framed in brown. They are highly-coloured. One of them represents a whole amphitheatre of kings and queens, every one of them duly crowned. The king of Austria is there, says George, and the German Emperor and other fellows with their wives, but he doesn't quite understand the lingo.

The other print shows a ship in a storm. The sea runs high, and the mast has snapped, and the lightning zigzags from the brown clouds in three distinct places, and the people jump into the water. You can hear them shout. Whenever Mrs. Viljoen finds time to look at this work of art she heaves a sigh and thinks to herself: "Ay, the sea's a terrible thing. Our people who had to 'drive over' to Ceylon on board ship had a hard time of it."

You needn't think you'll ever get h e r to board a vessel!

Maria bought a mantelpiece, which she has put along the third wall. She has trimmed it to such an extent with some kind of silk stuff that the wood has vanished from sight. All sorts of pretty knicknacks are on the mantelpiece. The round table in the centre of the room is full of washing, of dazzling whiteness. The chairs, too, shine, for

Mrs. Viljoen is a neat woman.

As for Oom Jannie, he has a good look at it all, and it sets him thinking. As Mrs. Viljoen hands him the coffee, he asks her "How goes it with the daughter?" And Mrs. Viljoen, not to be outdone in politeness, enquires about the present welfare of Mister van der Wal and the childers. And so they talk on, and they are not long in finding out that Mrs. Viljoen's late father's second wife was a cousin of van der Wal's late mother in person, and that all the deceased relatives hailed from Oudtshoorn, Cape Colony, whereupon Mrs. Viljoen remarks that they are related. Mr. van der Wal is tempted to reply that all human beings are related, though they make life a burden to one another many a time. After which they shake hands with greetings to the respective children.

Oom Jannie takes his pony back into the road, and struggles on until he gets home.

III.

Well, that same evening Mr. van der Wal sat ruminating once more. Annie's brats cried. Annie herself was a bit off-colour, and Gert, who had tossed a few of his cronies for drinks in a beer hall,

was on the stoep, outside, humming a song after a fashion. "I love you dearly, you are my own" it ran, but when he had got as far as that he was at the end of his tether, and then there was nothing for it but to start in the same old way, over and over again.

Oom Jannie thought to himself: The room is untidy. The cups and saucers are dirty. The breadcrumbs are full of flies. Everything looks nasty. Things were different at Mrs. Viljoen's... She needn't be afraid of an inspection!

Oom Jannie gets up, takes his hat and says to Annie: I'm going for a bit of a stroll.

He went towards the cemetery, and as he was walking between the rows of young trees, he was thinking—not of the dead in their graves, but of Mrs. Viljoen. He had been dissatisfied with things at home for some considerable time past. Whenever he got home, there was sure to be something wrong. He wanted peace. Mrs. Viljoen was a capable housewife. Why then shouldn't he "make a plan" and marry her? They would be able to live together in comfort, for the daughter would soon be married, and then there would be peace.

That is all Oom Jannie knew about it.

Late that night, when everyone was asleep, Mr. van der Wal indited a letter, by candle-light. And

this is what he wrote:

Dear missus,

To-day we had a quiet talk together for the first time, and this made me think of asking you if we hadn't better make a plan.

Your daughter won't be long before she gets married, and I am, so to speak, also a bit lonely in the world, and as you be a strong, healthy woman yet, this will be a good plan. What be your opinion of the plan? Do let me know soon.

I hope you will receive this in the same good health and spirits I am writing this in.

Herewith I remain your loving,

JAN VAN DER WAL.

P.S. I am sending this letter by a little boy. Private.

The next morning, before starting on his round, Oom Jannie presented a little boy in the street with a "teekee," waiting at the street corner to see whether the little rascal delivered the letter all right. The boy returned, reporting safe and personal delivery of the letter. This accomplished, he hurried to the nearest Chinaman's shop to invest his earnings in sweets, which he pocketed in order to show them to admiring schoolfellows.

Mrs. Viljoen could not get the sender's name

from the messenger who was in too much of a hurry, seeing that the tickey made his hand itch. She took the letter inside, and then opened it. She thought it was from the lawyer about the bond, and her first impulse was to leave it till the advent of night and Maria. But, look, that's queer! The thing is in handwriting—not typewritten, as all the other communications were. She reads, and reads *again. First she seems surprised, and then* she smiles, and then she wonders again, and thinks.

She puts the letter in her blouse, and makes for Maria's looking-glass. Anxiously, she looks at the few hairs adorning her upper lip. Fortunately these are but few. She smoothes down her apron, starts attending to the washing, and hums a tune.

Some of you, reading my story, may say: The silly old woman!

Let me tell you: you are quite wrong!

Mrs. Viljoen was a thorough good sort. She had lost all those who were near and dear to her. What hurt her most was that her daughter did not love her. She never spoke of it, but she felt it all the same. There are wise men who can tell you exactly what's what, and all about human feeling. This old woman could not have told you what troubled her, but her heart was sore, and now it

looked as if she would not be left all to herself, after all. If she married this decent, old fellow they might grow old together, and, with Maria settled down, the two of them, old fogies, might yet see Maria's little ones gambolling on their knees.

When Maria came home that night she was very tired, she said. Without a word she sat down to her meal. She saw at once there was something the matter with ma, because the old woman did not look her usual self.

"What's up?" Maria asked, her mouth full.

"Nothing," the old woman answered, but Maria knew perfectly well that there was something, so she continued:

"Ma, don't be silly; what's the matter? You look quite pleased."

"Maria," was the reply, "when is George going to marry you?"

This time the girl got really angry: "Oh, you want to get rid of me, eh?"

She spoke in English, and, as her mother did not understand her, added: "Look here, I'll be off. If you want to be rid o' me, I'm quite willing."

She threw down her knife and fork, and the plate rattled. The old woman could not bear this, for she knew Maria could not charge her with want of

affection, so she pulled out the letter, and gave it to the girl to read. Maria gave her a vacant look, not understanding what had happened, but as she read the letter she laughed, laughed until she nearly dropped off her chair.

"The old fool," she cried, between one burst of laughter and another, "the silly old sot, the old baboon. Good gracious, the ugly old sweep; doesn't he fancy himself! Well, this is too rich altogether. Well, I never! And you're even considering it! Well, I'm blessed!!"

When she had calmed down a bit, Mrs. Viljoen talked the matter over with her, trying to make her understand why she had enquired about Maria's marriage. But Maria sulked. Not another word passed her lips, and before she went to bed she wrote a note in English which she put into her lunch-bag. She never said as much as "Night, ma," but just went into her room, slamming the door.

Mrs. Viljoen remained alone for a long time. Then she, too, went to bed. But not to sleep.

The next morning was the beginning of a sorry day. The dust was thick in the streets. People looked as grimy as Bushmen. Maria left on her bicycle as she did on all other days, but she did not speak a word. Mrs. Viljoen was not merely

alone but very lonely. She felt her child was going to act wrongly, and yet she could not decide on a course that was not to Maria's liking. She took up the Old Book, trying to find consolation in what she read, but the type ran into long, black lines, because there were tears in her eyes. And so she sat quite a while, resting her head on her hands.

Then she got up, took a piece of paper and wrote a letter. She told Mr. van der Wal that they had better let the matter rest, because it might disturb things and cause quarrels among the children. But she was glad Mr. van der Wal thought so much of her, and she did trust they would be friends just the same.

She put the letter in an envelope, and wrote the address, sighing and with a heavy heart. Mrs. Rademeyer's daughter, next door, went to school, and to her she handed the letter, giving her directions about the delivery and a couple of biscuits on her way down.

IV.

Mrs. Rademeyer ran short of matches that night. Mrs. Rademeyer chronically ran short of everything, and Mrs. Viljoen was always ready to assist. Mrs.

Rademeyer thought she had better run across, but she was considerably surprised when she saw that all the windows in Tant' Annie's house were dark. So she went to the front-door, and called out: "Are you there, Tant' Annie?" But there was no reply.

She went round to the back, but the kitchen, too, was in darkness though the stove was always lit of an evening for Maria's dinner. It was quite evident that there was something amiss, but how was she to find out what it was? As she got back into the street she saw a man with a scotchcart and a small lamp in his hand, to satisfy police requirements. Mrs. Rademeyer went up to him.

"Can you please give me a box of matches or lend me your lamp for a minute?" she asked—"there must be something wrong inside here."

Oom Jannie had intended to pass the house as quickly as he could, for he had received the note, and it was only because business took him there that he went by at all. He gave the woman the box of matches, and waited. Mrs. Rademeyer went inside. She struck a match, and uttered a loud cry. Oom Jannie put his lamp on the cart, and entered. He took the matches from Mrs. Rademeyer's hands, and struck another light.

On the ground lay Mrs. Viljoen.

They lit the lamp and did all they could to help

her, but it was too late. Together they lifted the old woman on to her bed, and Mrs. Rademeyer ran to the chemist's to telephone for a doctor.

Oom Jannie sat down on Mrs. Viljoen's chair. Noticing a letter on the table, he read it.

It was from Maria: the first half in English—the rest in Dutch:

"Mother, I know you wanted to get rid of me, so I'm going to get married to George tomorrow. I'm not coming back. Ma can now go and marry that ugly, old baboon, and I trust you will live happily ever after.

MARIA."

Oom Jannie tore the note to pieces, and put them in his pocket.

What business of other people's was it?

From the kitchen he took a candle. Going into the room where the old woman was at peace, he took he cold hand, and kissed her brow. Back in the front-room, he wiped his eyes and waited.

Mrs. Rademeyer returned, bringing other women. Oom Jannie went home.

The funeral took place the day after. When the elder had finished his speech, and all the people had gone, Van der Wal put a small, wooden cross, carved by his own hands, on the grave. On the

cross he put some white roses. Then he, too, went home, heavy of heart.

People say he seldom speaks after Mrs. Viljoen's death. But not one of them knows the reason why.

V.

The Johannesburg cemetery is a beautiful place. If you can forget about the thousands lying there, it is one of the finest spots in the whole of Johannesburg. With the sun shining brightly, throwing broad shadows on the walks, and the birds twittering in the trees, one would almost imagine himself far away from dreary Johannesburg. About a year ago I reached the grave-yard one Sunday morning, half an hour or so after the opening of the gates. It was a fine day: no wind, no dust. The flowers looked fresh, brightly tinted. The grass was green, thanks to careful gardening by the coolie attendants. The shadows were long as yet across the paths, for the sun was not very far above the horizon. The birds sang a hymn to morning peace and solitude. Man always turns good into bad, and wherever he sets his foot, there quiet flies—that is their opinion. And perhaps they are right!

I walked along the footpaths, reading the epi-

taphs of all the nationalities resting there, looking into the yawning pits that were awaiting their occupants. It would be my turn, some day. It is good for a man to go there sometimes. Many people talk very glibly about the happy land above, but it looks very much as if they had not the nerve to look at a newly-dug grave. And yet it is the only road to that happy land.

The cemetery is divided into sections: the Anglican church, the Catholic church, the Dutch Reformed, and all other denominations. That sets me wondering which is the right place!

I walked about, looking particularly at the part where tombstones are rare. There are graves, big ones and small ones, in long rows, with only a small board and a distinctive number. Empty tins, cups and small vases have been put on some of them. The poor people have nothing better to give.

I rested awhile, close to a fence, when I saw a young woman in a pretty, brown frock approaching. She had a boa round her neck. A long-beaked bird was on her hat. In one hand she carried a bunch of white roses. Quickly she stepped along on her high-heeled shoes.

I could not see her face. There was a paper in her other hand. She examined it, comparing it with the numbers on the graves to see whether she

had come to the right spot, walking along the row with her back towards me.

Close to the fence she found the grave she was looking for. There was a wooden cross on it, but the flowers had long since withered. And yet there were a few fresh pinks at the lower end. She looked round nervously, putting the bunch of roses at the top part of the grave. She seemed about to leave when she turned round. I could see her face.

