

THE FRONTIER IN SOUTH AFRICAN

ENGLISH VERSE:

1820 - 1927.

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And who in time, knows whither we may vent
The treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores
This gain of our best glory shall be sent,
T'enrich unknowing Nations with our stores.

Misophilus, Daniel

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PREFACE.

Without many different kinds of help from many people this thesis would not have been written. I am grateful to them all and thank them sincerely.

To Professor Guy Butler, my director of studies, I owe my interest in South African literature. He has been most generous in his encouragement and inspiration ever since I first began this research in 1957.

I am indebted to the National Council for Social Research of the Department of Education Arts and Science for a grant which made it possible to visit the major African libraries in the Union during the past year. As a result I have been able to study a great deal of material to which I would not otherwise have had access.

I very much appreciate the help given me by the Librarians and staffs of the South African Public Library, Cape Town; The Durban Public Library; the Natal Societies Library, Pietermaritzburg; the University of the Witwatersrand; The Gubbins Library; The State Library, Pretoria and the Johannesburg Public Library: Strange Collection.

It is with particular gratitude that I recall the kindness of Dr. Killie Campbell, in whose library I spent an enjoyable week.

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I cannot express sufficiently my gratitude to my husband and parents; without their help I would not have finished this work.

INTRODUCTION.

"I have not found myself on Europe's maps,
A world of things, deep things I know endure
But not the context for my one perhaps.
I must go back with my five simple slaves
To soil still savage, in a sense still pure:
My levelless, shallow land of artless shapes
Where no ghosts glamourize the recent graves
And every thing in Space and Time just is:
What similes can flash across those gaps
Undramatized by sharp antithesis?"

GUY BUTLER, "Home Thoughts"

The concept of a distinctively South African poetry in English has been, and still is, derided as a "pipe-dream"; as part of the fallacy which stems from the desire for a "national" literature.

In 1955, for instance, C.J. Harvey (in an article containing much common sense as well as sound literary judgment) denounced the self-conscious hunting for "local colour" which engrosses so many South African writers. Harvey claimed:

"Our civilization is not "South African", except in trivial details; it is Western European, and more specifically as far as poetry written in English is concerned, English." (1)

There is a serious error of emphasis here. It would be more accurate to say that our ancestors brought Western European civilization to this continent. To imagine that this civilisation has not undergone and is not still constantly suffering a subtle but far-reaching metamorphosis in Africa would be to fly in the face of reality. White South Africans do not all carry the same identity-card but they can be distinguished from Frenchmen, Englishmen or Irishmen by more than "trivial details".

This thesis is an examination of some of the earliest English writing in southern Africa, particularly of the verse produced by our poetasters and near-poets. It

1. HARVEY, C.J.D. "'Local Colour' in South African Poetry", Theoria, vol. 7 (1955,)p. 93.

attempts, during the course of this examination, to call attention to a few of the more significant changes which have arisen as the result of the importation of Western civilisation to an African frontier. Further I hope to show some of the varying ways in which these differences affected the white pioneer and how this has been reflected in our verse since pioneering times. In this sense the Frontier may be thought of as the background against which South African English writers developed certain characteristic traits.

That this is a complex and controversial subject is undeniable. This study makes no claims to be comprehensive, neither does it assert that literature is passively conditioned by social change. The theory that

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness" (1)

is wholly untenable except to a purely Marxist critic. All that I shall hope to show is that the writer is seldom independent of his environment, of the cultural and social forces which surround him and that the writer on a Frontier finds himself in a society particularly inimical to the emergence of literature of any kind.

The literature of a country such as England is national, not simply because it is written in the language of Englishmen but because it is the concrete expression of the thoughts and experiences of English men and women who have shared a common culture, a common, if highly diversified civilisation. If we accept Eliot's definition of culture as a whole way of life⁽²⁾ then we must accept the fact that South Africans (whose way of life is not and never has been the same as an Englishman's life in England) may develop a "national" culture and perhaps - even in English - a "national" literature in the way that Americans have produced what most people now recognize is an American literature.

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1. MARX, Karl, Critique of Political Economy, Preface, Eng. trans., Stone; p.11 ff. Quoted in Culture and Society 1780 - 1950. Raymond Williams, 1958 p.266.
 2. ELIOT, T.S. "Culture..includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches, and the music of Elgar. Notes towards the Definition of Culture,"

Among the multifarious interacting factors which came into play when English speaking settlers arrived on this continent, one thing in particular has remained constant - the physical presence of Africa. Olive Schreiner wrote of the influence of a man's native land,

"It has shaped all his experiences; it has lain as the background to all his consciousness; it has modified his sensations and emotions." (1)

It is particularly in countries new to the European "where the white man's foot has never trod" that the disturbing effects of an unfamiliar landscape impinge themselves upon the consciousness of the colonist so that the actual earth upon which he treads will, in the end, contribute towards distinguishing him as a South African.

In literature it is not by any means merely a question of African instead of European subject matter (although it will, I hope, become apparent during the course of this enquiry that certain themes recur persistently in South African verse). Thematic differences are interesting; they colour but they do not create a distinctive literature.

A frontier is more than a physical barrier; more than a source of strange forms, new sights and sounds. The early colonists reveal, in their doggerel verse and in their prose, what the African frontier was to them, the ways in which they reacted against it, tried to ignore it or absorbed it, the manner in which it shaped their attitudes and, consequently, the effect which it had upon many of their descendants.

As well as discovering the Frontier, a process which took place at different times, at varying degrees of speed and intensity in different parts of the continent, the pioneers grew (some of them at any rate) to love the land, to love and understand Africa, to regard her as home. The extent of the English speaking settler's attachment to Africa is partly an individual matter, partly the result of social forces and of historical facts. English verse in this country is a kind of gauge of the growth of this identification with Africa, this weakening of what Poe

1. SCHREINER, Olive, Thoughts on South Africa. p.27

(speaking of American literature) called "the leading-strings of our British Grandmamma."

Incipient nationalism is another ingredient in the development of a distinctively South African English literature. In verse it does not imply innumerable rhymes on proteas and ox wagons, still less a crude expression of militant, self-conscious patriotism, but its existence does suggest the hope for a poetry written by men and women in South Africa possessing that

"subtle, sympathetic, subjective knowledge of a land and people...which is essential to the artist, and to the great leader of men. Without it no artist has ever greatly portrayed a land or a people, no great statesman or reformer has ever led or guided a nation or race."⁽¹⁾

Such insight and knowledge is linked with the sort of "nationalism" of which Walt Whitman was thinking when he prophesied the birth of the American poet...

"commensurate with his race: not cut off from the spiritual currents of other countries, but accepting them as contributions to his peculiar task."⁽²⁾

The early English immigrants to Africa were among the smallest of the groups who, during the 19th Century, transplanted their native language into a foreign soil. By 1900 English had become established as the lingua franca of an Empire of nearly three hundred and seventy million people. It could only be a matter of time before the literary and linguistic traditions inherited from England would become altered and modulated by the catalysis of these societies.

This did not happen overnight. It is such a slow, hesitant process that even to-day the study of Colonial-Commonwealth literature is barely respectable; it is not yet sufficiently apparent to the English speaking world that such a literature exists in a sense which distinguishes it as being specifically South African or Australian. There are those who maintain that little or no organic growth has taken place in the culture of the English speaking Dominions, that colonial writing (because it begins by being derivative) ends by becoming merely imitative. If it is more successful it is regarded as being solely "English"; as owing nothing (except perhaps theme) to the country of its origin. This point of view is nowhere else so strongly encountered as in the Commonwealth itself.

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1. SCHREINER, Olive, Thoughts on South Africa, p. 29.
 2. GORDON, George Stuart, summarizing Whitman's views in Anglo-American Literary Relations, p. 102.

Because of the prevalence of this belief - and because our literary Mecca is still London - neither scholars nor the general public show very much sustained interest in Dominion writing.

In South Africa, for instance, indigenous writing in English is often scarcely thought worth reviewing, let alone reading. Apart from University publications the Union has not been able to support a single journal devoted entirely to criticism and literature in English - indigenous or not. This lack of interest is high-lighted when it is left to an Afrikaans writer to exclaim,

"Hoekom die Engelse departemente nie waardiger teenoor ons Suid-Afrikaanse Engelse letterkunde staan nie, begryp ek nie..." (1.)

and to the University of Texas in the U.S.A. to produce a volume for its students entitled Readings in British Colonial Literature.⁽²⁾

In the past this contempt and disinterest was understandable. The first English speaking residents at the Cape relied upon the mail from "home" for their newspapers, their periodicals and their books; without question they accepted the fact of their dependence. The "Capers" lacked even the material facilities to enable them to compete with writers in the British Isles. The establishment of the first printing presses together with the publication of newspapers and journals, gave the colonists the opportunity to express themselves. When they wrote they were derivative, as the bulk of all early colonial writing is bound to be derivative. On the whole their work was evanescent; so much fatuous wish-wash beside the dynamic literature of England but it revealed, from the beginning, something of the conflict which arose between a newly imported civilisation and Africa where "The shade of Tchaka strides across the gloom".⁽³⁾

Circumstances were somewhat different for the Cape-Dutch. Land-hunger, the irksomeness of restraints imposed upon them (first by the Company, later by the British Government) as well as the compulsion to explore felt by frontiersmen, drove the Trek Boers away from the Peninsula. They wandered into a remote, barbaric world, isolated from civilizing influences. Instead of Dutch they spoke a rough dialect which developed

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1. OPPERMAN, D.J. "Roy Campbell en die Suid-Afrikaanse Poesie", Standpunte, no. 31. 1954. p. 14.
 2. JONES, Joseph, Readings in British Colonial Literature, University of Texas, 1957.
 3. CAMPBELL, Roy, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems p. 78.

so rapidly that, in the 1870s, a conscious movement was initiated campaigning for the recognition of the "Taal" as a literary language. The success of this movement, together with the encouragement which Afrikaans writers receive from their public, has often been in marked contrast to the apathetic attitude of their fellow-countrymen towards their local English writers.

Political pressures, combined with a deepening national consciousness (especially since the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 - 1902) were partly responsible for this rapid growth of an infant Afrikaans literature (a similarly conscious awakening occurred among French-Canadians). However an increasing cognizance of national identity should not be linked too closely with the emergence of a national literature; at least not in the narrow sense that demands of such a literature a fanatical adherence to patriotic flag waving.

It may be that the Afrikaner's closer identification of himself with Africa helped him (initially at any rate, before this advantage became outweighed by the dangers of an increasing cultural fission) to attach more importance to Afrikaans writing and to make more energetic efforts to maintain his writers than his English-speaking neighbour made on behalf of men like Pringle.

The difference between the two white language groups in the degree to which they adopted Africa might not have been so marked had history been diverted into other channels. At first the frontier on which Afrikaans and English-speaking colonists found themselves did more than anything else to weld them into one people - perhaps it has succeeded in doing so to a far greater extent than the present bitter divisions in South Africa suggest. However this gradual progress towards a sense of national entity, this groping towards a common culture which might be continually revitalised by the medley of races and languages in Africa, suffered what was almost a mortal blow in the cataclysm of the 1899 War.

The tragedy of that conflict, particularly for the future unity of white South Africans, was nowhere more forcibly stated than in the writings of Olive Schreiner,

but her prophecy that the war would sever the close connections between English-speaking South Africans and England did not come true. The struggle embittered the Afrikaner people, it was fuel to their isolationist tendencies, crystallizing the belief that they were a chosen race. On the other hand it left the English-speaking South African in a permanent dilemma. Cut off from complete sympathy with the Afrikaner by conflicting memories and legends of that war, he was torn between loyalty to the motherland and love for the reality of Africa. This clash of loyalties frequently finds expression in South African verse.

It is the more remarkable that Roy Campbell, the first South African to deserve the title of poet, should have sprung from the English group and that he should, in the opinion of some critics, have exercised a profound influence upon Afrikaans writers.^(1.)

Although it is not impossible that a literary genius should have landed in Africa with the first pioneers, it was not likely that a poet of the stature of Roy Campbell should emerge while the most urgent needs of the white community were not books but guns. Pringle could not have written The Flaming Terrapin, not only because he had neither the talent nor the inclination to do so, but because there had not yet been time for the growth of a distinctive milieu, a characteristic mingling of the Frontier with western civilisation.

C.S. Lewis has pointed out the all too obvious dangers of connecting the writer too closely with his surroundings:

"...ideas have an effect on literature which can be traced, often with great probability, and sometimes with certainty. When we turn to social, political, and economic conditions, we are in a very different situation. No-one doubts that these things affect a man's writing at least as much as his ideas can do, but the influence is very much harder to identify."⁽²⁾

Lewis himself hazards such an identification when writing of Elizabethan poetry.⁽³⁾ Examples of the interactions between a writer and his society can easily be multiplied.

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1. OPPERMAN, D.J. Digtors van Dertig, p. 43. "Tog gaan daar van Roy Campbell 'n duidelike impuls uit op Dertig. Trouens, hy is meer as enige Afrikaanse digter die duidelike voorloper van Dertig."
 2. LEWIS, C.S. English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.56.
 3. Ibid, p. 59.

Shakespeare transcends his age, yet he is also of it; "Marx cannot account for Milton" as Bonamy Dobrée has remarked, yet it would be absurd to pretend that Puritanism has not left an imprint upon Paradise Lost. It is a fairly obvious truth that the way people live, the social and economic structure of their society, the degree to which they are in contact with or are isolated from other groups - in fact the entirety of their environment, to some extent determines both what they write and the way in which it is written. The formative effects of a Frontier upon writers and upon the almost imperceptible growth of a native literature in an area of English colonization are elusive; they are implicit rather than clearly expressed, latent until they find a voice.

A frontier may be defined as "a border of settled country" or as the boundary of a country beyond which life is less controlled, more dangerous, tougher, open perhaps to greater possibilities both for good and for evil than may exist within the limits of long-established settlement. The 19th century saw the expansion of many such frontiers. In America the frontiersman rode steadily westwards; in Europe Russia extended her territories towards central Asia; in New Zealand, Canada and Australia pioneers forded rivers, crossed waterless wastes, hacked down scrub and forests and built their log cabins in solitary places as they waited for civilization to catch up with them. In Africa, particularly after the Berlin Conference of 1885, the epic development of the continent began to gather that terrifying force and momentum which is threatening (less than a century later) to engulf not only frontiers but also much that should be of enduring value.