It was Maria. But perhaps Magdalen would have been a better name. Her cheeks were pale, her hands emaciated, her eyes lustre-less. I saw her trembling as she stood. Suddenly she cried out:

"My poor mother, it was I who killed you!"

And then she fell forward upon the grave. Hearing her sobs and seeing the twitching of her body I felt obliged to go to her assistance. So I went up to her. But before I could reach her, an old man, walking along the fence, was with her. His hair had nearly turned grey. His whiskers were all but white, and so were his bushy eye-brows. He bent over the young woman. As for me, I took a small tin from one of the graves, rinsed it at a tap and, having filled it, handed it to him. We bathed the unconscious woman's temples, and after a while she opened her eyes.

The old man had not spoken, but as the woman

regained consciousness and began to sob, he supported her as if she were a child, and said to me:

"Sir, I thank you very much for your assistance. You can safely leave her to me, now. She's by way of being a relative of mine."

So I walked away. Never once looking back I passed between the rows of tombs and pits, thinking of the world's heavy burden, of all the misery people will cause one another, but of the few hearts of gold as well that are a help in making one forget all the evil there is in this world.

VI.

Ten miles from town or thereabouts you will see a little, stone building by the roadside. A fairly large piece of ground, with stables for a few cows and horses, belongs to it. The soil is fertile, there is a tolerable stream of water, and Oom Jannie is hard at work, making improvements. He is getting a bit stiff in the joints, but he says he will have to hold out yet a while.

When my cart passes the house, I get off for a few minutes. Unless I call for a cup of coffee, the old man takes offence. And so we talk about locusts, and East Coast fever and the latest thing in

politics. To his young housekeeper I recall the time when she went to school, and had to do hard "sums," and we resuscitate the fun we used to have in those days.

But the period following that is never mentioned.

As Oom Jannie sees me into the cart, and I have got in, we shake hands, and he will say:

"The child has exactly her late mother's character."

And then he walks back to the house, and I go on in my cart, thinking.

A FORGOTTEN VOORTREKKER.

"Ay, my child, it must be, it must be. The road lies straight ahead; what else can I do! Surely, you don't want me to go begging, or to tell all the people roundabout here of our poverty. That I will never do, never!"

And Oom Petrus puts down his cup of coffee, emphasising his views by striking his hand upon the little table, and making it creak. His hand is thin, as thin as his arm and the whole of his body. The face, with its fine, grey beard, is sunken, but the features plainly show Oom Petrus to have been a fine, young fellow in his time. The forehead is high, and his whole expression pure-bred, though the face is deeply furrowed. His blue eyes still look clearly on his child, facing him with tear-stained cheeks. It is his eldest daughter, the only one left of his family. Her first husband's name was among the list of the slain. His body rests, together with the bodies of many others, somewhere in Natal. She is childless, and she is glad of it, because life is enough of a struggle as it is. She was a beauty once upon a time, but care ruined her good looks. She looks almost twice her age. Her second marriage

was not a very happy one. Her husband is gone—a trading expedition he called it, but he has been away for a year now, and she has never heard of him.

Troubles have come. The last mortgage on the Free State farm is through, and a week ago Oom Petrus settled with his attorney. A few pounds are all that remained, and now he has arranged with one of his friends to get work. He can start in a mine as an apprentice, but in a couple of months' time he will be able to get a miner's certificate and earn decent money. Lenie has always been a dutiful child; she has never as much as contemplated crossing her father, but this morning it has been a hard struggle. She has revolted, not so much against her father as against the circumstances compelling him, a man of over fifty, to look for work on the mines.

She talked over the days of old with her father, not noticing that this was just what hurt the old man worst. How was it possible that he, who had always refused to have any truck with that set, who had always called the gold a national curse, could humiliate himself by going down into the very earth to dig for the gold he had looked on as a curse?

With tears in her eyes, she had reminded him of

the days when her mother was living, had reminded him of the life on their farm. What would ma have said, had she known that her husband would lower himself by working with Chinamen and kaffirs, by taking orders from people he would not have allowed inside his house?

And it had been an awful struggle for the old man. Every word cut him like a thong, and his eyes had filled with tears, but for all that he knew his duty.

"My child," he had answered, "your words are keen as a knife; I know you mean well, but had your mother been alive she would have agreed with me. I've got to help you along. If I were by myself I could always starve, but as it is I must provide. What would become of you? Who'd look after you? Your marrying that..."

And then Lenie interrupted him, begging him to spare her such reproaches. He had pulled himself together in no time, struck the table with his fist, and repeated that he would look after her—it had to be!

When Oom Petrus went to bed that night, he tossed and tossed but sleep he could not. He knew well enough it would be a hard job for him to work with his hands, and reminiscenses of happier days were almost too much for him, but there was no

other way. He had to, and he would!

The evening after, Oom Petrus went along the road leading to the mine. He had his billy with him, carrying his bread in a small bag. About half-an-hour's walk lay in front of him. The smoke made black streaks against the clear sky, ahead. Wherever he looked that black smudge extended, besmiring the tints he had so often admired in the days when he returned from inspecting the cattle on his farm. In those days he could sit his pony comfortably, gazing at the wide, wide plains, and at the dark hillocks wrapped in the distant, filmy haze.

Here and there lights began to gleam, dimly at first but more clearly as he approached them, piercing the gathering darkness. There was not much time to ponder the past, for he had got to the mine gate before he knew where he was. The big native porter gave him a look of surprise. The old boss looked so fit, though his hair had nearly turned grey and his face was full of furrows. Oom Petrus went to the office, where he was expected, and obtained his ticket. Thence, he went to the change-house. Twelve large clothes-chests and a pair of heavy, hob-nailed boots were in the room. The men looked at him, but he took no notice. Not that there was much leisure, for they were undressing and changing. Oom Petrus felt bashful, but

seeing that no one seemed to think anything of it, he, too, changed and all were ready. The man who was to see him through was a kindly Englishman, who preceded him to the shaft, talking to him meanwhile.

He told Oom Petrus to keep to the centre of the skip, and to hold on to him, as the first sensation was rather queer to people who had never been down before. The skip was soon full, and as the old man was still looking at the strong lights, shining on all sides, the thing began to descend with increasing speed. He squeezed the Englishman's arm until the skin was nearly blue but that did not come unexpectedly, and the other only smiled. The old man felt very bad, and a text about the bowels of the earth came into his mind but he had not had time to get really sick before they were at the bottom. Rubbing his eyes, he felt someone pulling him away from the crowd, and there he stood. As in a dream he followed his guide along galleries and tunnels where he had to stoop, and almost to crawl. He was told to wait a moment, and then he was left by himself, alone "in the earth's womb," as he told himself. By this time he could distinguish things. At intervals a pigtail went past him, and involuntarily he looked for a bar in case they might attack him, but the creatures glided by swiftly,

without as much as noticing him. He heard the drills humming, and he could smell the dust. When his superior returned, he was told to follow on. They entered a narrow tunnel, close by. A few natives went with them, and before long they had got to the spot where he was to work. The drill was adjusted, the tube fixed, and the affair began to turn, with the dust flying about and a kaffir pouring water on to the borehole from a cup, so as to lessen the dust. But that was not much use, and the old man almost coughed himself to death, but the other man said that always happened the first time one worked in a mine. He listened and looked on, all attention. The "boss" very soon began to like him, because people do not often take an interest in the work down there. He told the old man about the gold formation in the rock, showing him how to work the machine, Oom Petrus listening carefully. The dust troubled him fearfully, but he kept his courage up. And before very long he asked to be allowed to fix and work the machine himself, just to have a try. He did fairly well, too, but he had a good deal to learn. Meanwhile he was doing his best.

Everything having been set going, and the three drills humming away, the boss left them for a while, and he looked on. Suddenly one of the miners

made for him and, taking a couple of handfuls out of the case containing fuse and other material, said: "Beg pardon." Oom Petrus, not knowing but what this was a custom, said "all right," but the native who was busy pouring water into the borehole left his work, and told him the man was stealing. This led to cursing and quarrelling, such as Oom Petrus had never heard in all his life. The miner, seizing an iron bar, was for killing the kaffir on the spot, but this was too bad, and Oom Petrus, intervening, was in a fair way of receiving the blow on his own head, when the boss arrived and put a stop to further quarrelling. The old man now heard that the miners are fond of snatching fuse and other material when they get a chance, because they have to pay for it themselves and work on piece. The miner went away, giving him an angry look, and saying: "You'll be sorry for this," but the old man took no notice of the threat. The work progressed steadily, and he was gradually getting used to the dust, although it made him cough a good deal. At last the time arrived for the holes drilled to be charged with dynamite, and for the fuses to be fixed. As he saw this done, he realised for the first time the difficulty and danger attending the work. When all was ready, the boss told him to stand back a bit, and

to climb up into one of the passages overhead. At first he hesitated, but when the order was repeated, he complied. He was determined to behave like a young man in all things, but obey he must. The night's work had made him more agile than he knew of, and he quickly mounted the steps that had been cut into the rock. Below he heard a peculiar kind of shouting, and then he saw the kaffirs following him, climbing like baboons. Immediately afterwards the boss, too, came up. For a few moments nothing happened, and he shot a questioning glance at his guide, but the first blast sounded faintly, far below him. Every report was counted because misfired holes often lead to great loss of life, but all went well, and his shift was over. As the skip took him up again, the queer sensation had gone, and joyfully he hailed the daylight at the shaft's mouth.

He noticed, in the change-house, that one of the miners pointed to him, and talked to the others about him, but he was only too glad to be able to go home, having earned his first day's wages. All troubles and cares seemed to have vanished. He no longer felt fatigue, and as he walked home his gait had the elasticity of youth. His daughter was

awaiting him, but she placed the simple meal on the table without a word. He did his best to chat gaily, but she hardly listened, though she looked at him often and anxiously. When he went to bed the cough started troubling him again, but that did not prevent him from taking up his difficult task once more, as cheerfully as ever. After a few days the boss under whom he had worked so pleasantly, and who helped him on so well, met with an accident. The very same miner was placed over him who, on the first day, had taken the things from the box. From that moment his sufferings began. Nothing the old man could do was good enough, and he was stationed at a spot where the dust made it impossible for him to do his work. The next day he had to stop at home; he could never go back to work again. It was all up with him. The manager sent an exceedingly polite note stating that he much regretted the impossibility of retaining the services of such an able workman, but that he was not justified towards his directors in doing so.

Hadn't he given the old man a chance? And why should he trouble any further?

After all, it was better so. The cough grew worse,

and Oom Petrus felt that he was not going to last very much longer. The doctor counselled patience, but admitted that the patient should never have gone down the mine. Lenie said nothing. She looked straight in front of her. When all was said and done, she could hardly say to her father: I told you so!

A winter's morning on the Rand. The mines have long since finished sounding their hooters. It is almost seven o'clock. A dense mist clings to the huge, greyish tailing-heaps. A keen wind stirs the loose sand, sucking it up into dust-devils, which, ghost-like, drift about for a few moments, suddenly to disappear. Monster-like pieces of headgear loom up like dark, evil spirits over the flat ridges. The miniature chimney of a pumping-station laboriously puffs out its short breath, with heavy, regular beat, sending up pale cloudlets of steam.

With hurried footsteps natives mount along the sides of the dumps, disappearing at the top, to push the trucks that come, and come, and never rest. A wide, deep furrow runs between two of the tailing-heaps, leading off the dirty-bluish water, incessantly streaming from the big pipes. Stunted willow-trees line the furrow, shrivelled up as if lamenting over the miry water with which they have to put

up, like human beings who have known better days.

Near by, a couple of small houses hide among a clump of blackwood trees. There was a farm here at one time, long, long ago. The walls are of a dun shade, spotted with brown, and the thatched roof sports all the colours of the rainbow. The door is open. A woman is sitting on the threshold. You can hardly make her out from a distance, because her hands rest on her knees, and her head is very nearly bent down as far. There is a black cap on her head, and from afar you might take her for a bag of coal in her huddled-up position.

The house contains a large dining-room, in which there is a bed, together with a ramshackle table and a couple of chairs. Next-door, in a smaller room, an old man reclines on a bed. His face is wrinkled; his hair and long beard are white as snow. Softly he mutters to himself, rolling his head from one side to another unceasingly. Then silence once more for a while. The heavy eyelids close over the eyes, lying deep in their sockets.

Suddenly his weak voice calls out: "Lenie, Lenie."

The daughter, tired out and careworn, sleeps on.

"She's done up," the father sighs.

A yellow ray of light penetrates the little window, shedding a pale light in the narrow space. The old

man turns his head towards the door, and again his hand glides along his high forehead. Yes, he knows, now, that he is alone. There is the chair with the glass of water and the medicine-bottle. Over there his wife's photo hangs on the wall. He has asked for it to be put into this room, where he can look at it once in a while. Once more his head grows light, as he strives to collect his thoughts. He gazes straight in front of him, and old memories revive. His whole life passes in review before him. The great trek, life in his young days, the native wars, fights with the Basuto. Listen, there the mine hooter sounds again... 't is the kaffirs blowing their martial horns; the fight is about to begin... there they come; they are coming!

Wildly, the old man's arms strike out. Then he lies still, but the dream continues. He's back in the Free State, fighting for his country. Look—the flag! They stand round it, singing...

His daughter Lenie is still asleep in the same attitude, but all of a sudden she wakes up. What's that? She listens. Someone is singing. The sound comes from the room. Again she listens: "Now, burghers, sing of liberty." The line is repeated, and repeated once again. Abruptly the song changes into an awful shriek, coming from the old singer's lips.

At first Lenie listened as if in a dream, but now she jumps up. She enters the little room where her father lies on the bed, pale as a ghost, his hands folded across his chest. Lenie is so startled that her first impulse is to run away and call for help, but she takes the folded hands into her own, and feels that they are yet warm. She kisses the fine, lofty forehead. Then she sits down on the side of the bedstead, waiting. She looks at the handsome face, at the calm expression. After a few minutes the features relax. The eyes are opened, and the lips move.

"Is that you, Lenie?" a very weak voice asks.

She cannot speak, but presses her father's hand more firmly into her own.

"My child, the last hours of my long life have come; with Jacob I can say that they have been few and evil. I have not much time left..."

His sentences are short and broken at first, but the voice grows firmer and stronger as he continues.

Turning his head to the enlarged photo on the wall he asks: "Is your mother here still? I cannot see properly."

"Yes, father," she whispers.

"You see, I've had a dream," the old man continues, speaking quite calmly now. "I dreamt of all that ever happened to me. I saw the trek; I

saw your late mother as a girl; I saw you and your little dead brothers playing round the waggon. I fought the kaffirs once more, and the Basuto were coming on, coming on and blowing the big horns in the night. We fought for our independence; we won and stood round the Free State flag, singing."

He tries to raise himself, but falls back on to his pillow. His eyes shine, and he raises his shrivelled hand.

"Yes, we sang 'Now, burghers, sing of liberty,' and then I woke up, and I was here, all by myself, quite alone, and then I smiled at my own dream."

Exhausted, he does not stir for a few minutes, and then again vainly tries to raise himself. Lenie, seeing that he is over-taxing his strength, gently reproaches him:

"Keep quiet now, father. Don't talk any more. Your cough will come on again... Shall I give you some medicine?"

But it is no use. Very earnestly, he looks at her, saying: "I must talk now. The end is near," and as she bursts out sobbing, he says to her: "My dear daughter, thanks for nursing me so nicely all the time. Tell your husband he has to look after you when he comes back. And so he will when I'm gone. It's no good hunting for gold, tell him, because the gold is above the surface, not below it."

His voice has, by now, grown very feeble, and his daughter is sobbing again. "Hadn't I better fetch a clergyman, father," she asks. But firmly he answers: "Long have I lived alone, with none to take any notice of me... and alone I want to die. Listen, my child, and don't cry any more." A brief pause and again he goes on, Lenie listening in great distress:

"Ay, another voortrekker will have gone to his rest, but this time there will not be any notice in the papers, neither about his deeds nor about his battles; his name will not be mentioned when the roll-call of the pioneers is read... but he did his duty, just as well as the next man... every bit as well," he repeats, in spite of his daughter's efforts to soothe him and keep him quiet. "Ay," he continues, "who did his duty, along with the next man... and... is now... dying... a pauper."

"Father," Lenie sobs out, "my dear father, you mustn't talk like that; it hurts me!"

An interval of silence, and abruptly he resumes, quite calm this time: "I don't want to grieve you, my child, but it's no more than the truth, and I feel that I shall have to leave you very soon. Oh, when I think of all the striving and..." But suddenly the voice becomes almost inaudible. For a moment he supports himself on his arm, only to

fall back again upon the pillow. His face grows distorted. Cold perspiration breaks from his forehead.

Lenie throws herself on his breast, casting her arm around his neck. "Father," she sobs, "my poor father, you're not dead!"

Once more his eyes open, his lips move:

"Look, our flag and our colours;

"With courage we shall onward march.

"We put our trust in God."

His hoary head falls back. The light goes out of his eyes. The clear, wintry sun shines brightly through the little window, lighting up the manly face of a Forgotten Voortrekker, who has started on his last trek...

SUCH THERE ARE!

Sketches from every-day life in Johannesburg.

There is an individual—alas, would the matter stopped there!—I should say there is a class of people amongst the Afrikander town population, especially in Johannesburg, who were almost non-existent before the war, but who are now daily on the increase. I mean the so-called speculators. I am not referring to the cattle-dealer, to the produce merchant or to any merchant whatever. Let me try to give you his likeness. To begin with I must tell you that there are two descriptions: big ones and small ones, or rather, to give you an idea of their respective proportions: the speculator who wants to sell you a gold farm somewhere in the "O. R. C."—this man prefers English as the language of conversation—and the small man, with the "refusal" of one-eigth of a farm close te Johannesburg, on the railway line, or perhaps half an erf in Fordsburg or Vrededorp, which assets of his he wishes to make over to you at a bargain.

The small speculator usually looks prosperous, and well-dressed. Out-of-doors he wishes to pass

for a man of the world. I say "out-of-doors," because as a rule things look quite different across his threshold. His wife and children may work for their daily bread, or they may not, the family living in expectation of that fine spec' that "pa" has never yet managed to put through. People like that are apt to get poorer as the days go by, and sometimes worse things than poverty rule. The head of the family used to possess a few pounds; he might have provided for his family by buying a cab or a piece of ground outside the town while he had the means. But, then, it would have been necessary to put in some work, and of course it was much easier to speculate, as Cousin Gert had done, who had made £300 in the twinkling of an eye.

In a beer hall, at the corner of the street, the green curtain is wafted out into the street by the draught every now and then, enabling passers-by to catch sight of what is going on inside. Two men occupy a small table in a corner of the room. One of them is our typical speculator; his companion is the victim, or rather the intended victim. But Kootje Weilbach wasn't quite born yesterday either; he has his weather-eye on Neef Jannie van der Merwe, even though he talks like an expert estate dealer. Kootje listens, peering into his glass,

the contents of which have disappeared. Jannie, noticing this, raps his own glass on the table with a "Two more, please, hierso."

Jannie, nicknamed "slim Jannie," knows the ropes. "If you want to do business," he says, "you're not to grudge sixpennyworth o' beer."

"Look here, old chap," and Jannie slaps his friend on the back with a confidential gesture, "you must try and understand the thing thoroughly. If you let me have that bit o' ground at the price, I'll do you a favour some other day."

Kootje takes a sip, but is quite unable to understand why it is that he cannot meet the "party," as Van der Merwe calls the unknown purchaser. He, Kootje, is willing to pay the agent, being Jannie, the same commission which, according to Jannie, the "party" is going to pay. According to Jannie, again, the said commission amounts to but two pounds ten.

The speculator is disappointed. He had expected to find a more gullible dupe. He looks at his victim sideways over his glass.

"See here, my boy," he resumes after a brief meditative pause, "you must understand me aright. The thing's like this: The party for whom I'm working is a large firm who won't deal with anyone except myself. If I introduce any other party,

they'll give me the sack, and surely you wouldn't do an old pal out of a few pounds' earnings, would you now?"

"Ay," insists Kootje, "but if you are working for a commission in any case, why can't I do the business myself?"

"Man alive," the speculator interrupts somewhat impatiently, "am I not telling you that you're misunderstanding the whole affair?"

"All right, I'll sleep on it," says Kootje, rising, "so long!" and he leaves the room.

Outside he has a quiet grin, well satisfied with his astuteness in getting Jannie to stand two beers. He mutters: "What he can do, I suppose I can do, too." The spec' is off, and slim Jannie makes for home, in a grumbling mood.

It is a pity that all of his speculations do not end in this way, and that he is not compelled by necessity to go in for honest work.

Sometimes, or rather very often, it is a case of a poor man or some workman who has been driven into a corner, forced to sell a small piece of ground —perhaps the last bit of property he has left. If our speculator gets wind of a case of that nature,

he is sure of his prey as a rule, and his protestations of sympathy frequently get disgusting. He has no compunction about making half the value of the property disappear into his own pocket, all the time pouring forth offers of assistance. He plays the part of a "true Afrikander" who has lost his all in the war. Generally speaking this class of man quietly stayed at home while the fighting was on, or at any rate went back there as soon as ever he could. He spins a yarn about all the hardships he has undergone, all the adversity against which he has battled, and is continually proclaiming his self-sacrificing nature.

The whole affair won't cost Mrs. So-and-so a penny. He will put the whole thing right, sign the papers and see to it that the money is "cash down." And if the poor body happens to be dubious, he has no scruples about switching off the discussion on to last Sunday evening's sermon, commending the splendid discourse with such ardour that the woman is carried away. She is no sooner all attention before he says: "Well, then, we'd better leave the matter as it is, and I'll see that you get the money. All you have to do is to sign your name, and the cash'll be there."

Needs must when the devil drives, and he has his own way, glad because he has made a few pounds, caring not whether his work is that of a usurer, nor whether he robs the widow of her mite.

There are many such. Unfortunately, they are by no means the worst of the lot. There are others, who work on a wholesale basis. They deal in coal, gold and diamond shares. They are quite satisfied in their own minds that the farm "which is such a good thing" has no value except as a common quarry. The universal craving for gold has affected them to such an extent that they do not even realise the fact that it is their own country, their own nation, they are helping to sell. But the "big house" knows perfectly well that if they wish to succeed they have to send a Dutchman in order to do some simple farmer out of part of his estate, or perhaps the whole of his farm. These people call him a smart man. These foes of his birthright pay him, and his egotism is flattered when he passes for a "very clever fellow."

He does not even notice it when, of a Sunday (for he is a staunch churchman), the sermon points out that the land of his ancestors is being traded away for a few pieces of silver—a charge that concerns h i m.

And the cause of it all? It's a harsh word, maybe,

but it must be uttered. It is indolence. Fortunately many are beginning to realise that, literally, people have to put their hands to the plough. Our children should be imbued, at once, with the fact that only labour is able to save them from the proverbial "devil's pillow."

ANNIE.

About a year ago, one afternoon, I climbed a low ridge, close to town, just for the sake of solitude. There are moments like that, when a man desires nothing better than to leave all customary sights and sounds behind—to forget even his own existence if that can be, and to surrender himself to a world which, though it may have no other shape, exists at any rate in his thoughts.