Of all those nineteenth century borderlands one which has so far (with certain very notable exceptions) been somewhat overlooked by scholars, is the South African Frontier. Ever since 1652 when the Dutch East India Company built a trading post

"Where Adamastor from his marble halls
Threatens the sons of Lusus as of old". (1)

this frontier has expanded steadily away from Table Bay towards the interior of the continent. The Company vainly attempted to confine its more adventurous subjects. By the time of the first British Occupation in 1795 the outlying

1. CAMPBELL, Roy, "Rounding the Cape", Collected Poems, p.27

districts, particularly towards the north east where the natural barriers to expansion were less formidable were already beyond the control of the central government. The early history of the second British Occupation was to a great extent the history of the attempt to enforce a rule of law on the boundaries of the colony, especially near the Fish River on what came to be known as the Eastern Frontier. In 1820 five thousand British immigrants were dumped⁽¹⁾ along this inhospitable border to form what the British Government fondly hoped would be a living barrier against Kaffir incursions.

The southward pressure of the African tribes across the shifting colonial boundary in the area of the Eastern Cape grasslands eventually diverted the white frontiersman northwards once again. This pilgrimage of Cape Dutch pioneers - the Great Trek - was

"an acceleration of a process which had been going on as long as men could remember: the steady drift of Europeans and half-castes out beyond the proclaimed frontiers of the Colony." (2)

The trekkers threw the frontier wide open as far northwards as the Limpopo River. In time this led to the discovery of gold and diamonds, to the advent of industrialisation which challenged the Frontier and aggravated the conflicts already present in South African society. British influence both preceded and followed the trekkers until eventually, driven forward by the dreams of men like Rhodes, it was carried by the pioneering columns into the territory of the Mashonas - into the Rhodesias.

The Frontier then has been with us in Southern Africa since Van Riebeeck put his foot upon Cape soil. It is a frontier which is, perhaps, still with us, physically in Northern Rhodesia and, more intangibly but none the less powerfully, in many of our beliefs and attitudes, in what one might be tempted to call the South African Mind.

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1. "It is not easy", writes the Rev. William Shaw, "to describe our feelings at the moment when we arrived. Our Dutch wagon driver intimating that we had at length reached our proper location, we took our boxes out of the wagon, and placed them on the ground; he bade us good day, cracked his whip, and drove away, leaving us to our reflections. My wife sat down on one box and I on another. The beautiful blue sky was above us, and the green grass beneath our feet." Quoted in Assegai over the Hills, F.C. Metrowich, p. 59.
 2. WALKER, Eric A. A History of Southern Africa, (1956) p.196.

In tracing something of the nature and extent of the influence of this Frontier upon certain South African English writers, upon versifiers and poets in particular, specific attention has been paid to the original Frontier group. The degree of their cultural vitality as well as the extent of their isolation from their parent civilization would radically affect the society which they helped to inaugurate. Ancestor worship is not an enlightened devotion; it would be pointless to expend energy exhuming the still-born literary infants of our past merely to establish the fact that they never lived. What the settlers wrote, together with most of the verse and prose published in or about Southern Africa from Pringle to Campbell, was not literature as the Oxford dictionary understands the word; that is it was not writing whose "value lies in beauty of form or emotional effect".

Early colonial writing possesses several other kinds of value. To the historian, for instance, it may be valuable as a record of human affairs but the literary critic sees also in such writing the first attempts in the necessary process of digesting into words unfamiliar objects, places, people and ideas. The colonist was confronted with the problem of living in Africa but writing in a language whose history and associations are totally alien to this continent. More talent would have helped Pringle to picture his frontier more vividly for us, but it would not have relieved him of the necessity of explaining "Karoo" and "kudu" "Anakosa" and "Coranna" to his readers. It was not the fault of colonial poetasters that the Kat and the Fish, unlike the Thames, roused no echoes in the mind, or that time would have to pass before such names as "Roy Kloor" and "Tristan da Cunha" could gather to themselves evocative power. Foreign words, new themes, different attitudes of mind had to be introduced to English by many scribblers and minor versifiers before Campbell could demand, "A lyre of savage thunder" to accompany his singing.

In attempting to assess the effects of a frontier background upon the emergence of a distinctively South African literature one of the greatest difficulties has been the question of selection in a field so wide, with a crop so stunted and diverse. Wherever possible emphasis

has been placed upon the study of narrative verse. The reasons for this choice were first, that the conditions of pioneering and colonial life would appear (theoretically at any rate) to afford the greatest opportunities to the balladist and to the narrative writer. Secondly, the long, markedly derivative period in our literary history was brought to an end with the publication of a narrative poem, Roy Campbell's The Flaming Terrapin.

This Natal youth's version of the ancient story of Creation is the annunciation to South Africans that they too may produce poetry in English. The poem reflects, among other things, that its author was a man reared in a society where the frontier - although rapidly receding - was still, mentally and physically, an inescapable factor.

Campbell's companion in arms, the young poet and novelist, William Plomer, was among the first to lead the attack against the kraal mentality which was sapping the literary and cultural growth of the community. Since these two men began writing strength and vigour ^{have} ~~has~~ been instilled into what had been a predominantly flaccid literature. Today, especially in the field of the novel, we are enjoying a period of productivity which is promising, not only for the future of English South African literature but for its development in the Commonwealth countries as a whole. There are more people nowadays speaking some form of non-standard English outside England than ever before. This opens up great possibilities for literature in English. New themes will be presented, fresh styles and experimental modes of expression (already perceptible in the work of some young West African writers) will be introduced. An expanding Commonwealth literature should lead to a continual reinvigoration of established literary genre.

This study has necessitated the examination of much worthless material; worthless that is from the point of view of literary merit. This was inevitable for the English literature of this country must have its beginnings somewhere. Its roots are deep down with "the first verse sung, the first line written in a Germanic tongue in the country now called England" - but its beginnings in Southern Africa are with the neglected volumes of Pringle,

the dusty files of the first Cape journals, the rare books which interest only the collector of Africana. It is possible to learn more of that will-o'-the-wisp "the spirit of an age" from reading its newspapers and its minor versifiers than it is by restricting oneself solely to its great poets. In any case during the first hundred years of English writing on this continent South Africans produced no poet of any stature; neither would it be reasonable to have expected them among so small and insecure a group; a group moreover who betrayed so very tentatively any sense of commitment to Africa.

"It is an individual voice, not a family profile or national trait, which makes a poet" as Guy Butler has said but that individual must have roots, as our first South African poet, Roy Campbell, had roots - in the Natal and Rhodesia of his memorable boyhood. This work is an attempt to examine the frontier soil in which they had grown from the time of the 1820 Settlers to the publication of the early work of Campbell and Plover; to determine what, if any, distinctive characteristics stamp the writing of this period as being the product of a different cultural and social environment from that of England and, finally, to make some slight assessment of the value and importance of the early writers in the history of South African English literature.

CHAPTER 1.

THOMAS PRINGLE.

"Honour to Pioneers That Broke Sod That Men to Come Might Live."

Inscription on State Capitol Building, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Nobody would have been more astonished than Pringle could he have foreseen that in 1959 a University in "Kaffirland" would open a students' residence called "Thomas Pringle House". That this frail young Scotsman should have speculated upon the future as the brig 'Brilliant' entered Simon's Bay in April, 1820 (after a voyage from England lasting seventy-five days) is a natural assumption. His responsibilities were heavy; in the absence of a brother who had been unable to wind up his affairs in time, Thomas found himself the temporary leader of a party of twenty-four Scots immigrants (among them six women and six children).

The cast of Pringle's mind was serious; his decision to emigrate had not been taken lightly:

Nor wild Romance nor Pride allured me here:
Duty and Destiny with equal voice
Constrained my steps: (1)

His first aim was to unite his father's scattered family by helping to establish them in what he called "rural independence". The Cape offered fresh hope to those affected by the depression in Great Britain at the end of the Napoleonic wars. (2) Pringle explains:

"My father had been a Roxburghshire farmer of the most respectable class and all his sons (five in number) had been bred to the same profession, except myself. The change of times, however, and the loss of capital, had completely overclouded their prospects in our native country". (3)

It was largely owing to Pringle's vision and courage that these colonists found themselves on their way to a mountainous district on the Eastern Cape Frontier. The story of this settlement is best told by Pringle himself for he remained in charge until July, 1822, when his elder brother arrived and took

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1. PRINGLE "The Emigrant's Cabin", African Sketches, p.41.
 2. "Agriculturists had to face a severe crisis caused by a rapid fall in prices without a corresponding reduction in rent, and by a series of bad harvests." EDWARDS, The 1820 Settlers in South Africa, p.25.
 3. PRINGLE, "Narrative of a Residence in South Africa", African Sketches, p.119.

over from him the frontier farm, "Eildon". By then:

"The first difficulties had been surmounted; the severest privations were past. A crop, though a somewhat scanty one, of wheat and barley, had been reaped. The gardens were well stocked with vegetables. The flocks and herds were considerable in number, and gradually increasing. The necessaries of life were secured; comforts and conveniences were slowly accumulating. The several families had all obtained Hottentot servants; and, being now familiarized to the country and its various inhabitants, (1) had begun to feel quite at home on their respective farms."

The sod had been broken; another group of English-speaking settlers had been planted as a living bulwark against the Amatambu and Amakosa tribes. Pringle was free to journey to Cape Town with his wife, where a modest post as Sub-librarian of the South African Public Library awaited him. His salary was to be something less than £75 a year but he had no intention of starving on this pittance while other opportunities afforded him scope for his abilities. (2)

Pringle's second object in emigrating had been to secure an appointment for himself in the Cape Colony's civil service. In the autumn of 1819 he had written explaining his aims to Sir Walter Scott who had used his influence to get the Pringle party selected from among the many thousands of applicants for government aid to settle in southern Africa. In 1834, when his African Sketches were published, Pringle publically thanked the novelist in a dedicatory sonnet:

From deserts wild and many a pathless wood
Of savage climes where I have wandered long,
Whose hills and streams are yet ungraced by song,
I bring, illustrious friend, this garland rude:
The offering, though uncouth, in kindly mood
Thou wilt regard, if haply there should be,
'Mong meaner things, the flower simplicity,
Fresh from coy nature's virgin solitude.
Accept this frail memorial, honoured Scott,
Of favoured intercourse in former day -
Of words of kindness I have ne'er forgot -
Of acts of friendship I can ne'er repay:
For I have found (and wherefore say it not?)
The minstrel's heart as noble as his lay. (3)

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1. PRINGLE, "Narrative of a Residence in South Africa", African Sketches, p.289.
 2. Pringle wrote to Scott, telling him of his appointment; giving an account of his expenses in Cape Town and his efforts to secure the additional post of "Superintendent of the Govt. Press." See "Thomas Pringle and Sir Walter Scott", Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, vol.6, No.4, June 1952. pp.109 - 118.
 3. PRINGLE, "To Sir Walter Scott", African Sketches. According to Leitch Ritchie, his biographer, Pringle first caught Scott's interest in 1816 as "the author of a piece in the "Poetic Mirror," which was much praised by Scott, and which was the origin of his acquaintance with that great and good man." Memoirs of Thomas Pringle, The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle, 1837, p. XXXI.

That Africa was, as yet, ungraced by English song was an obvious enough fact. Pringle recognised this, he was aware of his opportunities, aware of the untapped literary resources of the Frontier. Unlike some of the versifiers of a later colonial era Pringle realised that unfamiliar subjects would attract his attention:

Sweet Teviot, fare thee well! Less gentle themes (1)
Far distant call me from thy pastoral dale.

He did not waste his time bewailing his exile but made a genuine attempt to transform his new experiences into poetry. His efforts may seem insignificant to us now but as a pioneering achievement they remained for a long time unequalled. Years later, there was still a melancholy truth in Kipling's sneer:

"As to South African verse, it's a case of there's Pringle and there's Pringle, and after that one must hunt the local (2) papers."

Thomas Pringle was born in 1789 at Blaklaw, near Kelso. He spent his boyhood in Teviotdale (Scott's Border country) where, as well as gardening, fishing and carpentering (interests which were to prove useful later) he showed an early love of reading. If Pringle had been physically stronger he might have turned farmer. His literary leanings and meditative habit of mind, as well as his sensitive awareness of the sufferings of others, were probably not unconnected with the fact that he had been lamed for life when only a few months old. (3)

1789 was also the year in which the States-General assembled at Versailles. It had been increasingly evident, ever since the middle of the 18th century that there were momentous intellectual currents vitalising European society. It was the dawn of an epoch;

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1. PRINGLE, "The Emigrants, Introductory Stanzas", The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle, 1837, p. 99.
 2. KIPLING, Rudyard, Quoted in Cambridge History of English Literature, vol. XIV, p.373. Kipling continued: "There is also, of course, F.W. Reitz's Africaanse Gedigte, songs and parodies in the Taal, which are very characteristic."
 3. "It is said that I was a remarkably healthy infant; but when I was only a few months old, I met with an accident in the nurse's arms, by which my right limb was dislocated at the hip-joint. The nurse, unfortunately, concealed the incident at the time; and though it was speedily discovered, that something was wrong with the limb, and I was carried to Kelso for medical advice, the nature of the injury was not ascertained until a very considerable period had elapsed, and it was no longer practicable to reduce the dislocation. I was thus rendered lame for life." PRINGLE, The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle, 1837, p.XIII.

the burgeoning Liberal and Romantic Movement coincided with many complex and interdependent events. In Great Britain the rapid increase in the population since about 1750 and the application of scientific discoveries to industry and agriculture were among the factors responsible for the fever of emigration which gripped the islanders. The writings of the "French Enlightenment" and the successful rebellion of the colonists in North America added their contribution to the world in which Pringle matured.

The revival of "enthusiasm" together with the "rising tide of humanitarianism"⁽¹⁾ with its new attitude to suffering of all kinds, particularly to the suffering of animals, slaves, prisoners, primitive races and children, was a powerful factor in the emotional and spiritual growth of men like Pringle.⁽²⁾ Like many of his friends - Fairbairn and Dr. Philip for instance - this settler brought with him from Europe a liberal, humanitarian outlook which he endeavoured to impose upon a totally different society.⁽³⁾

The current European theory on the subject of the "noble savage" was not all that Pringle (born a year after Byron and only nine years old when The Lyrical Ballads were published) inherited from the growing Romantic tradition. Had he emigrated fifty years earlier Pringle might possibly have been less responsive than he was towards the landscapes which he encountered in the Karroo and in the uncultivated areas allocated to the immigrants. Before he set eyes on Africa he had most certainly read some of the latest English poetry of the period with its descriptions of mountainous scenery, often haunted by lonely heroic figures. Like Wordsworth (though not to the same degree) Pringle was, at times, sensitive to the attractions of a wild unpeopled countryside. In addition it is possible, as Guy Butler has pointed out, that "Pringle's own bleak Scot's background helped him to respond to the bleakness of the Eastern Cape".⁽⁴⁾

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1. GEORGE, England in Transition, p. 72.
 2. For a reference to humanitarianism as one of the motives for emigration to the Cape see EDWARDS, The 1820 Settlers in South Africa, p.55.
 3. Pringle's life bears witness to his beliefs and interests. His Narrative of a Residence in South Africa is packed with references to such questions as the position of the Hottentots in the Colony and to eulogies of the work undertaken by the missionaries. Almost the first thing Pringle did after landing at Algoa Bay was to visit the mission of Bethelsdorp.
 4. BUTLER, "South African Poetry", S.A.B.C. talk, No.2, p.1.