There was a bit of a breeze, and when I got to the brow of the ridge, the cool air struck my face. The blue sky scintillated, and the setting sun shone so brightly that, for a brief moment, I felt it was good to be alive. In the distance, ahead, I saw the faint mountain ranges, stretching away procession-like, hazy shapes resting on their summits, tired of the day's wanderings, some of them reclining in the valleys or in the hollows of the hills. A few wind-streaks, looking like ostrich-feathers, suspended against a blue background, were to be seen. A mine-chimney or two sent up columns of smoke at intervals, marring the beautiful panorama with dark blotches. Close by, on my right, lay Parktown, with all its fine houses and dark-

green firs. To the left, Melville, with its scattered dwellings, white, yellow, and brick-red as in a child's book of pictures. Below me, not far away, a small flock of sheep were cropping the grass which, after yesterday's rain, looked green once more. The piccanin who was "looking after" them, was sprawling on top of a huge boulder, shying stones at his hat, which he had placed at some distance, to give the game a zest. It was very quiet although, far away, behind me, I could hear the city's subdued murmur.

I had been there for about half an hour, lost in thought, when, without my noticing it, some one came up from behind.

"Where've you got to, this time, you good-for-nothing?"

Startled, I looked up. A young woman stood just behind the boulder that had supported me. Her hair hung loose about her shoulders, and her neck was bare, her bodice being unfastened. With one hand she held up her skirt—a poor sort of garment indeed. Her face was painfully pale, and her dark eyes glowed like coals of fire. Her cheeks were sunken, with prominent cheek-bones and bloodless lips.

She was as startled as I was, for the moment I caught sight of her, I cried "Annie," and she replied

"Teacher!" There could not be a shadow of a doubt. This woman had been the child who, but a few years ago, had been in my class, and who had always looked as if she expected a beating. Even at that time she had been thin and delicate, but I would not have known her, had she not answered my exclamation. For a brief while we stood looking at each other, and, as she kept silent, I made a start, just to break the ice.

You living here now, Annie?

Yes, we live here.

Where is your house?

Just behind here. You can come and see.

I was standing by her side now, and she pointed out a roof, not twenty yards away, behind a heap of boulders.

May I come along? I should like to see your house.

Ay, come with me, and I'll show you our beautiful mansion, but please be careful not to soil the pretty floor-cloth, and scrape your boots carefully before you enter. It takes me all day to keep things clean. You, Hollanders, are so fond of a rub and a scrub, and making a fuss about a house.

Had she but spoken in a sarcastic tone, I might have retorted with a joke, but there was not even a smile round the corners of her mouth, and she kept

on staring straight in front of her. Slowly we walked along. Before we got to the house I stopped her, asking: Annie, what did you mean, over there, when you called someone a good-for-nothing? Surely, you did not mean me?

With that, the ghost of a smile stole over her face, but in a sadder tone she said: "The good-for-nothing is Johnny; surely, you know him for a ne'er-do-weel. You were in court when he was sent to gaol for stealing bags from the railway yard. He told me you were."

"Ay," was all I could say, for we were at the house by now.

It is a house, after a fashion, she said, and I could not but agree with her. They had built the shanty with a few posts and some old sacks, and the roof was made of the tin-lining of old packing-cases, gathered from the rubbish sites at Brixton. People have begun to call the place Ragville, because most of the houses were built on the same plan. There was no door to the shack, at least not of the accustomed kind. The opening, where the door should have been, was covered by a sack, in front of which two young children were playing—two very delicate-looking children, who were throwing about pebbles in the grass. Near by, at one of the corners, an old man was patching up a wheel-

barrow, with the aid of a piece of rusty iron wire. He did not notice us, or at any rate pretended not to notice us; he was working away as if his very life depended on it. But when I watched him closely, there appeared to be something futile about his work. As soon as he had fastened a bit of wire he would pull it away again with a gesture of such complete indifference that involuntarily I gave him a questioning look. She understood the question in my glance at once, and, pointing to the old man, said, as if it had been a matter of course: Cracked!

She lifted the sacking, and said: Just walk in; you needn't wipe your boots because you won't spoil the floor!

There was no contradicting her. The floor was no different from the veld outside. There was not much to be spoilt, for in several places the recent rains had caused small tufts of grass to spring up. The house was divided into two parts. The bigger room contained an old bedstead, covered with sacks. Behind a partition, likewise made of sacks, the old man and her brother Johnny slept—the one who had been called a good-for-nothing.

In the centre of the larger apartment a packing-case served as table. In a corner a rusty, little stove awaited the fire which it had not felt for a week past. There was neither coal nor firewood.

Johnny had been sent across the ridge by his sister to hunt for some manure by way of fuel, for they had got a bucketful of plucks from one of the slaughter-houses, off which they meant to sup.

I could hardly speak when I walked out again with the poor young woman. She pointed out a rickety little chair for me to sit down on. She noticed I did not intend leaving them just yet, and she herself sat down on a boulder, facing me. On my asking her why she did not herself take the chair, she answered that it was reserved for visitors. Again it was impossible for me to discover what was going on in her mind, so I asked:

"Annie, how is it that I've got to find you in such miserable surroundings? No more than six years ago you were quite a different sort of child." And a "poor wretch!" escaped me.

Her two big eyes had been fixed on me all the time, and suddenly she screamed, rather than said: "Yes, a wretch! I wish I were a coloured girl because then I might possibly be happy. Old Ateem is rich; she has plenty to eat, and I haven't. She's given us a mouthful o' mealiemeal; we're going to eat it tonight. I'm just waiting for Johnny; the blighter's no use to anyone. When I send him to the coal-yard to look for some of the coal, dropping from the trucks, he usually goes to lie down among

the boulders, where we met. He's a bit nervous since they gave him those two months for stealing bags."

There was a short pause. Her lean chin rested on her hand. Her eyes were fixed on the ground now. One of the children had taken her other hand, but she did not appear to take any notice.

"Annie," I went on, "do tell me, how did you get into this misery? I always looked on you as a smart girl, and thought you would make your way in the world. Is your mother still living?"

She jumped up as if she had touched a live wire. For the first time she flushed, and she came a little closer.

"Mother, mother! she's a... she's a..."

That was all she could say. Her body was shaken as if by convulsions, and she burst into tears. Then she told me a tale of misery, so awful that I cannot give all details. She had never known her father. Her mother had re-married twice, and now she was the scarlet woman, without repentance. The worst of it was that she had tried to lead her daughter into her own evil ways, but Annie had resisted the temptation. She had married one of my old school-boys, and he had treated her well, but he became unemployed, and she had been in poor circumstances for a long time, which made him take up liquor-

selling. They had given him the regulation six months. The uncle, whom I had seen, had been the owner of a small farm, but one of her mother's husbands had swindled him out of the money, and the balance he had given to her to keep the pot boiling. She could not send the old man away, for she had no other company. He was very queer in the head. He imagined that many head of cattle, belonging to him, were running about, and many a time he would go a long distance to look for sheep that were never there. Then, again, he would try and repair the wheelbarrow for days together, without uttering a word. And so things went on.

"And how do you contrive to live? Who is that other little mite? Is she yours, too?"

"She belongs to my brother-in-law, who is doing time with my husband. His wife died, and the child had nearly followed her, so I took her. How we manage to live? I don't know myself. As I told you, old Ateem, who washed for my mother, gives us a handful of mealies from time to time. When I get the chance I do ironing, but sometimes people come to look at the place, and when they see what sort of shanty their things are taken to they make some excuse, because this is really no kind of a place. My flat-irons are worn out, too, and I can't buy new ones. There's Johnny."

A tall youth approached, looking at me with a "what-the-devil-are-you-doing-here" air.

"Can't you see who's come? You donkey! Where have you been all this time? Lying asleep, eh?"

Johnny doffed his hat after a fashion, and replied: "What rot you're talking! How can I find dry manure, when it's only just been raining. Have you got 'em again?"

Saying this, he shook some manure from the coal-bag on to the ground.

Go, clean the plucks, his sister commanded, and without another word he went round to the back of the house to do his work. Annie did not speak for a little while, and all this misery dumbfoundered me to such an extent that I could not utter a word. By-and-by she began to hum an old school-song. This roused me.

"Annie," I said, "those youngsters are too small to be taken along, but if you will go part of the way with me, I'll buy them something."

She gave me a look, saying: "Haven't I got a fine ball-dress! That 'll look fine, my walking alongside of you. But wait a bit, I've still got my wedding-clothes."

She disappeared into the shanty. When I was alone I tried to get the old man to talk, but he just looked at me, without answering any of my questions.

Annie came out. I hardly knew her. She was dressed in white, and looked quite a different person. The old man looked at her too, and said: "The spider will be ready in a minute; just wait a bit." And then he continued his work with his old zeal, as if there were nobody there except himself.

Annie's dress looked worn and anything but new, but at least it gave her the appearance of an ordinary woman. The savage expression had disappeared. A blue kerchief covered her head, and there was something individual and ladylike about her appearance. As she stood there, next to me, she was anything but plain-looking.

I'm ready, she said. We went down the rise together, and having bought her and the children a few things, I was about to say good-bye and go home.

No, she said, just walk along a little bit further; I want to talk to you. I did as she asked me, and when we were out of sight of other people, she sud-

denly planted herself straight in front of me. Looking into my eyes, she said:

"D'you know that many have wanted to give me money and food before now? D'you know I gave one fellow what-for so well that he's still in Hospital, getting over it? He gives out that he's had a spill, but the fact of the matter is I knocked a hole in his head with a stone. D'you know I could lead an easy life of it if I just wished to do as my mother and some of your old school-girls do?"

I felt very uncomfortable, feeling those two dark eyes fixed on me. I did not quite know what to say. I understood the poor woman, and sympathised with her struggle to lead a decent life. But what could I do? What did she think of me? She saw I was puzzled. Suddenly she grasped my hand, crying. I tried to comfort her, but as suddenly she dried her tears. "I'm so glad you've come to see us," she said, "I'm so glad I could tell you about my troubles. I'm going to my uncle's farm. The old man and the children are going with me."

We had been walking on, and had got back to the house. The old man was on one of his cattle-rounding expeditions. Johnny had cleaned the plucks, and the ramshackle stove-pipe was smoking. Annie looked into my eyes once more, and said:

"Look after Johnny, will you? I can 't take him

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"Look after Johnny, will you? I can't take him

along; he's too bad a character, but for all that he's my brother."

She took the two little ones, kissed them passionately, and disappeared into the house.

Annie is in the Zeerust district now, on a farm. And she has enough to eat.

A fortnight ago, I saw Johnny in one of the cells at the charge office. What's the charge? I asked. Selling liquor!

D'you know him? the officer asked.

Ay, he's one of my old pupils, I answered.

Not much credit to you, old chap, he said, with a smile. But, somehow, I couldn't smile just then.

HOW OOM JANNIE LE ROUX SPENT HIS NEW-YEAR'S EVE.

It was a week after the New Year. In leisurely fashion I was walking down Pritchard Street. That's nothing very wonderful, you will say, but if you happen to have an eye for other things besides show-windows, and care to study types now and then, I can recommend you to follow my example, some Saturday afternoon. I was just listening to a conversation between two much-bepowdered and berouged ladies. They were agreed—and that, you will admit is, in itself, somewhat unusual—they were agreed, I say, about some one (whom they called George) being "awf'ly nice." When the ladies had reached this stage, I suddenly felt someone slapping me on the back with a vigour that shook my foundations.

"Goodness, gracious, teacher, so you're still in the land of the living!"

I had a dim recollection of similar slaps, received in years long past, and it only needed the voice to remind me of my old friend Jannie le Roux, on whose farm I had spent my first year in "this 'ere country." It was the very slap with which Oom

Jannie was wont to introduce me to his friends as "his tame little Hollander."

I was really glad to meet him, and with a "My gracious, Oom Jannie, how goes it?" we shook hands, in fact I still feel that grasp of his when the scene comes back to my mind. He had often invited me to spend a few days on his farm, but nothing had ever come of it, and now, thirteen years after we last met, we had run up against each other.

"Come on, Oom Jan," I said, "let's go and sit down. We'll have a glass of beer and a talk, and then we can tell each other how the world has treated us."

I thought I knew my Oom Jannie. He was a man of close on sixty, but straight as a pole. Except for a few grey hairs he looked a comparatively young man. In the old days the time had been when we had a dop together, and it had even happened, on the first day of the year, that he had confided to me about having been a bit "screwed" the night before. You will therefore be able to understand my surprise if I tell you that, in reply to my suggestion, he seized my arm, crying:

"No, not beer, man, not beer; no, my boy, coffee's the thing for me!"

All right, I said, not quite fathoming his excite-

ment, coffee be it. And we descended a staircase, to be served with coffee in the room below by a young lady with a high collar, shiny cuffs, red hair and a business smile.

Oom Jannie, having given her a critical look, said:

"A bit down in the mouth, eh?"

"I s'pose so," I answered.

We sipped at our coffee, but it was too hot as yet. Oom Jannie started telling me about his wife who, as usual, was a bit of an invalid; about his daughters, who were now married, and his eldest son who, it appeared, was killed during the war. Then it was my turn to confess, and after that we sat silent for a while. I noticed that Oom Jannie gave me a slanting look accross his cup, as if he wanted to make sure that I was still the same "old lad" of thirteen years ago. I noticed there was something on his liver. He had "tamed me," himself but had his doubts as to whether I was still the same "tame, little Hollander." After a few minutes, however, it appeared as if he were going to trust me, waiting only for some encouragement on my part.

"Well, Oom Jannie," I opened fire, "and what else?"

"Teacher," he said solemnly, "you were always

a good old lad, and the children are very fond of you. When they come visiting, they always talk of you, and I don't think you have changed very much."

But, looking at my physical condition, he took care to add: "Only, you've just grown a bit pot-bellied."

And then, after another short interval, he abruptly began: "Teacher, I must tell you, as an old friend, something that happened to me in this confounded place. But, man, you mustn't split."

I thought it best not to interrupt him, and Oom Jannie went on with a sigh:

"Teacher, I had an awful experience, New Year's eve. Man, but I had a hot time of it!"

I sat expectant.

"You know, I came down here with the old woman to settle that matter of my Bushveld farm. My nephew, who lives here, wrote to say that I had better come over, but as for him he had to go to the Cape; that did not matter, however, for he gave me the attorney's name, and I would easily be able to find him, he said. Well, we got to our niece's, and it was a treat to get into a house again after the train journey. My old woman had never been in one before. She felt a bit weak, and my head was aching. After a few days' rest, off I

went to the attorney, and we fixed up provisionally. This was on the thirty-first of December. When we were about finished, the old chap says to me: Come let's go and take a tot, he says, and we went into a bar. I can't remember the name of the place, but it was a swell affair, I tell you. A lot of people stood about, drinking and talking, and behind the counter there was a jolly fine girl, who took part in the conversation. My attorney says 'Mornin'.' We all shook hands. I was introduced. They said they were glad to see me. Of course, it was all English, so I also shook hands, saying 'so long.'

"Well, we had a beer, and they lifted their glasses, saying "kezonthite," for you know an Englishman can't talk our language. I finished the beer, and one of the crowd said 'Have another.' So we had another. There wasn't a glassful of good dop in the place, and the beer was a bit raw for my stomach, so I got on to whiskey.

"Well, you see, teacher, I began to feel very jolly after a bit, and we started talking, for, you know, I'm not quite out of it when people speak English! Things went on swimmingly, until a fellow behind me referred to me as a jolly old Dutchman. Of course, that made me wild on the spot. I made no bones about it, but, turning round,

I said: I'se a yentleman, and I will not beledig wor by jou nie. And I added that I was a Boer, and that it wouldn't pay him to try on his little game with me.

"Then that attorney of mine came along, and told me no offence was meant; it was only the other fellow's talk, and he added something about 'apologize.' I told him I hadn't the honour of that gentleman's acquaintance, but the attorney explained that apologize means to say: You're sorry. So we had another glass or two, and I cleared out.

"Now let me tell you, teacher, I don't know whether it was the beer or whether it was the whiskey, but as I stepped outside, the stuff went straight to my head. I felt there was something queer, so I walked across towards the Market Square. A lot of Jews were shouting there as if possessed, and a crowd of youngsters were selling little books, shouting 'rice carts.' Now, I had no idea they were talking about the 'rices' we had on the farm once or twice. What I thought was that it was all about the 'union of the rices,' our new schoolmaster had such a lot to say about—meaning us and the English. So, thinking to show it to the old chap, I bought the little book.

"I gave the coloured boy half-a-crown, telling him to look sharp and get change. Up he goes to a

Jew selling soft goods and shouting like mad. From this Jew he goes on to another Jew who was selling hardware, and then to another, and after that I lost sight of him for a bit. But you must understand I was on his track all the time, thinking: You rascal, you're not going to humbug me.

"Suddenly I caught sight of him again. I gave chase and caught him. He yelled, fit to burst. Then those Jews, and the Coolies, and the whole blessed lot came running up, kicking up a row, and the boy swearing he never got any money. Now, you must remember that my head swam as it was, and when I looked at the long coats of the Jews and the white dresses of the Coolies, everything seemed to be waltzing a tune round me.

"When I came to my senses, I was sitting on the Square, near the horses' trough. I woke up, for I had been fast asleep. A big, hulking kaffir, with an assegai in one hand and a knob-kerry in the other, was looking down at me. He had a blue, tight jacket on, and a small, black cap hanging about his left ear, looking very much like the sort of butter tin we used to buy at Harmens' in the old days, but for its being black. It was fastened to his head by a strap. There the trash was standing in front of me, tugging at the two points of his scraggy beard, saying: You must move on.

"Well, you know teacher, I can't stand a cheeky nigger, and when I was assistant-fieldcornet in the old days I used to lay it into them in first-class style. And there was that ugly creature jabbering away at me in English. I exploded straightaway, and told him I'd teach him all about being cheeky to a Boer, but up comes another nigger with one of those butter-tins on his ear, and the first carrion says to him, in Dutch, mind you: The old chap is drunk. Man, then I got thoroughly mad, and I was all for hammering into them, but they seized my arms, and a policeman came up. Moreover, the liquor had taken it out of me, so I had no choice but to follow them to the charge office. It was a good job that it was getting dark, for I tell you I felt awfully small. Now, don't you laugh, teacher —man, you know I'm a deacon, and there I was, being run in just like any criminal.

"When we arrived at the charge office, I was charged with being drunk and disorderly; if I could produce bail I might go; if not, I had to stay. The shock sobered me, and I felt in my pockets but they were empty. Those Johannesburg sneak-thieves had got hold of all my money—over £4. The slip of paper with the address of our place in Jeppes was gone, too, so it looked as if I were booked for a night's lodging as H. M.'s guest. They were

just about to remove me, when a fellow came from one of the rooms, stared at me, had another good look, and said: Good gracious, Mr. Le Roux, what in the wide world are y o u doing here?

"Will you believe me, teacher, it was the very same Englishman with whom I'd had a whiskey that morning, and who was going to apoloyice to me. I looked at him, and he smiled. He went up to the clerk in charge, and talked to him for a while. When he returned he asked me where I was staying. I said I didn't know ! With that, the fellow smiled again, and asked me to wait a little longer. The next thing was that he put me into a cab, telling the cabman where to take me to. I wanted to thank him, but he said he would make it all right with my solicitor. Afterwards I heard he was a detective.

"Well, teacher , you know my old woman. She can talk a lot, and when she gets angry, then you may be sure there is a real Tartar about, and no mistake. By jingo, she went for me properly, and not until this morning did she call me her old chum once more. Of course, that shows she's forgiven me. And that's how the matter stands."

As the narrative ended, I could not manage to look very grave, but on the other hand I did not wish to lacerate the feelings of Oom Jannie who,

being a pillar of the church, took the matter so seriously. We had had three coffees each when we went out. I accompanied him for a short distance, and was about to turn back, when Oom Jannie laid his big hand on my shoulder once again, saying:

"Old boy, I'm not going to have any more beer, and no one will ever get whiskey into me again, but if you happen to know of a place, old chap, where a man cat get a decent dop, I don't care, seeing it's you, if I have a glass."

So it came about that we had a "decent dop" together, and as we parted I had to promise Oom Jannie to come and visit him some day.

As a matter of fact I did visit him, and Tant' Annie asked me whether I hadn't heard about the terrible happenings to her husband who, being a deacon of the church, had scandalised the congregation on New Year's eve. The people in Johannesburg, she opined, would be talking about the affair for years to come, and if the thing got known among the congregation, they would surely go and put the old man "under censure."

"You know, teacher," she concluded, "I don't object to a 'yollification' at home on New Year's eve, but to my manner of thinking a deacon is no less than a servant of the Church, and if he wants

a drink or two, it should be nowhere else but at his own house."

Oom Jannie listened to all this with the air of one doing penance, looking at me out of the corners of his eyes.

As for me, I just said "Ja." and we had some more coffee, and then we wished each other good night, and kind regards at home, as I now do to you, but without trying to shake hands.

HAVING HIS PHOTO "TOOK."

"Leave off, Hermaans! Don't, my child!"

Hermaans was a young gentleman, four years of age, with an enormous hat, a starched blouse, a pair of velveteen trousers, and socks down-at-heel over a big pair of boots. He had been eating chocolate, which had left dark traces on his cheeks. Just then, he was occupied with a piece of toffee, drawing it out into long telegraph wires between his little teeth, and trying to fix them on to a shop window, in front of him, to the evident annoyance of the Greek who was busy making beautiful piles of his tomatoes inside.

"Hermaans, my child, don't!" the mother protested.

Ma was a small, thin woman with a good-natured face, which, however, was not without its sharp lines, conveying the impression that, when she got angry, she would prove quite a handful. Pa was nearly twice her size. He stood there, broad-shouldered, his legs wide apart on the pavement, puffing out huge clouds of smoke, but at the same time looking for something, meachanically repeating Ma's admonitions the while.

"Yes, of course, you're such a smart 'un," said Ma, "you know your way about, you do! Here you are now, hey? We may be quite wrong, and where are we going to be, then, hey?"

The man did not move, but appeared to be scanning the house-numbers on the opposite side of the street. "Do wait a bit; I know it's hereabouts, so don't be impatient. Just keep quiet awhile. Brother Gert and myself were here together, and I know it's somewhere about here. This is the place where Fordsburg is, and this is the street where he lives."

The woman was but semi-pacified, and Hermaans was dragged away from the window which he had covered with all manner of hieroglyphics. This, however, did not come about without a vigorous howl of protest on his part. Pa shouted a "shut up," and Ma waxed indignant because her Maansie surely must be tired of waiting about.

The couple jogged along a distance of a few more houses, Pa leading the van, though uncertain as to his real leadership, Ma pulling Hermaans along with pent-up impatience.

"Here it is, this is the place," cried the husband, suddenly wheeling about, "didn't I tell you it was here!" He stopped in front of an entrance hall with framed photo's hanging on the walls. Photo's there

were of children, and photo's of adults, photo's of wedding-groups with stiff-looking brides in white and ditto bridegrooms in black, their eyes wide-opened as if scared at their own temerity in taking the fateful step.

Pa said "Now we go up these stairs here, and then we shall have got there." Hermaans, however, evinced no particular desire in that direction. He wanted to stay downstairs, and held on to his mother's skirts with sticky fingers. But Pa had had enough of it. Taking his son bodily under his arm, he made the ascent to where Reproductive Art throned, Ma trying to pacify her progeny meanwhile with sweetly persuasive words. Upstairs, to the left, there was an apartment used as a waiting-room. Thither the couple were escorted by a young lady who informed them that they would have to wait a little, because times were very busy. Hermaans started thumping the piano with his sticky fingers, what time Pa had a look round the photo's.

"Look here," he called out to his wife, who was trying to clean the bedaubed face of her young hopeful with a handkerchief, "this fellow here looks for all the world like that Hollander chap who was on our farm—he has got just such a moustache."