On that first morning in Simon's Bay he and his party went up on the poop and gazed at the lonely sands and treeless hills of False Bay.

"Heh, sirs!" exclaimed one of them, "but this is an ill-favoured and outlandish-looking country."

Pringle's reply was,

"Quite as fair a sample as Culloden Muir is of (1)
the Carse of Gowrie."

Later, during the journey eastwards, we find him commenting on the Cape's "magnificent mountain scenery", describing the coastline between George and Knysna as "Beautiful, but somewhat savage" with that "air of loneliness and dreary wildness, which a country unmarked by the traces of human industry or of human residence seldom fails to exhibit to the view of civilised man." (2)

This was a less Romantic, more typically 18th century reaction than that which Pringle expressed later in his best known poem "Afar in the Desert". In commenting on the dreariness and wildness of the view Pringle was thinking principally of mountain ranges and vast horizons as being remote from civilization. This was an attitude akin to that of the many 18th century poets who thought of nature in terms of rural retirement in a cultivated society. In "Afar in the Desert" Pringle reveals that the spaciousness

And the blank horizon, round and round
Spread - void of living sight or sound. (3)

have affected him differently; they are thought of not negatively but positively, they are a means of bringing man closer to God. (4)

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1. PRINGLE, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa, 1834, p.118.
 2. Ibid. p.123.
 3. Ibid., "Afar in the Desert", 1834, p.13.
 4. It is difficult to account for the widespread change of attitude in England during the second half of the 19th century towards certain types of landscape. As well as the influence of the Romantic writers the shift in values may, in part, have had something to do with the land enclosures and agricultural revolution of the previous century. At a time when large tracts of forests, heaths and commons - as well as the hillier and more remote parts of the island - were associated in men's minds with difficult and dangerous travelling conditions, with physical hardships, thieves, highwaymen and marsh fevers, uncultivated tracts had been called "filthy blotches on the face of the country." Better communications may have helped people to appreciate the beauties of wilder scenery.

"Afar in the Desert" first appeared in the second number of the South African Journal in 1824. It enjoyed, for a time, a considerable vogue, being frequently republished and quoted.⁽¹⁾ Pringle's African verses - the fruit of a little less than six years experience of this continent - appeared a few months before his death. They attracted a fair amount of attention in the literary world (largely on account of the appeal of their subject matter to his contemporaries).⁽²⁾ If the name Thomas Pringle has gathered to itself a little shadowy fame it is certainly time, as a South African critic has suggested "for the Pringle myth to be abandoned and to be replaced by a true appreciation of what he attempted and what he actually accomplished."⁽³⁾

A comprehensive study of all Pringle's writing is not intended here but an examination of a selection of his poetry should help to clarify the Scotsman's position in the history of South African English verse. Here was a man fresh from Edinburgh, from the world of party politics, Scott's novels, squabbling magazine editors and the Anti-Slavery Society. He had no intention of returning:

From native haunts and early friends exiled,
I tune no more the string for Scottish tale; (4)

He finds himself riding a pony or being bumped about on an ox-wagon across the African veld. What attracts his attention, what are his qualities as a writer and what are his particular literary problems? These are some of the questions which are relevant here.

Pringle was not simply a "liberal humanitarian" (a depressing tag which robs him of personality), he was also an intelligent, inquisitive man who showed a genuine, almost passionate interest in everything African. It is this lack of narrowness, of conscious prejudice, this attempt to examine and record, which

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1. See GREEN, 'Thomas Pringle's "Afar in the Desert"'. Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, vol.2, No.4. June 1948. pp.110-112, for an account of the numerous versions and editions.
 2. The Athenaeum wrote on Pringle's death "few men were richer in friends than Mr. Pringle. Among them might be enumerated most of the literary men of the day."
 3. MILLER & SERGEANT, A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English, p.23.
 4. PRINGLE, "Introductory Stanzas, "Afar in the Desert," 1831, p.1.

which makes his prose Narrative so fascinating. Pringle learnt more about the frontier districts in a couple of years than some of its old inhabitants can tell you to-day. He was eager to investigate everything: - the history of the Colony, its physical features, its birds, animals and vegetation; while the characteristics of Bushman, Hottentot, Khosa and Frontier Boer were the objects of his constant observation and speculation. This intense awareness of a foreign environment is reflected in his verse.⁽¹⁾ Pringle's desire to help create a civilized society in southern Africa was genuine. Had he not crossed the path of the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, he would probably never have left the Colony. As it was he made plans, just before his death at the age of forty-six, to return to occupy land near the farm which he had pioneered for his brother.

Some of Pringle's difficulties in wrestling with completely strange material, something of his probably unconscious struggle to describe things particularly African in a medium entirely European, may be detected in "Evening Rambles".⁽²⁾

These lines are dated from Glen-Lynden - the nostalgic name Pringle gave to the Scots settlement in one of the loneliest sections of the Cape frontier. The form which he chooses is in the tradition of the long line of descriptive poems of the kind which Johnson called "local poetry" and which he suggested originated in Denham's "Cooper's Hill" (1642).⁽³⁾ The genus includes such varied achievements as "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", Pope's "Windsor Forest", Dyer's "Grongar Hill" (a favourite with Wordsworth) and the latter's own "An Evening Walk" (1793).

1. As well as in the extensive footnotes which (in the manner of of the popular Samuel Rogers) he appended to them. For instance the lines:

Brilliant as the glancing plumes
Of sugar-birds among its blooms

from "Evening Rambles" are accompanied by an extensive footnote of which the following is only a part:

"The delicate humming-birds (Trochili) of South America", says Mr. Burchell, "are in Southern Africa represented by the Nectarinias, here called by the Dutch Colonists Suiker-vogels, (sugar-birds), from having been observed, at least in the neighbourhood of Cape Town, to feed principally on the honey of the flowers of the Suiker-bosch (Protea mellifera).
PRINGLE, African Sketches, p.510.

2. Ibid. p.21.

3. See DOUGHTY, Forgotten Lyrics of the 18th century, p. 118.

"Evening Rambles" may have been written on an African frontier but its attempt at "elegance" as well as its echoes of English pastoral poetry, places it among the verse of the Neo-classicists. Not that such a generalisation tells us much about the poem - neither does it exclude the Romantic element which is present - it is merely a very rough indication of the kind of literary "influences" Pringle had inherited.

"The sultry summer-noon is past"
so we are told. Pringle welcomes the advent of the "Mellow Evening" which, but for the reference to mimosa trees, turns out to be just such an evening as might be expected to arrive in a dozen poems of the Georgic school. The "low and languid Breeze" which is "fanning" the trees; the trees themselves which insist on perfuming "the panting gale" remind the "poet", not indeed of England but "Of primrose-tufts in Scottish dell."

Soon, however, Pringle's honesty, admitting the evidence of his senses, forces him to state that his reveries on "tender spring" and the inevitable "blithe lark" have little in common with the veld, the dense bush and the rocky krantzes of the Baviana's river valley. He applies himself to the difficult task of expressing in words what he actually sees so that in

Sterile mountains, rough and steep,
... ..
Heaving to the clear blue sky
Their ribs of granite,

we have an image much closer to reality. But Pringle can, - he had been in Africa barely two years - summon no sympathy for the mountains or for their bare, dry ridges "by the torrents worn". He hurries away from their forbidding savagery to the valley where he has persuaded himself that "The landscape hath a warmer glow;"

In the lines which follow there is a certain delicate charm which arises partly from the accuracy of the writer's observation:

There the spekboom spreads its bowers
Of light-green leaves and lilac flowers;
And the aloe rears her crimson crest,
Like stately queen for gala drest;
And the bright-blossomed bean-tree shakes
Its coral tufts above the brakes,
Brilliant as the glancing plumes
Of sugar-birds among its blooms,
With the deep-green verdure blending
In the stream of light descending.

The comparative vividness and colour of this description is dulled by a diction entirely unsuited to the scene. The spekboom is light-green and lilac, the bean-tree blossoms are

coral, "glancing" aptly suggests the sheen of the sun-bird's wings as it flashes past; but what is the reader to make of the word "bowers"? Its associations are hopelessly of another world; it recalls chivalrous knights paying their respects to fair women; it is reminiscent of such courtly lyrics as Thomas Campion's

Where she her sacred bower adorns
The rivers clearly flow;
The groves and meadows swell with flowers,
The winds all gently blow.

There is a similar jarring artifice and ineptitude about the noun "brakes", which has all the wrong associations. This is a pity for the "bright-blossomed bean-tree" is simply and clearly evoked; it would be refreshing to find it in the company of the crimson-crested aloe where it not for the fact that the image is dimmed by the unfortunate, "Like stately queen for gala drest". The queen is in an incongruous position; one cannot help suspecting her discomfort.

It was Pringle's misfortune that his limited talent was impeded by a derivative "poetic" diction so foreign to his themes; a diction which was already out of date in England. All through "Evening Rambles" it clouds the sharpness of his observation as he attempts to record his impressions. He was writing during a lull in the recurrent Kaffir "wars" and, for the moment, the details of plant, bird and animal life absorbed his attention. He watched the "loxia" the weaver-bird, suspending its perched nest above a stream to protect its young from marauders. He discovered that the "guana" or leguan prefers calm to running water; he had heard the purring of the night-jar and had climbed -lame leg and all - to the rocky outcrops:

Where the grim satyr-faced baboon
Sits gibbering to the rising moon,
Or chides with hoarse and angry cry
The herdsman as he wanders by.

Here the pictorial and the auditory image are fused to evoke a distinctively African scene. A rare achievement among such Neo-classical affections as:

But lo! the sun's descending car
Sinks o'er Mount-Dunion's peaks afar.

This sunset is the introduction to one of those frequent passages in which Pringle uses his verse as a vehicle for his

views on slavery and the savage.

In common with practically every descriptive piece of this type, the herds and flocks return at sunset from the pastures. Leading the procession is "The brown Herder with his flock" who passes the rock on which the poet is sitting. The sight provides Pringle with an opportunity of expressing his horror and disgust at the institution of slavery. The didactic picture is disappointingly vague. Just as we read that the herder is no shepherd "from Scottish fell", that he has "no flute...nor book, nor tale" to cheer him up, so this Hottentot has little concrete visible shape, little individual life or personality. Pringle is so emotionally conditioned by the force of his own feelings (emotions which led him ultimately to the post of Secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society) that he forgets everything except the assurance he feels that the herder:

...feels not hope's electric spark;
But, born the White Man's servile thrall,
Knows that he cannot lower fall.

The evangelical tone is intensified in the next stanza with the appearance of the "stout Neat-herd" who has a "bolder step and blither eye". In spite of the fact that he is a "poor heathen Bechuan" as well as "A naked, homeless exile" Pringle asserts dogmatically that the neat-herd

"Bears on his brow the port of man;"

all because he is not (technically at any rate) "debased by Slavery."

This somewhat naive little passage contains one of those rewarding flashes which, here and there, illuminate the drabness of Pringle's work. All of a sudden we see and hear the African as he shuffles along in the dust, whistling through his teeth at the cattle or "Humming low his tuneless song". Pringle is right; the herdboys' song is often "tuneless" to Western ears; a characteristically rhythmic but monotonous little melody.

The last section of "Evening Rambles" emphasizes again the derivative influences permeating Pringle's verse. Twilight poems in which (as every school child knows) the ploughman is plodding home and "all the air a solemn stillness holds" are a repetitive feature in the annals of English poetry.

Pringle writes:

Now, wizard-like, slow Twilight sails
With soundless wing adown the vales,

Immediately we remember (if we have read it) Wordsworth's early poem "An Evening Walk":

Now, while the solemn evening shadows sail, (1)
On red slow-waving pinions, down the vale:

Pringle has abandoned his pulpit, forgotten his heathen Bechuan. He is lost in a romantic world of stillness and shadow, wizardry and twilight - a world which Merlin would not have found strange. Pringle imagines the wizard, Twilight:

Waving with his shadowy rod
The owl and bat to come abroad,
With things that hate the garish sun,
To frolic now the day is done.

Africa and the harsh realities of the frontier fade still further as the fire-fly arrives in the damp "meadows":

Link-boy he of woodland green
To light fair Avon's Elfin Queen;

As suddenly as he had entered it Pringle leaves his dream of Midsummer nights with the delightful comment:

Here, I ween, more wont to shine
To light the thievish porcupine,
Plundering my melon-bed, -
Or villain lynx, whose stealthy tread
Rouses not the wakeful hound
As he creeps the folds around.

The frontiersman's twilight vision has dissolved; he hurries back to the settlement in fear of lion and adder, closing his poem on the conventional meditative note of its literary predecessors:

Thus, murmuring my thoughtful strain,
I seek our wattled cot again.

In the same year Pringle wrote "The Emigrant's Cabin," (2) doubly interesting as a picture of frontier life as he experienced it and as an exercise in the decorous, "good-taste school" of verse popularised by Samuel Rogers.

In 1798 Samuel Rogers, whose work Pringle was to read and admire, (3) wrote in the Preface to his "An Epistle to a friend" that every reader turns with pleasure to those passages in which poets tell us "how they lived and where they dwelt;...It is the design of this Epistle to illustrate the virtue of True Taste; and to show how little is required to secure, not only the comforts,

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1. WORDSWORTH, "An Evening Walk", The Poems of William Wordsworth, p.6.
 2. PRINGLE, "The Emigrant's Cabin", African Sketches, p.35.
 3. The "gay-humoured Captain Fox" mentioned in "The Emigrant's Cabin" later repaid Pringle's frontier hospitality by "seating me at his English fireside with Sir James Mackintosh and the poet Rogers. PRINGLE, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa, p.516. Pringle continues with quotations from Rogers' Poems.

but even the elegancies of life." (1)

This was not Burns' intention when he adopted the friendly letter in verse, making it

"into an instrument of wide compass, for the expression of insolent, button-holing colloquy, or stentorian abuse, (2) or of chaff, or of confidential gentle talk."

Pringle could not achieve such easy-going familiarity (his countryman's ribald tone probably appalled him). Unlike Burns he was over-conscious of his audience; incapable of dashing off the intimate, careless:

It's now twa month that I'm your debtor,
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter. (3)

It was not Burns, but the banker Rogers who provided the model for Pringle's epistle.