"You're mad," his spouse replied as she continued the cleansing process on her son's face. "this fellow

looks quite different; the Hollander's hair was yellow, and this here fellow has dark hair."

Pa had another look, and had to admit that there was something in what Ma said, though the fellow looked almost like the Hollander. Ma, on her part, conceded that, if it had not been for the colour of the hair, it might have been the very man.

At this stage the photographer entered, asking: "You want your photo's taken?"

Mr. Vermaak was about to answer, when Mrs. Vermaak anticipated him: "Yes, ve vant a portret, from de leedle poy."

The artist took in the "leedle poy" without appearing to relish Hermaans's musical genius very much, even apart from the fact that the said Hermaans was covering the keys of the piano with a glutinous film.

"Please come this way, will you?" Ma led the way, dragging Hermaans along. Pa brought up the rear, and via a narrow passage they reached the scene of operations. There was a ring, and the artist excused himself. Ma took possession of the only chair, situated in the centre of the room, still holding her son's hand. Pa perambulated, inspecting several objects of interest. He carefully turned round a female statuette, in the nude, which was perched on a stand. From the ground he lifted

a tambourine, showing it to his wife: "That's the thing the Salvation Army collect their 'oof with. I wonder whether this fellow belongs to the Army, too." But Mrs. Vermaak was much too busy getting her son into ship-shape. His collar was pulled straight, his socks were hitched up, and his hat was given the correct position. The youngster was all eyes for "that thing" on a tripod, covered by a black cloth. He even refused to consider the tambourine, offered him by Pa as a toy.

"Ma, what's that thing?" "That's the photo thing, my child," said Ma. "What do they do with it?" "They take you off," answered Ma.

There was no doubt about Hermaans being duly respectful towards "that thing." He was just about to continue his enquiries, when the photographer entered. The man was very busy, and did not waste any time in preliminaries: "Now we'll see. How do you want him taken?"

But matters were not so far advanced as yet, for Mrs. Vermaak desired to enlighten him on a few points, first of all. "You see," she explained, "us lives at Graskop by Roodepoort, and Hermaans, my son, is four years en nou wil ons hom laat afneem by jou, you see." "Yes," Pa chimed in, "ons wil hom laat afneem."

The artist understood, and asked with a touch of

impatience: "Yes, I see, but how?" And, struck by a recollection, "die kop of also die lijf, of die kop and die heel pens?" Ma understood what was meant. "O, ik sien, jij verstaan Hollands," she continued, "kijk hierso, ek het gedenk ons sal Hermaans 'n nuwe paar skoene koop en 'n nuuw broek, en nou denk ek, ons moet hom heeltemaal laat afneem."

"Will you take off his hat, please," the artist asked. Pa removed his scion's hat, but Hermaans objected. Ma thereupon presented him with a piece of toffee, and Hermaans was mum.

"Now sal ons kike," continued the artist, putting a small chair in the centre of the room. Hermaans was placed on the chair, his mother holding him, but she no sooner attempted to leave him to his own devices before it became apparent that the youngster was top-heavy, and threatened to fall down. Fortunately the artist knew a trick worth two of that. An ordinary chair was substituted, and Hermaans was placed in it. That succeeded. Whilst the photographer was away, to get a receipt for a sovereign paid on account, Ma told her son to be a plucky man. There was really nothing in it, she

said, and Pa said it was too foolish for words to show funk. All Hermaans had to do was to look nicely into that round bit o' glass, and if he did so he would see such pretty little birdies, oh, so pretty! The child, not quite reassured as yet, promised to watch the birds.

The photographer returned, and began to arrange things. He pulled Hermaans's trousers down, tugged at his blouse, and placed both his hands over the child's ears so as to fix his head the right way. This was not quite what Hermaans wanted. "I want to see the birdies, the birdies," he cried in Dutch. "What does he say?" the artist queried. "O," said Ma, "hy wil die bird sien wat daar uit die ding kom, ons het hom gesê, you see, van die birds."

The man understood. He pinned a small piece of paper to a screen on the other side of the room, and said: "Look, here is die fo'els, here is baja fo'els. You'll see baja fo'els," repeating and emphasising "baja."

Pa and Ma having drawn back somewhat, Hermaans watched the piece of paper with an anxious face. As the photographer dived into the recesses

of the black cloth, the boy quickly shifted the piece of toffee in his mouth, gazing attentively at the lens. And, lo! the "thing" began to move, the entire apparatus crept closer, and he saw his image in the big box growing larger and smaller, by turns. The child's fears increased, and when, suddenly, the artist's head emerged from underneath the black cloth, he could not contain himself.

Loudly he yelled: "Ma, ma, the bogey wants to catch hold o' me."

Ma approached her darling, and Pa got angry. The artist called Hermaans a good boy, provided he would consent to stand still for just a little while. There would be lots of birds directly!

Again he disappeared behind the cloth, and he had soon focussed Hermaans, whose coat was tied to the chair this time. Just as the plate was exposed, he suddenly drew a long string of toffee from his mouth. Ma saw him doing it, but, alas, too late to stop him.

We'll try another one, the artist said, with commendable fortitude, and Hermaans, who wanted to start another loud yell, was pacified by Pa with the promise of a pretty "iron horse."

Everything was in readiness. The photographer stood next his camera with an elastic ball in his hand, which he pressed just as the piece of paper was removed by the draught, which caused Hermaans to hold out both his hands, crying: "The birdies are flying, the birdies are flying."

Ma was beginning to lose her temper. This was too much. She pinched Hermaans a good one in the arm. Pa did his best to comfort them both, but got mercilessly snubbed for his pains.

Never mind, the artist said, we'll try again. Another piece of paper was stuck up. Pa took his position in the photographer's rear, and Ma backed up Hermaans. A broad grin spread over the child's features every now and then, for Pa was pulling all sorts of faces, to keep him in good humour, which incidentally resulted in displaying honeyed treasure in Hermaans's mouth. "Once more," the photographer called out, and before they knew where they were, the young hopeful had been taken for the fourth time, trusting to luck this time.

Ah yes, Pa said, it was just too fine for words, and the artist said it had come off first-class. Hermaans now refused to vacate the chair, fondling

his mother with his sticky hands. He insisted on being shown the birdies.

The proof would be sent on in a week's time, and Hermaansie would now be able to boast that he had really had his photo "took." Slowly the party strolled away towards the station. Ma with Hermaansie went in front, Pa following, proud of his offspring, who had behaved so exceedingly well.

'BUS - DRIVERS.

"A 'bus," said Hendrik Bruyn, "is just like the world itself. It rolls ons, nor does it stop, and just like in the rest of the world, if they can do you out of a tickey, they won't miss the chance, the rogues. Yes, sir, it's a strange world we live in."

Hendrik Bruyn is one of the drivers whose route lies between Troyeville and the Rissik Street stand. Mr. Bruyn is a respectable fellow, who looks after his wife and children, and is satisfied with the wages he earns. He is descended—or so he says—from the French Huguenots, on his father's side. His name originally was spelt with two u's—"you know, sir, just as the French spell it, but my wife's father was a Hollander. Now they've gone an' put an English **y** into it, and one would think I was a Hollander, too, but that's where one'd make a mistake."

Bruyn is a proper philosopher. When it rains, he says "It's wet;" when the winds blow, he remarks about the dust being rather dirty, and when the sun shines and the weather is fine, he calls it passable. On the Troyeville stand the junior members of the profession all respect him, not because he is an

aged man, but because he knows a thing or two that are beyond the ken of ordinary man. When they all squat alongside of their 'busses five minutes or so, throwing pebbles about to pass the time away, Bruyn will tell the youngsters af all kinds of things that are new to them. He tells them why the nasty tramcars just slide along over the rails. The electricity, he says, comes in at the top, and comes out at the bottom, for all the world like a dose of medicine—and that sets it in motion.

Or Oom Hennie, for so they call him, will say: "Hans, your off-wheeler's lame; I think his shoe must be loose." And if Hans replies: "But, Oom Hennie, that can't be," Bruyn feels the horse's foot, and, on finding that he is mistaken, says:

"Man, that's another one of those bastard horses; if it'd been a decent Afrikander horse, one might have seen the trouble at once. Those creatures' legs are just like the Irishman's dogs."

Hans makes no reply, for he knows the best policy is to let the old chap talk.

"What's the time?" some fellow, perhaps, will shout, when the whole crowd pull out their watches, which generally differ. Bruyn still carries one of the old Netherlands Railway timepieces, and he swears it never goes wrong. In the old days he was a watchman, and the big bosses had often asked

him what the time was. He therefore feels entitled to lay down the law: It's exactly eighteen minutes to ten. Hans Hever opines that it's seventeen and a half to. Gert Steyn has left his at home, but when last he passed the post office, it was 'zacly quarter past nine, for which good and sufficient reason it must now be sixteen to ten, or thereabouts.

Pieter Klerk says nothing at all, but jumps on to his 'bus and starts away.

"He goes by your time," Bruyn says to Hans, but Hans is apt to answer "What do I care!"

Hans is a jovial soul, and does not trouble much about the world. He can tell you yarns, fit to make you die with laughter. The other day, when I was in his 'bus, he said: "That was a real funny lot I'd in my 'bus yesterday. Never seen such a hard case in my life. You know old Gert Plessis, of course. He's as deaf as a post. He don't look over-clean, and wears blue specs. You must've seen 'im about here."

I just answer "Yes," though I cannot remember ever having met the gentleman. "And then," I asked, "what happened?"

"Well, yesterday," continued Hans, "the old chap gets in, and says in his usual low voice: 'Hans, old chap, can I come 'long?' I says:

'Cert'nly, Oom Gert, get in.' In gets the old man. I knew very well he hadn't any money, but thought to meself: 'Never mind, it 'll all come out in the washin',' as the Englishman says. He hadn't sat down very long before two o' those Russian Jews gets in, jabberin' away for all they're worth. You know the way they carry on a conversation, throwin' their hands about. They went at it till the old 'bus fairly quaked. After a while, Mrs. Works, she also gets in—the old woman, you know, who sells liquor, so they say, but it isn't me as says so. Well, the Jews they begin to talk to the old woman, sawing their hands about, and Oom Gert begins to fancy one of them's pointing at him. After a while he says to me: 'What does the fellow want? He's pointin' at me. I don't like it.' I shout back: 'He's only talking', but that didn't satisfy the old man. He was watching the one chap all the time, and after another few minutes he calls out: 'Hans, I want to get out.' It was no good my trying to make him believe those people were all right. He thought they wanted to rob him, and all the time he hadn't a penny to bless himself with. So I stopped the 'bus, and the poor fellow felt in his pockets just as if there was anything there. Well, I tell you, I laughed all the way till I got to the stand."

Jannie Dupreez, another 'bus-driver, is a very

quiet man. You never hear him talking to the other fellows. He just sits on the box of his 'bus, looking for passengers. The reason is that the other drivers don't like him because he once drove an opposition 'bus. You must know there was once a man by the name of Gutman. The fellow thought he would soon be able to shut up the Troyeville 'busses, so he just went and sent a lot of large, new 'busses on to the line. He got a couple of old drivers, and made them carry passengers for a tickey. The fare was sixpence at that time, but Du Preez ratted ignominiously. So, now, one calls him a "National Scout," and another calls him a scab, and Hans says he's a regular "lump o' dirt."

That affair did not last very long, for they all started competing, and you could see 'busses driving along the whole day, racing one another in the streets of Troyeville; and then the fellow gave it up as a bad job. Du Preez had to wait for months before he could get another 'bus. At last one of the old bosses gave him another chance, because he was a hand short, and so he got in again.

Du Preez has a habit of speaking very deliberately, and as he hails from Paarl, he has the Paarl accent, substituting a guttural "g" for an "r". He will tell you all about the dr-r-r-eadful str r ruggle for existence, but you will hardly ever get a word

out of him, and few people address him at all. Oom Hennie says that he don't want to talk to people o' that kidney.

Gert Steyn, the other driver, is a different kind of a man altogether. He is forever complaining. If you ask him how things are going, he will reply:

"What shall I say! There's naught but trouble. As soon as the child's got better, the wife's ill, and when the wife's about again, business is sure to be off. What's a man goin' to do?"

That's always his way. When his 'bus is full-up, he will tell you: "Yes, but yesterday I'd an awful bad day," and if you suggest that the fact makes no difference to his pay, he replies "Yes, I know, but it's a very sorry state of affairs for all that." "Ay," he will exclaim, with a sigh, "I'm too unlucky for words, people are always bothering me." And when you ask him how that is, he goes on:

"Look here, now, yesterday a fellow comes up with a small bag o' potatoes and a box o' candles and them things in front, and puts 'is little boy into the 'bus. When we gets to the stand, and I asks 'im for sixpence, he says I must be crazy. I get the poorest 'orses an' the rottenest busses. But what's the good o' grousin'?"

The other day I had a chat with Hans about all these things, and I said: "It seems to me Steyn's

a bit unlucky." But Hans answered: "That's all bosh. You know, sir, a 'bus-driver is a man who has to look out for business just as much as any other fellow. It don't help, your sittin' on the box, asleep all the time, just like a tame baboon who can hold the reins. You must watch and keep your weather-eye open. When I'm driving, an' I sees a gent standing by the roadside, I pulls up a trifle, an' I calls out 'Yes, sir, Troyeville, sir,' or 'Jo'burg, sir?' Many a time he never intended taking a 'bus but he may get in, and then I've got hold of him. Or it may be that I pulls up straight in front of a lot of girls with a 'Yes, Madam, here you are for Jo'burg, Madam.' And they had better do as I tell 'em to. When the tram passes us, they say 'We ought to have taken the tram,' but I laughs to meself, sayin' 'Ay, but you're in my old 'bus now, and you'll have to pay up.' That's the way to drive a 'bus. You must keep a lookout, and not go to sleep."

And in case there are any among you, who read this, who would like to ask: "Why does he take so much notice of 'bus-drivers?" I'll tell you. Most of them are a decent sort, whom we see every day but do not often give a thought to. Have you any idea what it means to have to live on £2

a week, and to be on the box from 7 a.m. till 10 p.m.? To feed and clothe a wife and children, and send the little ones to school, and have them always looking respectable? Last week I got up alongside one of them. As a rule he is talkative, but that day he was very quiet. "What's the matter?" I asked. "Sir," he replied, "I buried my little daughter this morning, and you will understand how I feel."

I was very sorry for him, and he told me how he had loved the child. After a while, I asked him why he hadn't taken a day off. He had been off duty in the morning, he answered, but he preferred to drive for the rest of the day, because at any rate that kept the kettle boiling, and it made him forget his troubles.

Remember, when you see a 'bus-driver, that he, too, is a human being; that, when all is well and he is not out of work, he has to take you and me for a very small wage, and when the Johannesburg dust blows about, keeping us inside, he has to be at his post just the same, being obliged sometimes to hunt for a tickey's worth of change, his handkerchief kept before his mouth. When the rain comes down in torrents, he has to keep a look-out for the sake of your safety and mine, avoiding cabs and tramcars, his hands stuck through the

flap in front, and the rain beating his face. Whenever he makes a mistake it means he is out of pocket, and, with it all, he has to grin and look pleasant.

That's why I take notice of 'bus-drivers, and I hope that you who read this, when pulling out your tickey in an off-hand way to pay your driver, will not forget that that unassuming man is a fellow-mortal who does his duty with the rest of us, even though he be but a 'bus-driver.

TRAPPED.

Walking from the Johannesburg Market Square along the tram line, past the post office, you first of all pass a lot of fine building and shops that anyone might well go and have a look at. There are boot shops, and outfitters, and big hotels, and bars; and everything looks first-rate. But if you continue, you will notice the street getting worse and worse. The buildings on either side of you will suggest that you have got into another street altogether. And yet, that is not the case. You are still in Market Street. Iron shanties seem to prop up old hovels, built of stone, but now showing a desire to collapse. Foul, little lanes, leading on to dirty, vacant stands, where people have deposited their empty tins and rubbish generally, intersect the rows of tumble-down houses. You will see Coolies talking in front of their doors in long, white shirts. Many-coloured blankets are displayed outside the shops, and on the sidewalk yellow, tin trunks for the kaffir trade form a row. Raw natives can be fitted out here with second-hand clothes and boots by Russian Jews and Coolies.

Hereabouts money will buy anything; and everything is second-rate. You will find jewellers'

"shoppies," where you can get a watch for the modest sum of half-a-crown—on the instalment system. You pay two shillings weekly, until you have spent altogether £1.10.0 on an article which, as likely as not, has been stolen. Coats, jackets and frock-coats, as well as sundry wearing-apparel can be had here. You can get a shave from a coolie with a long, shabby shirt, and you can buy a whole handful of sweets for a tickey. Coolies who do carpentering and can mend your boots live here. You can have anything in the wide world done, for the second-hand stores are legion.

There are terrible, little dwelling-houses with miniature windows, and you wonder how a human being can live in a place like that. Occasionally you will notice a decent place, but most of them are unfit to live in. Walking about of a night, one does well to have a look round and be on one's guard, because the whole neighbourhood makes one think of thieves and rogues. The streets are badly lit, and, looking through the curtains and the chinks of the doors you will see Coolies and Chinamen lolling about on the merchandise they display outside in the daytime. Only the fruit shops are still doing business. In several of them fruit is sold by women who, during the day, follow other occupations.

It will be evident that the cross-streets in this neighbourhood are not exactly spick-and-span, and that millionaires do not hive hard by. The houses are small, grimy and brown with accumulated dust. The verandahs look grey with the tailings that have been blown on to them. Many a house is empty, with windows in which not a single pane has managed to survive. The doors are open, because there is no chance of letting the houses. Thieves, rascals, and people without a roof over their heads congregate there at night, under the cover of darkness. The police make themselves scarce, because they know that opportunities for receiving a knife-thrust or a blow with a sandbag abound.

Not lang ago a man by the name of Pieter Duvenhage lived in one of these cross-streets. He was a mason by trade, and had always been able to knock out a living for himself and his family. There was his son Jannie, a boy of fourteen, and his two little daughters, one five and the other three years old. His wife has been dead these two years and a half, and his eldest daughter got married soon after to a gent who worked on the City and Suburban. She had a son who was also called Pieter, of whom his grandfather, of course, was exceedingly proud.

Pieter Duvenhage had learnt his trade properly

after the war. When he was a farmer he had built his own house, however, and a substantial little house it was. But when the war was finished, Duvenhage was finished, too. His few head of cattle had been taken, his house destroyed. The small piece of ground he had to sell, so as to feed and clothe his family. On the advice of his brother-in-law he came to live in Johannesburg. They packed up all that was left, and went to town. Sixpence, the little Bushman, accompanied them. Duvenhage acquired the boy from his mother, when he was but eight years old, and he grew up with the elder children. They played together, fought together, shot clay out of tubes together and made toys of knuckle-bones together. Sixpence was an excruciatingly funny bit of a Bushman. He was an expert liar, and could laugh with the best of them, but he was very fond of the missus and the kids. Of Baas Pieter he was a little bit scared, because Baas had given him a good drubbing one day. The police found out about the existence of Sixpence when the family moved into town, and he had to be registered. There was a lot of trouble about the thing, but the boss got matters put straight, and Sixpence could stay on. After a while he asked for leave to attend Sunday school in the afternoon, and the missus saw no harm in it. Oom Pieter

didn't exactly like it, but he said nothing. Shortly afterwards, Sixpence came home with a little book, and by candle-light he would pore over his English "a-b, ab." He would study night after night, and twice a week he went to school with the kaffir clergyman. He was 'cute enough, and it was not long before he applied for a special pass. Very soon after that he had a talk to the missus about his wages. He considered that his valuable services would fetch more elsewhere, and when the woman told him that they had brought him up, always treating him well, he answered that he was quite aware of that, but that he was not a slave; the missus knew he would like to be obedient (for the cleggyman had taught him the virtue of obedience!) but it wasn't good enough, for all that. Ten bob a month wasn't wages; he was sixteen by now, and could make his £2 with other people.

Another three weeks and Sixpence was gone. It was no good trying to get him back. They owed him £1, and Duvenhage found work scarce.

Altogether, the history of Duvenhage's career as a worker in town was not a brilliant one. His wife sickened, and six months after she was dead. His married daughter looked after the baby a bit in the daytime, and the other children went to school. He tramped and tramped along the mines, asking

for a job—asking here and asking there, but everywhere in vain. From time to time he would get a small job, but in a few days, or at most in a week's time, he would be out of work again. His brother-in-law joined the unemployed, and was also without work for some considerable time. Things were beginning to look very black.

About two months ago, Oom Pieter left his house one morning with a very heavy heart indeed. His daughter had spoken to him about all her troubles, and had asked him for money. Her husband could not go on like that, she thought, providing for all the children. Pa had to "make a plan," Sannie said, because her husband was hard up as well. Pa said "Ay," and started his tramping about once more. He went along the street, and just as he was turning the corner he noticed a native brushing past him. When he looked a little more closely, he noticed that the native was dressed better than he himself was, sporting a starched collar, a fine jacket and trousers, and solid, tan boots. He had no sooner taken in these things than the native looked at him, too, saying:

"Morning, master."

Pieter looked at him in astonishment, for he had not noticed that this was Sixpence.

"My, gracious, Sixpence," he said, "is that you!

Why, you do look a toff! What are you doing now?"

"Boss," the boy said, "you mustn't call me Sixpence now. My new name is Johannes; they baptised me by that name when I was confirmed."

"I see," Duvenhage replied, moving away.

But all of a sudden the boy put his hand over his stomach, crying out "O, o, o." Duvenhage turned round, and there the boy was, looking as if he were suffering fearful torture. Oom Pieter was a compassionate soul, so he asked: "What's the matter wi' you?"

"O, my boss," the native said, groaning horribly, "I've got the cramps. O, when I get that, I'm mad with pain. O, my boss."

"But what can I do?" Oom Pieter asked.

"O, my boss, can't you get me a tot?" the boy answered, and he looked fit to drop with agony.

"No, my boy, I haven't any money, so what am I to do?"

Sixpence managed to sit down on the kerbstone, and groaned some more.

"Ach, my boss," he cried, "I've got money enough," and he produced two florins and a shilling-piece. "If boss will just buy a small bottle of dop for me, it will soon be over. O, do, my boss, do please buy me the dop."

Duvenhage had often heard about illicit liquor selling, but he took the prohibition to apply only to a regular, remunerative retail trade. And as he saw the poor creature in pain, he was reminded of the old days, when his late wife was very fond of the boy—and why shouldn't he help the poor fellow? The native kept up his groaning and moaning, and Petrus went into the bottle-store, buying a pint of liquor for four shillings. Passing it on to the boy, he returned the shilling change but Sixpence told him he could keep that for his trouble. At first he did not care to, but, thinking of his children, he fingered it once or twice. By this time the pain seemed to have grown less. Sixpence got up, and, walking stealthily alongside of him, asked him for a match when they got to the corner, because he wanted to light a cigarette. Oom Pieter had no matches, so the boy fetched some out himself, took a cigarette from a small box and began to smoke. The pain appeared to be considerably less. As soon as Sixpence started smoking, a man with a Panama hat aproached them from the cross-street, walked straight up to Oom Pieter, and told him he was his prisoner.

The poor man hardly knew what it all meant, and was almost scared to death. He was going to speak, but the other man told him to take care,

and to follow along to the charge office. The boy said nothing, but came on behind. At the charge office the marked shilling was produced, and Sixpence showed his pint-bottle.

The next morning Duvenhage was taken to court from the Fort, and the magistrate gave him "six months hard" for selling liquor to natives. He pleaded very hard, the poor fellow, and everybody could see he wasn't a rogue, but that didn't mend matters. The magistrate was a soft-spoken gentleman, and said he was very sorry, but he couldn't help it: that was the law!