By 1820 Samuel Rogers had already begun to move in a distinguished circle; in time his famous breakfasts would be attended by most of the important literary and political figures of contemporary London. The Pleasures of Memory, which had first appeared in 1792, had gone through nineteen editions by 1816. It was regarded as a classic; no "cultivated" man's bookcase could be without a copy. It had, according to one of the innumerable eulogies which it collected, rendered literature an

"invaluable service by its purity of language and chasteness of tone - which immediately became the objects of improving (4) imitation and elevating rivalry."

"The Emigrant's Cabin", a rimed epistle in which Pringle imagines he is entertaining his friend Fairbairn beneath his favourite "umbra-tree" on the banks of the Bavarian's river is closely imitative of Rogers in form, diction and tone. (5) Roger's invocation:

Yet some good geni o'er my heart preside,
Oft the far friend, with secret spell, to guide; (6)

is echoed by Pringle:

I pictured you, sage Fairbairn at my side,
By some good Genie wafted cross the tide;

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1. ROGERS, Poems, p.74.
 2. ELTON, A Survey of English Literature 1780-1830. Vol.1. p.110.
 3. BURNS, "Third Epistle to J. Lapraik", The Poems of Robert Burns, p.100.
 4. Quoted in The Early Life of Samuel Rogers, CLAYDEN, p.238.
 5. Pringle claims to have coined the name "umbra". In 1957 this particular tree was still standing; its age having been estimated as at least 400 years. See RENNIE, John V.L. "The Site of Thomas Pringle's 'Emigrant's Cabin'", Africana Notes and News, June, 1957, Vol.12, No. 6. pp. 219-221.
 6. ROGERS, "An Epistle to a Friend", Poems by Samuel Rogers, (1814) p.85.

The banker's "hermit-cell" becomes the pioneer's "rustic cabin" where, surrounded by "grassy-meads" he sits with his favourite hound, old Yarrow, dreaming at his feet.

However, once we enter, with Fairbairn, the "beehive-cottage door" we realize that Pringle intends to describe the novel interior as graphically as he can. His eye is on the object: he delights in picturing the cool, clean hut floor (made from the mud of termites' nests) and the rough home-made furniture. There is an inventory of the hut's contents - a jointed stool, a leopard-skin couch, "A wicker cupboard, filled with flasks and jars", a pile of books and, in sharp antithesis, "hides of ferocious beasts that roam the waste".

Books were doubly precious to Pringle in his isolation; he was pathetically eager to assure his friend that, though remote from civilization he was not divorced from it. He emphasizes this when describing his neighbours - farmers, officers at the military outposts, the district Landdrost, occasional visitors such as:

the gay-humoured Captain Fox,
With whom I roamed 'mid Koonap's woods and rocks,
From Winterberg to Gola's savage grot,
Talking of Rogers, Campbell, Coleridge, Scott,
Of Fox and Mackintosh, Brougham, Canning, Grey;

The educated exile's longing for talk on "things and men" is apparent. However, Pringle makes the best of frontier life. This willingness to adapt himself to his environment is evident in his frequent use of Colonial words borrowed from Bushman, Hottentot, Bantu and Boer. Kranz makes its debut in English verse here. Pringle finds it necessary to italicize and explain:

Kranz, in colonial usage, signifies a steep cliff
or overhanging rock, such as the Bushmen often select
for depicting their rude sketches on."

The Hottentot girl, Vytjè Vaal, is addressed as the "Nut-brown Maiden"; a transformation which the Scotsman finds neither comic nor anomalous. Some markedly artificial dialogue towards the end of "The Emigrant's Cabin" introduces Powana, the Amatambu chief, who comes to "smoke the Pipe of Peace with Scottish men." Pringle seizes the opportunity to parade his smattering of the "Taal" in lines attributed to the Hottentot Shepherd:

Powana wagh'
Tot dat de Beas hem binnenshuis zal vraagh,' (1)

The value of these verses is in their accurate reporting of Frontier life at the time, especially of those domestic details of which there are so few records. The food and drink consumed by the settlers is given the careful attention which it might have received by a poetaster in the age of Pope.⁽²⁾ Roasted springbok is followed by a haunch of hartebeest, by pasuw, korhaan, guinea-fowl and pheasant. There is a familiar ring about his

Kid carbonadjes, à la Hottentot,
Broiled on a forked twig: (3)

but what descendant of Pringle today would boast of having "Caffer-stew" for lunch?

The second half of the epistle is used by Pringle to elaborate his aims in coming to Africa:

- I have my farm and garden, tools and pen;
My schemes for civilizing savage men;

All this tells us a good deal about the writer but it is very indifferent verse. The letter closes in the manner of Rogers with a salute to friendship; becoming increasingly stylised, derivative and dull. Relieved from the healthy necessity of recording scenes which Fairbairn had never seen, Pringle unconsciously drifts back into imitating the "poetry" of Taste

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1. PRINGLE, "P.S. It will take some little pains to acquire a competent knowledge of the Dutch language; but that may be effected with moderate diligence during the voyage, and two months study and daily conversation in the country after arrival. I learnt to write and speak it tolerably well in a very few weeks - to acquire the language thoroughly of course requires time and attention."
Extract from letter dated from London, 16-2-1832, to Rev. Dr. Burns. Taken from the correspondence dealing with Pringle's efforts to secure a suitable schoolmaster for the settlers at Glen Lynden. (Microfilm, Pringle Correspondence, Cory Library.)
 2. "Perhaps never before or after have food and drink inspired so many poets." DOUGHIY, Forgotten Lyrics of the 18th Century, p.178.
 3. The word "carbonadjes" has an interesting history.
"How she long'd to eat Adders heads and Toads carbonado'd".
A Winter's Tale, IV, v. 268.
The novelist, Mrs. Ward (See Chapter 3) knew the word:
"Then what ample justice was done to the carbonatis (broiled mutton steaks), and the stewed buak.." Jasper Lyle, Vol.1, p.11.
The writer has heard the word Karnatjies (sp?) used by English speaking farmers in the Bedford district (in the area of the original Glen-Lynden settlement) to mean "presents of meat or sausages sent to neighbours after a kill", presumably to be cooked at a brasivleis.

and Culture still widely current in England. (1)

So far the lack-lustre literary tradition which Pringle imported has been seen to be almost entirely enervating - tending to drop a semantic curtain between him and Africa. It has been suggested that his best work was produced "When the influence of Wordsworth's ideas began to take effect", and further that it would be "an enlightening task to group his poems into two categories; those written before the acquaintance with Coleridge and those written afterwards". (2)

The evidence, both of Pringle's letters and of his later poems appears to support the thesis that he was favourably influenced by Wordsworth's theories on diction.

Any complete study of Pringle would necessitate further examination of the effect of the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads upon his verse. In 1820 Pringle had written a sonnet expressing his admiration of Wordsworth. (3) Nine years later he clarified his maturing poetic intentions in a letter:

I am not a little pleased that you like my 'Bechuana Boy' ...because it satisfies me that my aim to attain the simple language of truth and nature has not been entirely unsuccessful. Condensation and simplicity are now my great aims in any poetical attempts, for without these I am satisfied that nothing I may write will live - or deserve to live - and many of my early pieces are very deficient, especially in the former of these qualities". (4)

The italics are Pringle's own. Even a cursory reading of "The Bechuana Boy" (5) reveals at once a greater clarity, a simpler, less "poetic" language and a more sustained effort to present the

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1. Dr. Burney wrote of Samuel Rogers in his diary, 1st May, 1804: "he is a good poet, has a refined taste in all the arts, has a select library of the best editions of the best authors in all languages, has very fine pictures, very fine drawings, and the finest collection I ever saw of Etruscan vases; and moreover, he gives the best dinner to the best company of men of talents and genius I know; the best served, and with the best wines, liqueurs, etc...His books of prints of the greatest engravers from the greatest masters in History, architecture, and antiquities, are of the first class. His house in St. James's Place, looking into the Green Park, is deliciously situated and furnished with great taste." CLAYDEN, The Early Life of Samuel Rogers, p.449.
 2. MILLER & SERGEANT, A Survey of South African Poetry, pp.25-6.
 3. "Poets are Nature's Priests" PRINGLE, The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle, p.186.
 4. Ibid. This letter (quoted by Ritchie) dated London, Aug.29, 1829, goes on to give an account of the Bechuana Boy, together with some comments on the poem itself. p.cxlili.
 5. PRINGLE, "The Bechuana Boy", African Sketches, p.1. See accompanying note in the Narrative for an account of the factual basis of this poem.

narrative in an objective way.

I sat at noontide in my tent,
And looked across the Desert dun,
Beneath the cloudless firmament
Far gleaming in the sun,
When from the bosom of the waste
A swarthy Stripling came in haste,
With foot unshod and naked limb;
And a tame springbok followed him.

This is a very different Pringle from the author of The Autumnal Excursion (his first book of verse published just before he emigrated). We feel that it is a conscious change; he is deliberately trying to "pipe a simple song for thinking hearts."

Pringle attempts to depict the background to the story as vividly as he can. In spite of numerous cliches "the bosom of the waste", "vainly cried" and so on the writer has searched for more effective epithets as in "desolate Karroo" and "foul-beaked birds of prey." His evocation of the Orange River

Hoarse-roaring, dark, the broad Gareep
is an advance on the lines he had written in 1819 on the Africa of his imagination:

A land of climate fair and fertile soil
Teeming with milk and wine and waving corn,
Invites from far the venturesous Briton's toil. (1)

Experience of Africa (forcing him to look and examine) combined with the influence of the Romantic poets was having a simplifying, invigorating effect upon Pringle's verse.

In his effort to emphasize the pathos of the Bechuana Boy's situation Pringle (as he admits in his letter) made various additions to the details of his story:

I have not adhered strictly to his real story in every point, and have represented him as rather older than he was, and capable of more deep feeling and reflection than he appeared to possess when he first came under my charge, though not more than what he had attained before he died. The destruction of his tribe and kindred, and his being sold to a boor, etc., are all as he related; but the spring-bok, and his mode of joining us, are poetical licenses. His expression, when we took him into our waggon, "I am alone in the world," was, however, (2) strictly true.

This confirms the suggestion that Pringle was trying in some of his later verses to use the actual language of ordinary men. The boy's

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1. PRINGLE, "The Emigrants", The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle, p.112.
 2. Ibid, p. cxliv.

statement becomes:

Then let me serve thee, as thine own -
For I am in the world alone!

where the monosyllabic words echo his plaintive request.

"The Bechuana Boy" is marred by an excess of sentiment: the logical result of Pringle's views on what we would call "The racial question". His series of sonnets on the Hottentot, the Caffer, the Bushman, on Slavery and the work of the missions all testify to the extent which the "bitter cry of Africa's race" haunted his imagination.

"The Caffer Commando" (1) is perhaps the most striking example in early South African verse of a settler expressing views diametrically opposed to those held by the majority of the Frontiersmen.

For who cares for him, the poor Kosa, that wails
Where the smoke rises dim from yon desolate vales -
That wails for his little ones killed in the fray,
And his herds by the Colonist carried away?

Pringle could scarcely have asked a more awkward question or one better calculated to make him unpopular in the Colony. The ability (unusual in a Frontier society) to put himself imaginatively in the other man's place, led him to write verses which horrified his fellow colonists. The most notorious of these was "Makanna's Gathering" (2) with its ringing opening:

Wake! Anakósa, wake!
And arm yourselves for war.
As coming winds the forest shake,
I hear a sound from far:
.....

Fling your broad shields away -
Bootless against such foes;
But hand to hand we'll fight to-day,
And with their bayonets close.

Influenced by European beliefs in the nobility of man in a state of Nature, Pringle (in common with some early American writers who had idealized the Indian) wrote a series of poems depicting the savage leading an idyllic existence, undisturbed by the white man. These verses are more spontaneous and charming than most of the lines in which the philanthropist is over-conscious of his mission. At times Pringle could command a lyrical sweetness which almost succeeds in lifting him into the uncertain realms of a minor poet:

1. PRINGLE, "The Caffer Commando", African Sketches, p.58.
2. Ibid. p.52.

The crested adder honoureth me,
And yields at my command
His poison-bag, like the honey-bee,
When I seize him on the sand.
Yea, even the wasting locusts'-swarm,
Which mighty nations dread,
To me nor terror brings nor harm -
For I make of them my bread. (1)

In "The Kosa" (2) with its similar picture of pastoral delights, Pringle shows that he is alive to the music of local place-names:

The free-born Kosa still doth hold
The fields his fathers held of old;
With club and spear, in jocund ranks,
Still hunts the elk by Chumi's banks;
By Keisi's meads his herds are lowing;
On Debè's slopes his gardens glowing,
Where laughing maids at sunset roam,
To bear the juicy melons home:
And striplings from Kalumana's wood
Bring wild grapes and the pigeon's brood,
With fragrant hoard of honey-bee
Rifled from the hollow tree.

This is derivative enough but it has a limited appeal. It is when Pringle takes Scott as a model (his letters to him reveal the almost idolatrous admiration he had for the novelist) that the result is disastrous.⁽³⁾ In "The Forester of the Neutral Ground"⁽⁴⁾ a frontier Boer tells his story in terms of his "rude shieling", "purple gore" and his "courser's flank". The effect of this is to raise a series of incongruous and ridiculous images in the mind of the reader so that a good tale loses its edge while the opportunity of writing the first of a number of genuine Frontier ballads is not grasped. If ever language needed to be "scrubbed clean" it needed it here for the diction is so outworn, so entirely alien to the subject and so carelessly handled that one marvels at the writer's lack of sensitivity and discrimination.

1. PRINGLE, "Song of the Wild Bushman", African Sketches, p.15.

2. Ibid. p.18.

3. See bibliography for references to the extant correspondence between Pringle and Sir Walter Scott.

4. Op. cit. p. 85. Cf. "The Lion Hunt", African Sketches, p.28. This is also modelled on Scott but probably Pringle did not intend it to be taken seriously. He wrote in his Narrative: "The skin of this lion, after being rudely tanned by our Hottentots, was, together with the skull, transmitted to Sir Walter Scott, as a testimony of the author's regard; and these trophies have now the honour to form part of the ornaments of the lamented Poet's antique armoury at Abbotsford". p.261.

The echoes are too predominant, the diction is too similar to that of the model, and the poet, is continually fighting a losing battle to prevent his own thoughts being moulded and distorted and thrown out of context by the old. (1)

True enough, but the blame does not lie entirely with his models. Few men who aspired to the title of poet can have written worse lines than:

That instant a ball whizzed past my ear,
Which smote the beast in his fierce career;
And the turf was drenched with his purple gore,
As he fell at my feet with a bellowing roar.