Sannie refused to go and see her father. He had known all about what he was doing, she opined.

Pieter Duvenhage is a wreck of a man. His only consolation is that his conscience proclaims him an honest man still, and that his wife did not live to witness the disgrace. The eldest boy, who works in an office, says it is not his father they caught—it is one of the other Duvenhage's—no relation at all. Sannie and her husband went away to escape the disgrace. The two little daughters she gave to a poor woman who was sorry for them, a widow

who has to work hard for a living; but she says: "the Lord will provide for the little mites." She treats them as if they were her own children. You get a few genuine people about town occasionally.

Sixpence was elected a deacon in the native church, this last Sunday. He's a regular, good, religious boy—so they say.

THE MARKET.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen—if there are any of that class present—I will sell you a bike, a real bike, a good bike, in short a scorcher, a... shut up, you fool!"

The little, back bowler is suspended over his neck. The long hair covers the dirty, crumpled collar. From the sleeves of his shabby coat long, lean hands protrude, waving a red handkerchief as they swing about. Perspiration is pouring down his forehead. In vain, with vigorous jerks, he attempts to wipe it dry. From time to time he closes his eyes as a bright ray of sunshine is reflected from the polished rim of the bicycle, placed next to him or in front of him, on a table consisting of boards on trestles.

There is a momentary lull. A couple of loafers are his only real audience; the rest are scattered. Jamkowitz, "dealer in wholesale bicycles" as his business card proclaims, looks about him. No one notices the wry face he swiftly pulls, and he continues singing the praises of his best "Sunshine" bicycle. A young gent, not a "son of the cold, western shores" either, stands diagonally behind

the two loafers; he calls out: "Rubbish! Who said rubbish?"

The salesman pushes his little hat yet a little further back, and gets quite excited. "Who said rubbish?" he repeats, and this has the effect of immediately drawing attention, for a few people come nearer.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he continues, now thoroughly disgusted, "I consider you a r e ladies and gentlemen. But not all of you; no, never! Ha, I see you, you little wretch. Don't go near him, don't please! He aint quite as clean as he ought to be. Did you have a wash this morning, eh? No money to buy soap, eh, what? Had no breakfast, had you? Come 'long, I'll give you a penny. Don't get too near, you dirty what-d'-yer-call-'em!"

The party thus apostrophised listens callously, but the audience increases and enjoys itself. The salesman's flow of words seems inexhaustible. He reflects on the pedigree of the offending person as if it dated back to a certain insect; his present exterior is described as being akin to that of a baboon, a word that evidently sends his hearers into transports of delight. In the midst of his harangue, which has by this time attracted quite a big crowd, the victim, under a storm of reproaches from the salesman, disappears.

"But now about business; look at this." The bicycles now "go off" as if they had been oiled, in more senses than one. At the rate of from £1.10.0 to £2 each, a whole quantity of them are disposed of.

After half an hour of this, things slacken off, and hardly any further sales are effected. Jamkowitz has a look round, and calls: "Sam, come along." The youth who, a while ago, roused so much sarcasm, approaches, and the salesman says: "Nu, 's geht gut. Du sollst mind der gescheft—werd ich nemmen er drink."

Oom Hansie, his market-bag in an empty condition under his arm as yet, stares at Sam. He pushes his old hat on one side, and strokes his tangled, grey beard. His stooping shoulders bend down still further as he presses the conveyer of produce between his knees, so as to be able to prospect the depths of his pocket for a few crumbs of tobacco with which to fill his well-worn little pipe. Dun clouds of smoke curl round his face as he fills his lean cheeks again and again, muttering "Goodness, gracious, me — goodness, gracious me," all the time.

Old Tante van Graan, passing by with her granddaughter, recognises Oom Hans and hears his ejaculations. "Goodness, neef Hans, what is it all

about? What's neef Hans doing this way?"

The old man, who is only just beginning to be a little less flabbergasted, is glad to meet his neighbour from 36th Street, Vrededorp.

"Ou niggie," he says, "either I've gone out o' my senses, or else this crowd has. That there little chap almost had a fight with the other Jew, but now he is taking his place. It beats me, that does!"

Tante van Graan is not quite so interested, and says she had better go and buy her things. This reminds Oom Hans of his domestic duties, and he leaves the domain of the bike in order to go and buy a pound of nails, mixed, and some "grub."

Just behind the firm of Jamkowitz there is an exhibition of new tools. Oom Hans knows it by this time. Those things are too dear for him. "Ven mister vants ter puy der second-'and stuff, mister must puy in the next place; I'm not just any sort of a fellow," the Jew had said to him. Oom Hans knows this, because in the days of old he used to hawk things about on the farms.

The scrap-iron departement is controlled by a lady of generous proportions. Her grimy face half-hidden by a huge kerchief, the watchful eyes nevertheless take in the smallest bit of a screw among her stock.

"Vat you vant," she shrieks at the would-be

buyer. "Dat nail? A pound? You vant der long or der short? It's a zixp'nce der lot."

The old man digs a coin out of the recesses of his worn-out waistcoat-pocket, and receives his purchase. Now for the "grub."

Along the wall of a neighbouring building is the commissariat department. Oom Hansie makes for the spot. Owing to the crush of buyers the whole family has to watch and sell. The old man is somewhat bashful, and comes to a halt at a short distance. He watches huge tins of jams and big hunks of cheese being disposed of. He languishes for the fleshpots, not of Egypt but of America, which are being handed over lavishly, and one of which has its contents exposed so as to convince the public that the commodity is first-class.

"You vill neffer get this pully-peef in de odder blaces," the salesman says, "an' vat apout der jam! an' no mistake abaht it."

The end of the matter is that, for the sum of ninepence, Oom Hansie becomes the purchaser of a large tin of corned beef, and an even larger tin of jam, carefully stowing them into his bag, amidst the blessings bestowed on him into the bargain. The man said, so Oom Hansie related afterwards: I hope you vill eat der stuff mit good health, and your children's children vill come and eat, and puy

mit me. This was a sure sign to Oom Hansie that the children of Israel were for all the world just like they were in the desert, because they were still extremely fond of showering benedictions on one.

But the old man has yet another commission. Opposite the tram terminus he has to buy a strap for his son-in-law in a coolie shop. It being Saturday, there is bustle in all directions. Carefully, he crosses the Market Square but he pauses awhile as he sees a wide circle of kaffirs, who have been joined by a few whites, surrounding a couple of musicians. It's a strange group. Two people are perched on an old packing-case: a blind man and a lame confrère. The blind virtuoso flourishes a violin which, for the moment, reposes on his head to enable him to show the tricks he can perform with this instrument. One hand works the fiddlestick. The lame partner strums incessantly on the strings of a monster guitar, repeating the same melody, but in a number of very free variations. A working-man starts a humming accompaniment: "O, why don't I die, my gal gives me the go-by." But further than that no one gets for the same tune holds the field uninterruptedly for a solid ten minutes, and the man turns round, disgusted, saying: "Seems to me the chap ain't goin' ter stop 'is whinin'." However, though the tune be monotonous, the

attitude of the musicians changeth. It is as if the poor blind man, whose sightless eyes appear to be fixed on one and the same spot, instinctively apportions time. Five minutes under his chin, another five on his head, and then, with a swing, the old fiddle finds a resting-place behind his back, and his crossed arms divide the labour between them. This evokes cries of admiration from the off-coloured audience, and Oom Hansie repeats his "Goodness gracious, me."

The guitar-player's thumb has all the while been scraping the strings. On one solitary occasion, perhaps, he examines the finger for a few seconds —may be to make sure it's still there—and then he continues operations. However, even this melody ceases. The lame man places his wooden leg on the ground. This is the public's cue for a sudden recollection of other, and more pressing, engagements. The old Oom pursues the even tenour of his way among rows of cows and horses, timidly giving a wide berth to mokes, whipped up to show off for the benefit of buyers or spectators.

Oom Hansie strikes off into President Street, out Fordsburg way. It is here that the "Forest-bull and the Lamb," Ishmael and Isaac, are to be seen swarming in all their fallen greatness. If the great Bard could have witnessed but for a moment how

the two nations "sprung from the loins of Abraham" live and die here, he would surely not have exclaimed: "And what is born of Abraham's loins shall become a king." Dirty coolies, with long, unwashed coats and brownish-red, high fezes with attenuated tassels; long-bearded, stately priests with gold-trimmed but equally dirty black coats; small-statured Indians, likewise wearing their fez and white shirt, wriggle along through the stream of dust-coloured humanity. Frowsy Poles, recent arrivals from Whitechapel, force their way, screaming, through the crowd, their wares carried on their stomachs before them, imperturbable in their salesmen's passion. At the top of the street you will find the wholesalers: Samuelson & Co., glassware and pottery; next door, Abdul Kasson whose speciality is vegetables. The filthiest slums are occupied by poor coolies, counting their stock of tomatoes at night, crouching among the baskets they carried on their heads the lifelong day. It is here you will see the poor white settling up on Friday afternoon with Alin Said Esquire, haggling about a few pence, which represent his meagre gain.

In the other big businesses poor Israelites buy their stock-in-trade from Mr. Hamburg, because he is styled great in the congregation, and from Mr.

Lewis, because his wares are a "farding" cheaper. But the old man walks on, until he reaches the Coolie market where, having bought his strap, he awaits the 'bus. Opposite, the pulse of Johannesburg trade is beating. Small chimneys puff out their short cloudlets of steam; huge, black smoke-stacks—high, iron tubes—belch forth trailing, murky volumes of smoke, as dense to the eye, sometimes, as dirty wool, but dissolving into beautiful plumes. Inside, thumping, groaning and roaring noices are heard. From those hollow canopies, rattling trams emerge, tinkling, circulating through every vein to the extremities of the vast body.

There is a certain amount of repose about the Coolie market. The numberless little booths are all guarded by their respective owners but the fussy activity of the Israelite is not here. Ishmael's movements are calmer, more dignified. Not his, the gesticulation that is to persuade a woolly-headed Shangaan that yonder multi-coloured kerchief will be an ornament to his loins; he will carry conviction to the mind of the savage, in either Shangaan or pidgin-English, that the fact is thus, and not otherwise. Each booth is a bazaar in itself, containing every variety of commodity, from bread to boots, not to mention the vanities of the earth, such as gold rings and diamond tie-pins.

Among all those stalls there is one that belongs to a Greek. The fat, old woman is busy rolling cigarettes. When business is slack she smokes them, at other times hiding them behind her ear. Along the pavement, young maidens from the East crouch, their wares displayed on their knees or in front of them, on the ground. It is worth while studying these daughters of Syria. A prophecy forces itself on our memory, and the swarthiness of the complexion disappears. What remains is the fine oval of the face, lit up by dark gazelle eyes. With a gesture, and in a lingo as incomprehensible to us as that of the dirty mine native, she does her best to sell him a small mirror. Grinning, he takes it up. We almost expect him to examine the back, ape-like, but he does not go quite so far. Evidently he considers his beauty but inadequately reflected by the mirror for, with a lazy movement, he passes it back. Before he can get away, however, the saleswoman has fetched out a many-hued brooch. A "*teekee*" is the purchase price of this ornament, which is removed from the hawker's basket into the big hole, bored by the native into his ear.

Suddenly there is a commotion along the row of vendors, for the multitude observe a guardian of the peace approaching, and they are not allowed to squat on the pavement. Word is sent down,

travelling like wildfire, and the whole lot make the pace in Indian file, their baskets on their backs, to the accompaniment of kaffir laughter. The flight, however, is but of short duration. Just round a block, and then back again, and the same position is taken up on the same spot.

The Johannesburg Market is worth studying. You can go and see for yourself the little I have told you here, and much more besides, because all that is wanted to delight the eye is a little sympathetic insight, a feeling for sadness and a sense of humour.

U. J. C.