After this ridiculous bombast "Afar in the Desert" (2) appears as quite a modest achievement. Here the bookish immigrant, a man considered too delicate to farm, rejoices in the pleasures of galloping across the Karroo. Perhaps the attraction of the theme was partly psychological - one is reminded of Robert Louis Stevenson solacing his confinement with dreams of sword fights upon the high seas or, when he was feeling stronger, playing soldiers in the loft. (3) Whatever the reason for it the poem is essentially romantic in its mood of despondency and depression, its

fond recollections of former years;
And shadows of things that have long since fled.

Like a Byronic hero this man (still in his early thirties) tells us that he is haunted by departed day-dreams, banished "visions of glory", and "attachments - by fate or by falsehood reft". Suffering from this fashionable melancholy he flies to the Desert, "afar from man!"

Whatever its literary ancestry these verses probably reflect a sincere, though transitory mood. In the letter in which he discusses the Bechuana Boy Pringle had remarked that his poems were generally "begun from accidental impulse rather than any distinct plan". The melancholy tone of "Afar in the Desert" may partially account for the well-known praise which Coleridge lavished upon it. Perhaps it touched him on a tender spot for he too was often,

Aweary of all that is under the sun.

In 1828 Coleridge wrote to Pringle:

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1. MILLER & SERGEANT, A survey of South African Poetry, p.25.
 2. PRINGLE, "Afar in the Desert", African Sketches, p. 9.
 3. Pringle seems to have enjoyed riding. According to Leitch Ritchie he had ridden since the age of five when he and his brothers, William and John, rode daily to school "all three, on one stout galloway".

It is some four or five Months ago since G.Thompson's Travels etc. on Southⁿ Africa (to which Pringle contributed) passing it's book-club course thro' our house, my eye by accident lighting on some verses, I much against my Wort was tempted to go on - and so I first became acquainted with your - Afar in the Desert. Tho' at that time so busy that I had not looked at any of the new Books, I was taken so completely possession of, that for some days I did little else but read and recite your poem, now to this group and now to that - and since that time have either written or caused to be written, at least half a dozen copies... The day before yesterday I sent a copy in my own hand to my Son, the Rev^d. Coleridge, or rather to his Bride, at Helston, Cornwall - and then discovered that it had been re-printed in the Athenaeum. With the omission of about four or at the utmost six lines I do not hesitate to declare it, among the two or three most perfect Lyric Poems in our Language. Praecipitandus est liber Spiritus, says Petronius: and you have thoroughly fulfilled the prescript.

(1)

This is an extraordinary eulogy. It can be explained by the friendship between the two men, by the common interest which they shared in the abolition of slavery and by the fascination which the accounts of travellers had for Coleridge.

(2)

The popularity of "Afar in the Desert" may puzzle us now but we forget the novelty of the descriptions at the time as well as its thematic appeal. There is nothing positively distasteful or discordant about these verses - it is a pleasant, memorable little poem but it does not merit inclusion among even the best thousand English lyrics, while its obvious weaknesses sum up Pringle's deficiencies as a poet.

He is far too easily satisfied with the time-worn word and the woolly image as in the line

When the wild turmoil of this wearisome life,
where "wearisome" may mean merely "annoying" and "turmoil" is far too washed out to achieve any effect. This insipid complaint is followed by the equally dreary

..scenes of oppression, corruption, and strife -

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1. Quoted in "Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Pringle", by Earl Leslie Griggs, Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, vol. 6, p.1. Dr. Griggs has pointed out that, by altering the punctuation, Leitch Ritchie somewhat distorted the meaning of what Coleridge had written. Cf. The poetical works of Thomas Pringle p.cxxii.
 2. See GRIGGS, op.cit.for an account of the extant letters between Coleridge and Pringle and a discussion of the friendship between the two men, which appears to have been one of "the greatest intimacy." Also WELLESK, René, A History of Modern Criticism, for some discussion of Coleridge's blind spots as a critic. "...the modern reader will again and again be disconcerted by evidence of amazing prudishness, bigotry and chauvinism." p.185.

where the abstract nouns impress upon us neither a sense of
the writer's personal heart-ache nor of

the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to.

Pringle has not the ability to present his depression as
a vital, personal reality. He moralizes and poses:

And I - a lone exile remembered of none -
My high aims abandoned, - my good acts undone, -
There is more than a hint of suspect rhetoric; too much
drawing-room elegance and too little of the drama of Hamlet's
cry, "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time?"

Pringle's handling of metre is common place; we get the
impression that the couplet masters him - not he it. His
rhymes are often forced and unimaginative; for instance the
reader cannot help suspecting that "the sufferer's tear,-"
has been inserted to rhyme with "the base man's fear,-". An
overfondness of the medial caesura causes his lines to see-saw
with monotonous regularity so that the recurring antithesis is
sensed as a matter of form and convention rather than as a
compelling need arising out of the thought. Unquestionably
Pringle was sincere enough, but obviously sincerity alone does
not make a poet. There is something drearily comic in a man
who can talk about his bosom "being full and his thoughts being
high."

This approach to "Afar in the Desert" is a little unfair for
there can be no question of taking Coleridge's praise seriously
while Pringle had captured something of the attraction of the
semi-desert Karroo Country. As he rides, alone with his silent
Bush-boy, as far away as possible from "the dwellings of men", he
finds himself

By the wild deer's haunt, by the buffalo's glen.
In spite of the distracting words (African buffaloes do not recline
in "glens") this first catalogue in English verse of the indigenous
animals of the continent suggests the beauty of that wild Africa
which was disappearing before the hunters' guns even in
Pringle's time. The poet deliberately contrasts the troubled
haunts of man with the peace of the wilderness. Most of the
verbs suggest an air of restfulness, of calm and placidity.
The oribi "plays", the kudu and eland "unhunted recline", the
elephant is browsing peacefully, while the rhinoceros and wild-ass

appear to be enjoying a picnic together. There is no suggestion (apart from the reminder of the "death-fraught firelock" which the poet carries; the only law which the wilderness recognizes) of savagery or of the primitive law of the jungle. Even the dense elephant country is robbed of any element of "tooth and claw" by the feminine image "the skirts of grey forests o'erhung with wild-vine."

It is scarcely possible to find a sharper contrast in South African English writing than that which exists between these first portraits and those animals which we meet a century later rolling splendidly out of the grim hold of the Ark to go

Kicking up the dust on the great, grey plains -
Tsessebe, Koodoo, Buffalo, Bongo,
With the fierce wind foaming in their manes. (1)

On the other hand we will have to sail through the doldrums of barren verse for many years before we again encounter anything as charming and (in its own humble way) as evocative as Pringle's account of the "brown Karroo".

He hears the whistling neigh of the timorous quagga and watches the "fleet-footed ostrich"

Where she and her mate have scooped their nest,
Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view
In the pathless depths of the parched Karroo.

Riding on towards the Kalahari, Pringle describes the desert in one of the most successful passages in all his verse:

Where the White Man's foot hath never passed,
And the quivered Coranna or Bechuan
Hath rarely crossed with his roving clan:
A region of emptiness, howling and drear,
Which Man hath abandoned from famine and fear;
Which the snake and the lizard inhabit alone,
With the twilight bat from the yawning stone;
Where grass, nor herb, nor shrub takes root,
Save poisonous thorns that pierce the foot;
And the bitter-melon, for food and drink,
Is the pilgrim's fare by the salt lake's brink:

He has learnt a great deal in technique and in objectivity since the "wanton mazes", the "green hills, gaily sprinkled o'er with sheep" of his pre-African writing. We should be grateful

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1. CAMPBELL, Roy, "The Flaming Terrapin, Collected Poems, p.88
 2. Pringle reveals his knowledge of the Karroo in the Narrative. It is, he maintains, "three hundred miles in length, by from seventy to eighty in breadth." He knows the names of its mountain ranges; the nature of its "argillaceous soil, largely impregnated with iron, upon a substratum of rock or gravel." He has examined its vegetation and knows, for example, that the "fig-marigold" as he calls it, belongs to the family mesembryanthemum. p.297.

to him for the satisfaction to be had from such verses as "Afar in the Desert"; for what Eliot, writing of the poetry of Johnson, has called "the minimal quality of poetry." (1)

Thomas Pringle died of tuberculosis in 1834 at the age of forty-six. (2) He had left the Cape because he would not submit to that Prince of Tories, Lord Charles Somerset who accused him of using "all his social influence to run that 'seminary of sedition', the Classical and Commercial Academy, where he and Fairbairn were supposed to teach 'the most disgusting principles of republicanism'". (3)

The principles which horrified the Governor had been the motive power in Pringle's life, driving him to organize the emigration of his relatives, to voice the grievances of the Albany settlers at a time when they seemed almost an abandoned community, (4) to become one of the chief protagonists in the colonists struggle for a free Press and to spend his last energies campaigning against Slavery.

The same spirit pervades his African verses. He regarded his writing as a means of spreading his gospel:

Adieu, ye lays to youthful fancy dear!
Let darker scenes a sterner verse inspire,
While I attune to strains that tyrants fear
The deeper murmurs of the British lyre, -
And from a holier altar ask the fire
To point the indignant line with heavenly Light,
... ..
That it oppression's cruel pride may blight,
By flashing TRUTH'S full blaze on deeds long hid in night! (5)

"To point the indignant line" this was Pringle's intention; an aim which conflicted with the main currents in the Frontier society in which he was writing. Humanitarianism was a healthy importation but in literature - as in life - it had its weaknesses. In Pringle's verse his didactic, moralizing tone frequently becomes too overt. The personalities of his Hottentots, Bushmen and Caffres are obscured in a cloud of theory and sentiment. Very often, though he is not aware of it, his attitude is patronizing.

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1. ELIOT, Selected Prose, p. 168.
 2. "While occupying Eildon, Thomas Pringle made application to the Government and subsequently obtained a grant of land for himself which was situated on the western boundary of Eildon. He called his grant 'Eiland's Kloof'...As a voyage was judged necessary for the recovery of his health, he resolved to combine this with his wish to become a settler, and had engaged a passage to the Cape, with his wife, and sister-in-law" when he died. PRINGLE, Eric, Pringles of the Valleys, pp.37, 53.
 3. WALKER, A History of Southern Africa, p.120.
 4. PRINGLE, Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa, 1824.
 5. PRINGLE, "Introductory Stanzas, 'The Emigrants'", The Poetical works of Thomas Pringle, p.99

Eager to "clothe the savage" Pringle did not realize that his efforts might be resented; neither did he imagine that the African might in some way transform what he had received.

Nevertheless his place as the pioneer of English verse in Africa is assured, and that not simply through an accident of time. Through his willingness to learn and to commit himself Pringle began the slow process of the "adoption" of Africa into English verse. He familiarized readers with strange words and foreign names while he did his best to describe both unfamiliar landscapes and their effect upon Western man. For nearly a century after Pringle scarcely a major theme is introduced into South African verse (with the exception of the advent of industrialization) which is not to be found in African Sketches. It is Pringle, far more than Slater who is, in Roy Campbell's words, "the forerunner and pioneer of us all". (1)

The intrinsic literary value of Pringle's writing is not high. His prose Narrative has been neglected, while a few of his lyrics possess a simple melody and charm but they are mainly of local interest and appeal. It was not, for Pringle, a question of imitating Wordsworth rather than Rogers or of using words unencumbered by irrelevant and distracting associations. His major difficulty was simpler than that - it was a lack of poetic genius to carry out a formidable task for which taste and talent were not enough.

1. CAMPBELL, Roy, "Preface", The Collected Poems of Francis Carey Slater, 1957, p.vii.

CHAPTER 2.

THE SETTLER.

"It is a strife
Between the black-skinned bandit and the white."

Thomas Pringle.

By 1820 Grahamstown, established eight years previously as the chief military post for the British troops on the Eastern Cape Frontier, had developed into a colonial trading centre of some importance. Soap and tobacco, aloes, hides and skins, ostrich feathers and ivory were being transported by ox-wagon to Port Elizabeth for shipment to Cape Town.⁽¹⁾ The wagons returned loaded with an assortment of merchandise ranging from beads to bullets, from pencils to parasols. Only seven years after Pringle had been carried through the surf at Algoa Bay, the population of Grahamstown had grown to an estimated three thousand people.

Among this heterogenous collection of all kinds and all colours were some who attempted to cater for the needs of a more sophisticated community. A contemporary traveller, Cowper Rose, found in the straggling settlement:

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1. "The development of coastal shipping, accompanied as it was by a reduction in freight rates, and the subsequent establishment of a harbor at Port Elizabeth, not only resulted in an increased exchange of goods between the frontier and the outside world, but also led to a further expansion of the frontier itself. For with the development of shipping, the eastern coast of the colony became a new and more advanced starting point than Capetown for new frontiers and for further expansion into the interior of Africa."
NEUMARK, *The South African Frontier*, p. 140.

...a circulating-library and a fashionable tailor, whose shopboard announces that he comes from the Quadrant. Piano-forte tuners, a seminary for young ladies, and an artist, who in England was employed to copy Varley's drawings, and who succeeded, by his own account, so well, as to have his copies always mistaken for the originals; but, alas! Africa affords no encouragement to art; he lives in a mud-hovel, hawks about his drawings in vain, and his pencil fails to keep him in Cape brandy." (1)

This library proved no more successful than the artist for the average settler had little time for reading. He was engrossed in more practical matters: hunting and ploughing, fears of rust in the wheat and Kaffirs among the cattle. Even the prosperous trader, builder or merchant had better things to occupy his mind than books. C.C. Wiles, describing the trials and tribulations experienced by those who made successive attempts to establish a permanent library in Graham's Town, pictures the citizens spending most of their spare time

in heated political discussion or in equally heated letters to the press. Dr. Philip, John Fairbairn, Thomas Pringle, and Andries Stockenstrom were not, in local opinion, the well-meaning if sometimes wrong-headed figures of our history books; on the contrary they were disingenuous rascals callously scheming for the ruin of Albany. To expose their iniquities was more important than to establish libraries! Had not one of them, "ungrateful viper," sunk so low as to discern patriotism in Makarna, and to say so in vigorous verse? What settler would want to read poetry after seeing this "Satanic" poem pilloried in the Journal? (2)

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1. ROSE, Four Years in Southern Africa, p.46.
The artist may have been Edward Turvey, a drawing-master who came to the Eastern Province at the age of thirty-nine. He went on Cowie and Green's ill-fated expedition to Delagoa Bay in 1828. Andrew Steedman, the traveller, bought some of his drawings. See GORDON-BROWN, Pictorial Art in South Africa during three centuries to 1875.
 2. WILES, The Tale of a Library, p.4.
The paper referred to is The Graham's Town Journal at one time the most influential newspaper in the Colony. The early numbers contain numerous attacks on the philanthropists, some of them in doggerel verse.
"What never heard of me! I'm Dr. Feelings;
Drops for Researches hang on my pen's point,
Ready to book it, as soon as you give me,
Your pitiful story!" etc.
(Thurs. October 29, 1835 p.2) and:
"Though stations multiply and priests increase,
Doth plunder lessen, or doth rapine cease?" etc.
(May 18, 1837. Vol. VI, No.282.)

Most new, unstable and expanding Frontiers would provide the pioneer with scant time or inclination to read poetry. The early New Englanders were perhaps an exception (the Massachusetts settlers, for instance, have been described as "a community of readers".)⁽¹⁾ However, the pioneers on this African frontier were (Pringle's protestations notwithstanding) in an environment inimical to the cultivation of education and the arts of leisure.

The Albany Settlers (wishing to identify themselves with a larger and successfully established group of English colonists) were fond of comparing their situation with that of the Pilgrim Fathers; but it is the contrasts rather than the similarities between the two groups which are illuminating.

In the first place the motives for emigration (not always, as D.H. Lawrence pointed out in "The Spirit of Place", as simple as they are often made to appear) had not been, among the Founding Fathers, principally economic. Although there were a few professional men among the African immigrants they were, for the most part, people who had had neither the money nor the opportunity to acquire much formal education. In fact it has been estimated that fifty-five per cent of them were agriculturists and thirty-three per cent artisans.⁽²⁾ In contrast there had been a large proportion of learned men among the Pilgrim Fathers who, in 1636 - only sixteen years after the start of their first settlement - had been able to found Harvard. The New Englanders were so intent on preserving their cultural heritage that in Massachusetts they passed a law insisting that every township of fifty house-holders should have a schoolmaster and every township of "one hundred household had to provide a Latin grammar school based upon the model of the English schools."⁽³⁾ According to one authority there were, between 1630 and 1690, "as many university graduates in New England per capita as there were in old England."⁽⁴⁾

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1. GORDON, Anglo-American Literary Relations, p.13.
 2. EDWARDS, The 1620 Settlers in South Africa, See P.171 for an analysis of the occupations of the settlers. Miss Edwards estimated the professional men - among whom she counted five gentlemen and one writing clerk - as forming a mere two per cent of the Settlers.
 3. NYE and MORPURGO, A History of the United States, p.57.
 4. Ibid. p.45.

Nor was it only that the Albany settler was less versed in "book-learning" than his American forerunner: (1) he had, on the whole, fewer opportunities for advancement and (initially at any rate) greater difficulties with which to contend. The absence of any great staple (a factor discouraging both further immigration and the investment of overseas capital); the consequent poverty and smallness of the English-speaking population; the longer sea-voyage between Europe and Africa; an uncertain Frontier policy causing constant dismay among both white and black pastoralists: all these things lessened the possibility of an early Flowering of Albany.

However, as Pringle had pointed out to Fairbairn in his verse epistle, the African frontiersman's isolation - even among the Hottentots and the prickly pear bushes - was not total. In Graham's Town particularly the presence of numbers of British officers and Colonial officials helped to maintain contact between the Eastern Frontier and the rest of the world. Talking of life in the town as early as 1828 Cowper Rose wrote:

You are by no means to infer that we are 'out of humanity's reach, or wholly deprived of communication with the polished world. No: we hear every nine days from Cape Town, the African seat of government, learning and science, (laugh if you will,) and we receive the English newspapers, and read the advertisements of Warren's blacking, and Charles Wright's vinous verses, and the mysterious hints of changes in the ministry...Then we have Walter Scott's last work, which has ceased to be his last before we get it, for where do they not reach? and sometimes the novel of a day comes, (2) heaven knows how, among us."

One way through which Scott's novels arrived in Kaffirland was through the enterprise of Thomas Pringle, who, after his return to Scotland in 1826, wrote to friends and well wishers

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1. I do not mean to suggest that the 1820 Settlers were unaware of the advantages of education. A number of individuals attempted to start schools of one kind or another. The following advertisement appeared in the first number of the Graham's Town Journal, Dec.30, 1831: "Graham's Town Grammar School. Mr. J.H. Stephenson Respectfully announces to the inhabitants of Albany, etc. that he has made arrangements for the reception of Eight Young Gentlemen as Boarders...." Cf. post p.41, foot-note 2.
 2. ROSE, Four Years in Southern Africa, p. 69.

asking for books which he shipped out to the Frontier, to found the Glen Lynden Library. ⁽¹⁾ Established principally for the use of the Scottish settlers - to whom Pringle also despatched a schoolmaster ⁽²⁾ - these books were lent to readers in the surrounding districts.

"A well-selected library" is Pringle's description of the collection. An examination of the remaining two hundred and ninety-seven books shows that they had been carefully chosen to cater for the needs (as Pringle conceived them) of a pioneering community.

The cultural climate of Cape Town was - at any rate while the settlers further east were defending their lives, cattle and property against the Kaffirs, somewhat different. It was a difference of degree rather than of kind, of aspiration not attainment. The citizens of Cape Town thought themselves far superior to their Frontier cousins; sleeping easier in their beds at night they woke, not to news of their neighbours murdered, but to the English papers and conversation with some travelling gentleman lately arrived from Bombay or London.

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1. The book-plate, headed "Glen-Lynden Library, South Africa" with its "General Regulations" is "certainly the work of a person with some experience of libraries and one is strongly tempted to ascribe it to Thomas Pringle himself, though this is merely a conjecture". VAN DER RIET, "An 1820 Settler Circulating Library at Glen Lynden, Eastern Province, " South African Libraries, vol. 19, No.4, April, 1952, p.14. See APPENDIX A.
 2. Writing to Sir Walter Scott from Capt Town on Oct.31, 1822, Pringle referred to his earlier efforts to start a Frontier school. "Having in vain attempted to do something in farming - for which indeed I had no funds - I attempted to open an Academy on the frontier. But in nine months I only obtained two pupils - so that I was forced to abandon that plan - as the Clergyman of the district had also done the preceeding year, from a similar cause. This is not so much owing to the want of desire for education as to the great poverty of the country - much increased by the almost total failure of two successive crops - so that board and education for about £15 sterling a year was more than even the genteel families could afford in that part of the Colony." Quoted in "Thomas Pringle and Sir Walter Scott", Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, vol. 6, No.4, June 1952, p.114.

The desire to prove that the Tavern of the Seas was the only civilized spot in southern Africa probably accounts for the surprising number of attempts to establish literary journals of one kind or another at the Cape. As early as 1828 a hundred page booklet (in excellent clear print) was published in Cape Town. This Poetry of the Cape of Good Hope.⁽¹⁾ (collected from colonial newspapers) was mostly composed of the kind of sixth-rate "drawing-room verse" endemic in England at the time. Numbers of epitaphs, sentimental lines on past friendships, lamentations on the absence of English bird-song, hawthorn, daisies and milk-maids is evidence of the popular belief that it was the function of "poetry" to act as a vehicle for the expression of melancholy feelings and pious moralizing. Loneliness and distance from home may have had something to do with the numbers of versifiers who felt compelled to write to the local journal on the subject of "A wounded spirit and a broken heart."

Apart from Pringle and the author of some sympathetic lines on "The Bushman", the only contributor who thought his African surroundings worth mentioning was a certain "Robert" or, as he sometimes signed himself "Timothy Torrid." This gentleman suffered from the fashionable gloom (perhaps with reason for he had been invalided to the Cape from Bengal) but he kept up his spirits by writing letters in rime to friends in England, explaining to them:

For poetry, of all kinds, is here now the go -
Some good, and some bad, and some but so-so;
But I beg to refer you, for more information,
To BRIDEMKIRK'S Cape paper - a new publication. (2)

Doing his best to avoid what he called "the blue-devils or vapors" Robert elaborated on the latest Cape Town craze: "The mania for rhyming has become here contagious." He claimed (with pardonable exaggeration) that "The bookseller's shops are now starting by dozens."

1. STAPLETON, Poetry of the Cape of Good Hope, selected from the Periodical journals of the Colony.

The editor published a list of sixty-nine subscribers, among them John Fairbairn and the printer G. Greig. Stapleton included (as anonymous, South African) "Lines to a Waterfowl" by William Cullen Bryant.

2. STAPLETON, "From an invalid at the Cape to his friend in London" pp. 24 - 26.

The source of this short-lived enthusiasm was probably the recent arrival of the new Sub-librarian from the Frontier district. Pringle was in the news. The booksellers (according to Robert) were advertising his "Settler's Report", ⁽¹⁾ with Fairbairn's assistance he had opened an Academy in Cape Town while,

A magazine too, in which languages mingle,
Is announce'd from the efforts of Faure and of Pringle. ⁽²⁾

Pringle's journalistic ambitions foundered on the rock of Lord Charles Somerset's High Toryism, but the battle for a free press at the Cape was won in 1828 when

"the Colonial Secretary, Sir George Murray, gave leave for a press ordinance based on the law of England. Printers and publishers who were prepared to deposit £300 as personal surety and a like amount guaranteed by friends, might publish newspapers on ld. stamped sheets paid for in advance at the Capetown Stamp Office, subject ⁽³⁾ to the law of libel as interpreted by the Judges."

The result was the appearance of a number of newspapers in various parts of the Colony. Some, like Bridekirk's The Cape of Good Hope Literary Gazette announced that they were "devoted exclusively to Literature, Criticism, Science; and the advancement of useful knowledge." The difficulty of obtaining news may partly account for the fact that these papers were often more literary than their modern successors. The editors must often have had to scrounge for copy; they were only too eager to accept original contributions, whether from Frontier farmers or itinerant versifiers. ⁽⁴⁾

The liveliest of the early Cape periodicals was Sam Sly's African Journal launched in 1843 by W.L. Sammons ⁽⁵⁾ as a "register of Facts, Fiction, News, Literature, Commerce and Amusement... To assist the enquiring, animate the struggling and sympathize with all." A tall order for any journalist. "Sam Sly" was conscious of his civilizing mission. He vacillated between encouragement and sarcasm in his efforts to educate; writing in an editorial on

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1. PRINGLE, Some account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa, 1824.
 2. Lord Charles Somerset opposed this scheme to issue a monthly magazine alternately in English and Dutch. See WALKER, A History of Southern Africa, p.160.
 3. WALKER, A History of Southern Africa, p.163.
 4. See APPENDIX B.
 5. See HATTERSLEY, Oliver the Spy and others, for a short biography of Sammons.

some bequests to the South African Public Library, "he should not only have left books behind him, but also readers."

Sammons was particularly keen to ferret out native talent: "This small 'folio of four pages' is published single-handed, not only to discover who are the readers, but also who are the writers." (1) As well as writing didactic articles on Cowper, George Herbert, Dickens and other poets and novelists popular in England, the editor gave close and serious attention to the products of the Colonial printing-presses. He reviewed a volume of verse published in Cape Town:

This is an indigenous plant that will not pay for the growth...it is too rare and too good...In Cape Town, at present, we seem to be too busy and too hungry, to relish Poetry, or any of her Ideas. She has been kicked out of Society by the hard heeled and hard headed, but she is not exactly defunct. Like a snail she modestly advances her horns occasionally, as much as to say 'is it time, - may I come out, - is the storm over?' (2)

The languishing romantic narrative to which Sammons is referring can have had no interest for the average "hard headed" colonist. Both at Cape Town and at the Frontier the storm clouds of the South African race problem were already hovering over the writer. Sammons published verses in imitation of Pringle's Makanna's Gathering, (3) while, further east, the pages of The Graham's Town Journal betrayed the bitterness of the quarrel between the philanthropists and the Frontiersmen. The settlers countered their critics with long lists of losses in goods, stock and men, with innumerable angry letters, with forthright editorials and satirical rhymes. In 1837 (the year in which the Journal published Piet Retief's famous "Manifesto of the Emigrant Farmers") the exasperated editor complained of the "host of literary knight-errants now-a-day who go abroad in search of adventures" tilting at windmills and achieving nothing but mischief. (4)

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1. Sam Sly's African Journal, vol. 1. June 1, 1843, p.2.
 2. Ibid. vol.11, 1844, No.55. p.3. Rev. of Guy Alric and other Poems, Cape Town. Published for the Author, A.S. Robertson, Heerengracht.
 3. See APPENDIX C.
 4. Editorial, The Graham's Town Journal, Nov., 2, 1837.

In general literary men were the propogandists of an extreme point of view little calculated to endear them to the Frontiermen in Kaffirland.

In spite of mounting tension eastwards Semmons was sufficiently detached from such matters to begin, in 1844, a series bravely entitled Cape Literature. In this way he preserved much ephemeral doggerel, some of it of considerable interest in its reflection of contemporary colonial society. (1)

By 1846 the situation on the Frontier had become so grave that Semmons was devoting more and more space to detailed news from the east so that his journal grew to eight pages. However, as he himself lamented, "but little - if any - progress" has been made since Pringle in the rise of any native African literature.

"The British Settler's Song" (composed and sung at a Commemoration Dinner at Graham's Town in 1844 by a Mr. A.G. Bain) is a fair example of what the Colony as a whole produced and even accepted as "poetry".

Oh, what a gay, what a rambling life a Settler's leading!
Spooring cattle, doing battle, quite jocose;
Winning, losing; Whigs abusing; shopping now, then mutton
breeding;

Never fearing, persevering, on he goes!
When to the Cape I first came out, in days of CHARLIE SOMERSET,
My lands were neatly measured off, and reg'larly my numbers set;
I strutted round on my own ground, lord of a hundred acres, sir,
I said I'd plough, I'd buy a cow, the butchers cut and bakers, sir.
Oh, what a gay, etc.

On Kowie's banks I built a house, and made a snug location there;
I fenc'd my lands with my own hand to keep all right;
The river rose, and 'fore my nose made awful desolation there;
The Kafirs stole my only cow away that night!

I made a trip to Kafirland, in hopes to find my cow again,
And tried to act the dentist then, which no one can do now again. (2)
I drew the Kafirs' ivory teeth at risk of heppen collar, Sir,
Which at Graham's Town on the market brought me full 300 dollars, sir!
etc. (3)

That there was a public for such doggerel is proved both in the journals of the day and by the publication (over half a century after Stapleton had collected his "stuffed owls") of another

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1. See APPENDIX C.
 2. An allusion to a Colonial law prohibiting colonists from crossing the boundary into Bantu territory to recover lifted cattle.
 3. Quoted in full in GODLONKON, Memorials of the British Settlers, p.117. Also reprinted in Sam Sly's African Journal. These lines, (as being typical of the period) are mentioned in A Cambridge History of English Literature, vol. XIV, p.377.

anthology, this time with the grandiose title, "The Poetry of South Africa." (1)

Alexander Wilmot appears to have included whatever he could find in the way of verse without regard to critical standards. Pringle accounts for a fifth of his volume; his verses remain, sixty-seven years after his arrival, the most interesting and the most competent written in English in Southern Africa. Many changes had taken place during the period covered by Wilmot's anthology:

The whistle of the locomotive has taken the place of the shrill cry of the Kaffir. The lion has retired from business...the wandering trader has to pay taxes, and is no longer in need of a gun." (2)

Yet, except for some doggerel on Diggers, an occasional reference to the growth of commerce and some lines by Wilmot himself on Drought, the themes which attracted these versifiers had already been better handled by Pringle. There is one significant thematic shift. Verses dealing with the conflict between black and white are increasingly in evidence, but the emphasis is now almost entirely weighted against the philanthropic, the imported, "Western European" view. The "noble savage" has - for the time being at any rate - been discredited by most of the poetasters.

This hardening of the Frontier attitude is particularly noticeable in Henry Dugmore, whose work is an undigested lump of militant patriotism and evangelical Christianity, coupled with a strong sympathy for the colonist exposed to the fury of the blood-thirsty heathen.

Dugmore was himself a pioneer. He had been a boy of nine in 1820 and his experience of the frontier was hard and personal, driving him into the comparative security of Graham's Town where, at fourteen, he was apprenticed to a saddler. He abandoned saddles for bibles, eventually becoming a much respected Methodist minister. (3) His long and active life in the Frontier districts

1. WILMOT, The Poetry of South Africa, 1887.

2. Ibid. Preface, p. VII.

3. He learnt Dutch and Khosa and is said (by his admiring biographer) to have taught himself enough Greek to read the New Testament as well as learning German when he was seventy in order to read Schiller, Lessing and Goethe. His biographer insists that, in spite of the expense and difficulty of procuring books, Dugmore was familiar with the work of "Historians like Grote, Thirwall, Arnold, Guizot, Ranke, ... Bryce, Freeman, Lewes and Mitford." His favourite poets were "Milton, Cowper, Goldsmith, and Montgomery." CROUCH, Life of Rev. H. H. Dugmore, pp. 173-174.

is not reflected in his appalling verse which is sickeningly sentimental, laboriously modelled on "the best authors". (1) Whatever his theme Dugmore never stepped down from his pulpit. Like most of the other contributors to Wilmot he regarded "poetry" mainly as a means of inculcating certain approved beliefs; as a rhetorical sermon in which he could deliver sentimental and grandiloquent utterances calculated to move or impress the reader. It was a popular view, common in all ages and widely current in the 19th century. Auden has suggested that it is a theory which regards a poem as "a magical means for inducing desirable emotions in oneself and others." (2)

One of the "desirable emotions" which Dugmore wished to induce in his readers was pride in being a colonist whose mission was to establish a home for Englishmen in "Afric's Southern Wilds". Dugmore's imagination was stirred by the struggles of the pioneers. Repeatedly, in verses such as "Past and Present" and "A Reminiscence of 1820" he exhorts the settlers:

This is our home!
A spot on earth we now can call our own;
A starting-point for a new life's career.
Wake all our energies afresh! A brighter day
Has dawned at last upon us. Let us raise
A song of gratitude to Heaven,
And gird us for our duties." (3)

In 1861, having seen with his own eyes - as Pringle never had - the effects of "Kaffir devastation", Dugmore reminded the Frontiersmen:

The locust clouds have darkened heaven;
The "rusted" fields to the flame are given;
The war-cry is echoing wild and loud;
For the war of the savage, fierce and proud,
Has burst like the storm from the thunder-cloud
On Afric's Southern Wilds. (4)

Conscious of self-appointed position as local bard responsible for general morale, he encourages the Settlers:

Never Despair, though the harvests fail;
Though the hosts of a savage foe assail;
... ..
Cities are rising to stud the plains;
The life-blood of commerce is coursing the veins
Of a new-born Empire, that grows and reigns
Over Afric's Southern Wilds. (5)

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1. CROUCH, Life of Rev.H.H.Dugmore. "He read the works only of the best authors and endeavoured to correct or model his style on some favourite." p.178.
 2. See AUDEN, "Squares and Oblongs," Poets at Work.
 3. WILMOT, "A Reminiscence of 1820", p.75.
 4. Ibid. "Past and Present" p.76.
 5. Ibid. pp. 76-77

In Dugmore's verses the Frontiersman succeeds in ousting the evangelist. Although he occasionally echoes Pringle -

There is still work to do.
Let me but show the way to Afric's heart:- (1)

he strikes a more characteristic note when he laments the loss of English lives and calls upon the settlers to rally to the defence of their neighbours during the 1851 Kaffir war:

Away to the mountain glen!
Where the warwhoop wild is yelling,
And the savage howls
As he darkly scowls
On the white man's flame-wrapped dwelling. (2)

Those who do not go are to be branded as cowards and traitors, while this missionary sees no end to the strife until the black man has been completely subjugated.

Later in the century the Zulu rebellion prompted Dugmore to produce another crop of verses:

"Preserve the colours, MELVILLE! We stand here;
And - to the end." 'Twas thus that PULLINE spoke,
...
On ISANDIANA 'A dark and fatal day;
...
And MELVILLE took the COLOUR - sacred trust! (3)
And bore it from the field.

The "Settler Poet" had obviously been reading Morte d'Arthur. His imitation is sufficiently bad without the liberal dusting of capitalized and italicized words - one of Dugmore's most irritating mannerisms.

The dominating subject of racial conflict appears in the next contributor to the anthology, Alexander Wilmot himself. In "The Landing of the British Settlers of 1820" (4) he attempted a versified history. As might be expected the writer's sympathies are very obviously with the Bowkers, the Southey's, the Gurrries and those British soldiers who died on "many a red hillside". Wilmot, however, had sufficient imagination to picture the other point of view.

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1. WILMOT. "The Funeral in the Abbey", p.64.
 2. Ibid, "A tribute of sympathy to the defenders of Glen Lynden," p.89.
 3. Ibid. "The Colours of the First 24th", p.91.
 4. Ibid. "The Landing of the British Settlers of 1820" written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of their arrival. p.107. These verses contain what appear to have been conscious echoes of "Afar in the Desert".

Ah sad are our hearts,
Our souls are full of trouble,
Ruin's harvest has come -
We are left as the stubble.

...

From Limpopo to Vaal
Has the mandate been given,
"From his veld and his home
Must the black man be driven". (1)

It is the South African dilemma reduced to a simple clash of interests.

The Rousseauesque view of the conflict was revived by W.R. Thomson who had been born in the frontier district of Stockenström in 1832. Thomson was one of the original pupils in the racially integrated classes at the Lovedale mission where he studied for five years before going to Europe to complete his education. This early experience of the black man as a classmate rather than as an enemy may account for his humanitarianism.

Thomson greatly admired Pringle:

Your far too flattering comparison with Pringle
has excited anew and strengthened a desire which I
have long cherished, to strive to write something
for and about the country in the same spirit, at least, (2)
as he did.

"For and about the country" - these words are a key to Thomson's ideals. He had a vision of a new Africa:

Land of "Good Hope!" thy future lies
Bright 'fore my vision as thy skies;
O Africa! long lost in night,
Upon the horizon gleams the light
Of breaking dawn. Thy star of fame
Shall rise and brightly gleam; thy name
Shall blaze on hist'ry's later page;
Thy birth-time is the last great age;
Thy name has been, slave of the world;
But, when thy banner is unfurled,
Triumphant Liberty shall wave
That standard o'er foul slav'ry's grave,
And earth, decaying earth, shall see
Her freest, fairest child in thee! (3)

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1. WILMOT, "In the country of Mankoraan" North of the Vaal River, December, 1882, pp. 109-110.
 2. Quoted in MILLER & SERGEANT, p.33.
 3. WILMOT, "Cape of Good Hope", pp. 115-116.
Written from Utrecht, 1856.

These lines became popular with the colonists; they were among the earliest verses translated into Cape-Dutch. "The Cape of Good Hope" indicates Thomson's patriotism but provides no warrant for declaring him "one of the most important writers of his period between Pringle and Scully..." on account of his "South African preoccupations and his individual style." (1) Thomson's themes are often local but that his style is in any sense individual is a judgement which is not supported by his verse.

The direct influence of Pringle upon Thomson is evident in "Anakeya", (2) a ballad founded upon an incident which occurred at the close of one of the Kaffir wars. Thomson seems to have come across the story in the pages of Mrs. Harriet Ward from whose book, The Cape and the Kaffirs he quotes at some length.

Anakeya is the daughter of the Kaffir chief, Macomo who, in punishment for his so-called rebellion has been ejected from his ancestral lands by the British. (3)

The opening lines of the ballad establish both the theme and the tone:

Far in the Kaffir's glorious land,
Beside a burning heap
Of ruins, sits an aged man,
Who bitterly doth weep.

Surrounded by the ruins of his home "Red with his kindred's blood" the defeated chief cries to the God of the white man:

Thy children are a cruel race,
Of murderers and thieves.
Give back to me my warriors brave,
Fall'n thick as autumn leaves.

Macomo, the "godless savage" looks around him:

Where'er he turn'd his eyes he saw
War's desolating brand;
The smoke of burning villages
Arose on ev'ry hand.

This is followed by a number of stanzas in which the old man reminisces, giving Thomson the opportunity of presenting an idealized picture of tribal life much as Pringle had done in "The Kosa". The objective details which Pringle introduced are all missing but the

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1. MILLER & SERGEANT, p. 32.
 2. "Anakeya" is not among the selections from Thomson in Wilmot's Anthology. It was included in South African Poetry and Verse, ed. CROUCH, 1907, pp. 174 - 186.
 3. Macomo was eventually banished to Robben Island.

sentiments are similar:

Ah! white men, do ye ever think
The black man too can feel.

Macono is comforted by his daughter, Anakeya, who accompanies him to "the white chief's tent" where they beg to be allowed to remain on their tribal lands but

No mercy shall be given
To black men who can break their oaths,
And fear no God in heav'n.

Finding their plea rejected Anakeya offers herself to the white conqueror (according to Mrs. Ward it was Colonel Campbell of the 91st Regiment who found himself in this embarrassing situation). The heroine declares she will forsake her people; she promises to live forever as the Colonel's slave if he will allow Macono to remain in Kaffirland. The white man, powerless to revoke the decree of banishment, is moved to tears. He exclaims:

Thou noble creature! God has made
Thee beautiful and fair;
And given thee a soul as pure
As e'er breathed Christian pray'r.

There is not a fresh image or an original idea in the whole of this protracted tale. Vague cliches such as "The tow'ring mountains", "that beauteous land" and the "savage foe" are fair examples of Thomson's "style". This sort of thing can easily be paralleled in Pringle but at least he made an effort to describe the background against which his idealized figures moved. The Bechuana boy, who is obviously the precursor of Anakeya, though scarcely a realistic youth, wanders about in an environment recognizably African:

Hoarse-roaring, dark, the broad Gareep
In turbid streams was sweeping fast,
Hugh sea-cows in its eddies deep
Loud snorting as we passed; (1)

Anakeya and her father (for all their prolix lamentations) are quite dead - partly because even their surroundings lack distinction of any kind:

O let us die where we were born,
And let this waving green,
Which waves above our fathers' dust,
Once wave above our head.

Simplicity, essential to the ballad, has here descended into banality.

1. PRINGLE, "The Bechuana Boy", The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle, p.2.



Thomson's lack of originality shows itself in the fidelity with which he followed Mrs. Ward:

We may fancy Amakeya taking a last look at the green places wherein her childhood had been passed, and finally sitting down among a strange people, in sight of the "great waters". A new and wondrous spectacle to that mountain-girl must have been that mighty and pathless sea."

(1)

This is transferred to the ballad stanza, the compound epithet in the last line revealing how closely Thomson had read "The Bechuana Boy".

She gazes on that mighty sea
She ne'er had seen before;
Half-pleased, half-awed, she hears the waves
Hoarse-moaning on the shore.

Thomson's work is of no literary value but he helped to maintain and even to promote an interest in English verse. In addition he was one of the first colonists to give literate expression to a feeling of love and pride in South Africa as a homeland.

The remaining rhymesters represented in Wilmot are (with the exception of Brodrick who will be referred to in a later chapter) of little interest and less worth. Colonial life continued to afford (particularly during the 1840s and '50s) no time for scribbling verse. If men wrote at all they wrote letters or official despatches or kept diaries. Such documents are unfortunately seldom preserved (especially on a frontier) but of those which remain the letters of, for instance, Charles Brownlee from Fort Cox or the diary of the settler, Jeremiah Goldswain, are worth more in human interest and evocative power than nearly all the verses in Wilmot's collection.

Goldswain, a young sawyer from Buckinghamshire who emigrated in 1820 was scarcely literate, yet his record of life on the Eastern frontier is one of the most complete and genuinely moving of Settler documents. His frank, ingenuous prose unconsciously reveals the gradual changes which took place in a simple man of devout, Christian principles when he, his family and friends, constantly suffered the fears and terrors of life on a savage border. He reveals too, when particularly moved by some incident, the age-old human impulse to express his sorrow in a medium more intense, more concentrated, than prose. In describing the

1. WARD, Five Years in Kaffirland, vol. 2, p. 280.

murder of a friend, Alexander Forbes, by the Kaffirs, a murder which took place in front of the victim's wife and six children, Goldswain is driven by his emotion to attempt verse:

I cannot better describe their feelings and their sorrow than stating of it as follows

In the year 1834 when I think of
that eve it greves my Hart sore
when the blacks came on us
that dwelt in the east
to burn and to murder
and to drive of our beast

when theas savages first
in our borders they came
they seased Mrs. Firbes that
dwelt on the plain
poor Alick he ruen the caues
to inquire they stabled him
to the Hart and set his House all on fier

ho think of her Loss her greaf
and her payn Six Fatherless
Babes and her House all in flames
no foud and no Clothing and
and they Kaffers all in site
and nought but they woods
Two sleep in all night. (1)

A frontier diarist in verse with similar sentiments about the "Kaffers" was the mysterious Martin Bekker Hudson - mysterious in that almost nothing is known of his personal history. (2)

1. The Chronicle of Jeremiah Goldswain, Ed. Una Long, vol.1,p.81.

2. There was a Henry Hudson, aged 42, among the 1820 Settlers in Hayhurst's party and a Hougham Hudson became the first Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate of Port Elizabeth in 1828. However, Martin Bekker Hudson does not seem to have been connected to either of them. Extensive research has, so far, revealed no further information about the man except for a few letters and the notice of his death. In 1852 Hudson wrote from Craigeburn, Somerset, to D. Pringle Esq., at Baviaan's River concerning the details for the publication of his Narrative. It was "to be published immediately on the proclamation of peace" and was to cost half a guinea. Included with the letter was a list of approximately 112 subscribers.

On the 19th August, 1852, R.Hart wrote from Glen Avon to D. Pringle, Esq., at Lyndoch, Baviaan's River: "...On Monday last R. Bowker was here all the people were absent from Craigeburn when some Boors came...to follow eight of the enemy in the Karegha. There was not to upset (sic) them by the time we got a note from the schoolmaster Hudson." This is the only personal reference I have been able to find. Other letters, signed by Hudson, are written on behalf of the Commandant. (See Pringle Letters, microfilm, Cory Library, Rhodes University.)

The following notice appeared in the Graham's Town Journal, 29th Jan. 1859. p.1:

"Died, at Orange Fontein, in the Wittebergen, Native Reserve, where he had been private tutor for 2 years, M.B. Hudson, Esq., after a lingering illness. He shall rise. Friends will please accept of this notice."

Hudson, who called himself "a Resident in a Frontier Family" dedicated his narrative to W.M. Bowker who was commandant of the burghers in the Eastern district during the 8th Kaffir War. There are letters in existence, written and signed by Hudson, which show that (as well as being schoolmaster to the children) he acted as private secretary to the Commandant. As a result he had the double advantage of an insight into the military and administrative problems of the campaign as well as personal experience of much that he described. The events which he did not witness himself he must have heard recounted by men who had been on the spot.

A feature in South African Frontier Life ⁽¹⁾ is the longest, most detailed narrative of its kind written on the Kaffir Frontier. That Hudson attempted anapaestic, tetrameter couplets instead of being content with prose is further confirmation of the fact that verse in a frontier society (except in the cases where it represents a genuine overflow of feeling) must nearly always exhibit some moral or utilitarian purpose. Here was a man, obviously of some education, aware of the value of the written word, aware that he was taking part in events of some significance, events moreover which were the subject of much controversy at "home". He wanted to record them, not only for his own pleasure, but for the benefit (as is clear from his preface) principally of readers in England, and for this purpose he embodied them in what he considered a suitably impressive form. Like most of the settlers, Hudson longed to present what he considered a true picture of the frontier situation in order to defend the colonists against the negrophilist faction and to appeal to England for practical help. This aim is clearly stated in his last lines:

...That the Birkenhead goes
With despatches to England is certified news.
Let us hope that she sails on a prayerful mission, (2)
For a further assistance our home to petition:

Hudson begins his narrative at the point where the Bowkers have been compelled by the worsening situation to abandon their Albany farm to trek to the comparative safety of Graigie Burn

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1. HUDSON, A Feature in South African Frontier Life, ...embracing a complete record of the Kafir War of 1850-1851. vol. 1. Port Elizabeth, 1852. (vol.2 was almost certainly never published.)
 2. On her return journey, carrying reinforcements for the frontier war, the Birkenhead went down off Point Danger with a loss of sixty seamen and three hundred and fifty-seven officers and men.

(a family property in the Somerset East district). In another age Hudson might have taken to journalism; he had the good reporters respect for facts and detail:

The scene will be laid in South African clime;
Eighteen hundred and fifty's the date of the time;
And the persons who under description will come
Are a Frontier Family leaving their home.
Only four years have passed since a former occasion (1)
Compelled them to flee from a Kafir invasion;

Despite the doggerel and the stilted mannerisms a composite picture of the general disorder and panic emerges from the pages of this diary. Best of all are the vignettes he draws of domestic life, the homely details of the preparations to leave. The stock is rounded up, the wagons packed. One of these was:

a monster unusually wide,
With so lofty a tent, seven feet in the clear,
That the whole of the chairs could be stowed away there,
Still leaving good room for the cartel to swing,
Where I made up my bed and could snugly pig in.
At the back of the wagon, for want of a trap,
Where the kettles and pots would not have a mishap,
The gate of a kraal had been dexterously swung,
And the kitchen utensils were fastened thereon:

Hudson continues with a day by day account of the journey, describing the people they met, reporting their news and rumours, until the wagons arrive at Craigie Burn where relatives offer them the only available shelter:

A weather worn shearing house, standing awry,
With a roof that exposed many a view of the sky.
The walls of the building, just five feet in height,
Have many a loop hole to let in the light;
Some made for defence, others left where the clay,
That cemented the stone work has been washed away.

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1. Hudson does not seem to have taken part himself in the hastily summoned burgher commandos but to have stayed behind with the women and children. Most probably his health was not good and he may have come to the Cape for that reason. The Eastern Frontier in 1850 was scarcely the place for a delicate man. On Christmas Day Khosa warriors had attacked the military villages near the Amatolas and butchered defendants. According to WALKER: "In all directions the tribes sprang to arms. Gaikas and emigrant Tenbus were aided and abetted by Kreli's Galakas...the Kaffir police and even some of the Cape Mounted Riflemen went over to the enemy." Westwards the Hottentots were in a mutinous mood, in the north Mosheah was keeping an uneasy peace; the colonial burghers were divided among themselves and did not all rally to the call for volunteers (as Dugmore hints in his verses). The military garrisons were weak and reinforcements could not be expected for some time.

The schoolmaster lectured at length on the controversies over Colonial policy which, at this period, were reflected even in the cartoons of Punch. His opinion of meddling philanthropists is quite clear:

A demand on philanthropists now should be made,
That the matter at home be with justice portrayed.
Of the hardly-used black they no longer must preach,
But practise the truths that they uselessly teach.
Self-denial espouse, and lay open their heart,
To their party at home its known secrets impart,
How their Kafir missions, and brotherly labours
To inculcate in natives a love for their neighbours;
How their efforts for years, in this land represented
As successful, have now a gross failure presented.

Referring to the interpretations put upon the punitive expedition reported by Sir Harry Smith, Hudson is equally outspoken:

The horrors of war on the savage inflicted.
Whole villages burnt and complete devastation
Of populous vallies in high cultivation.
Our kind hearted friends who may read this despatch,
With the glowing effects of the firebrand and match;
And the desolate waste now despoiling the land,
May in ignorance plead for a merciful hand;
As they picture the savage in great destitution,
Already the object of just retribution.
Be it known then to all who may form such idea,
That a few Kafir vrouws will such villages rear,
In the space of a week, and the great devastation,
Of populous valleys in high cultivation,
Must be viewed as a purely Utopian sketch,
That an artist alone is enabled to catch,
Of a country where tillage scarce needeth man's toil,
And the women at seasons just scratch up the soil.
It is pity Sir Harry should thus colour facts,
His descriptions at home can have but false effects
On the feelings of all, as they read of the ravage,
His efforts appear to have worked on the savage. (1)

Whatever our own attitude towards the vacillating policy of the British government at the time (judging it now in the light of a superior knowledge of Bantu society and law) Hudson's views were natural for a man in his position. That there were white men on the Frontier who thought differently it is true but they were

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1. There are numerous documents and publications relating to the 6th Kaffir War. One of the best known is the account given by Robert Godlonton, the editor of the Graham's Town Journal. Like Hudson, Godlonton wished to defend the settlers against the accusations of their opponents. A different point of view emerges in such publications as NIVEN, Perils of a Missionary Family, sec.ed. 1860.

the exceptions. Fear, hatred and contempt of the black man increased among the Frontiersmen who, like Hudson, saw the bodies of their friends, mutilated and stripped, decaying on the veld, or returned to burning homesteads ringed by carcasses of sheep, to

...the old house with its tall gable ends;
Through the space for the windows now echo the winds;

Hudson's account of the War of Umlangeni or the Bont Corlog (as it was variously known) is principally of interest to the local historian, for the wearisome beat of his ragged couplets never attains to anything approaching poetry. Only very occasionally does he so much as find an apt word - when he calls the drought - stricken veld "rusty" is an example. His diction (though less positively distracting than Dugmore's) is completely undistinguished. In spite of such damning comments Hudson is worth remembering in the meagre history of early South African verse for his attempt at realism and for the glimpses which his lines give of such events as the storming of the rebel-held Fort Armstrong:

The door flew to atoms; and outpoured a host
Of both sexes of Rebels whose lives were not lost,
All covered with blood, some, with horrible wounds,
The men seeking shelter beneath women's gowns:
They who thus were detected were instantly shot
By the Volunteer Corps who with dead strewed the spot:
Our men then rushed in, and but few with the thought,
Of withstaying their hand 'gainst the remnant they caught.
Thus the foe was reduced; and that British built fort,
Of most treacherous Rebels of late the resort,
Was gutted with fire; too disgraced to let stand,
Once reared, now destroyed by the Englishman's hand. (1)

As the controversy over the Kaffrarian policy became increasingly embittered Hudson grew more intent on pleading the Frontiersman's cause. This distracted him from the descriptive details of his narrative or he might have drawn more rough sketches of such local characters as Allen, the sailor:

A thorough-bred tar from the siege of Bayrout,
A shipwright by trade, no professor of truth...
By the strength of his arm, underground in a trice
The grindstone was buried, dismembered the vice.

Any Frontier is a lodestone for eccentrics and adventurers and the Eastern Cape - as Metrowich has indicated - was no exception. (2) It is a pity that none of them seem to have found

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1. Cf. GODLONTON, A Narrative of the Kaffir War of 1850-51, p.381.
 2. METROWICH, Assegai Over the Hills, 1953 and The Valiant but Once, 1956.

their way to popular songs and ballads.

The era of the Kaffir Wars was almost at an end when Robert Michael Bruce volunteered in the 1877-8 campaign. A volume of his poems was published posthumously by his brother, in memory of a "gallant fellow" who died shortly after his twenty-first birthday "Far from home, in the fever wards of a hospital crowded with suffering victims to Kafir bloodthirstiness". (1)

Ironically there is nothing about "Kafir bloodthirstiness" in this slim collection which includes several translations from the French and one from Ovid. According to his brother many of the young man's verses had been lost but the best of those preserved are two narratives based on Kaffir legends and "Ncedane's Sorrow, A Kafir's Love-Tale".

This is the simple story of a young Bantu who goes off to work so that he may buy the dowry cattle for his love, Nomento. In the lover's absence Nomento's father gives her to Umgalane "rich and old and ugly" in exchange for ten fat cows. Bruce is a breath of air in a stuffy room. There is a lyricism and a freshness of image about "Ncedane's Sorrow" which is quite unexpected to anyone accustomed to the flat, dreary pen of the Colonial bard.

"Son of my father, tell me, oh Ncedane,
Why is your face so gloomy in the starlight?
Why is your voice so obstinately silent?
Tell me, Ncedane.

"While the tired oxen steadily together
Drag thro' the sands the lofty-piled wool-wagon,
And the Baas slumbers in the tent behind us,
Tell me thy sorrow.

"Friend, the voice is still when the heart is heavy;
Grief ever throws its shadow on the features.
Listen, Zenane, son of my father,
Listen, - I'll tell you.

"While the tired oxen steadily together
Drag tho' the sands the lofty-piled wool-wagon,
And the Baas slumbers in the tent behind us,
I'll tell you my story."

1. BRUCE, Under the Yellow-woods, Grahamstown, 1878,
(Robert Michael Bruce lived at Salem near Grahamstown.
There is a tablet to his memory in the Settler Chapel
at Salem)

"Tell me, Zenane, tell me, have you seen her,
Big-eyed Nomena, loveliest of maidens,
Loveliest maiden 'monst all the Amakosa, -
Say, have you seen her.

"Timid her glance as is the startled bushbuck's,
Bright are her cheeks as shining yellow mealies,
Graceful her step as oribes in the valleys
Playing together.

"White are her teeth as snow upon the mountains,
Sweet is her breath as scent of evening flowers,
Red are her lips as outspread wings of lories
In dark kloofs flying."

.....

The similes which Bruce uses to describe Nomena (though not particularly original) cannot be paralleled in Wilmot's anthology, neither do they give the impression of being selfconsciously "African". Unlike Amakeya, Nomena has some life and Nodane's sorrow some reality. It is when Bruce begins to moralize that he is least successful:

"Oh! the strange laws the white men have for Kafirs,
One law for black men, another for the English;
Why not one law for whites and blacks together?"
"True!" said Zenane.

Nomena and the other romanticised maidens in Bruce's versions of Bantu legends live in a credible world:

Fat were the cattle in Sekopa's kraal,
And in his lands the maize grew thick and tall;
Warm was the sun, and frequent was the shower,
And vales were yellow with the thorn tree's flower,
When, with her friends, as Kafir maidens' wont,
While the young men were absent at the hunt,
Nolai, Sekopa's daughter, led the train,
With light, gay steps, like quickly patt'ring rain.

The care-free Nolai is contrasted with her body "foaming on the ground" as she dies a victim to the legendary snake-fiends:

Does the Baas laugh? He should not laugh but fear,
But Kafir legends suit not white man's ear.
Mabula saw the snake, saw Nolai die,
And does the white man think that she would lie?
Mabula, promised for my brother's bride,
But she had seen the serpent - she, too, died.
Nay, I have ended, and I say no more,
For Baas believes not, and my heart is sore.

In his attitude towards the major Frontier theme - the racial conflict - Bruce is a link between the Hudsons and the Pringles; the rare personality who was able to detect a human being in a black

skin without running up against a "noble savage". Both extremist viewpoints on this subject were antagonistic to the development of a significant indigenous verse, because they tended to swamp Africa and the people who lived in Africa in an emotional morass. Writers like Thomson treated the Bantu as a symbol of the oppressed, without individuality, as much part of a group as the blood-smeared assegai-brandishing savage of the opposition. The Bechuana boy is more likely to have eaten his "fawn" than to have rescued it from wild-dogs while Amakeya, as Mrs. Ward rather delicately hints, was probably prompted to sacrifice herself for motives not so entirely pure as Thomson would have us believe.

Local themes, no matter from what angle they are approached, do not by themselves (as has already been stressed) create a body of writing which can be regarded as "national" in any distinctive sense. What then is the value, if any, of these colonial rhymsters? Regarded from one point of view they achieved absolutely nothing. Dugmore, for instance, was not even a competent versifier; it is easy to make fun of him, he is almost the worst of the bunch, his verses lacking even the historical interest of Hudson's narrative.

Such a judgment is easy enough, but it is also superficial, it ignores many important factors in the development of South African society. Dugmore and his companions laboured, according to their lights, at keeping an interest in English verse alive against many odds. They continued to scribble away about the settler and the savage, the sunshine and storms, the lion and the locust - about Africa and what was happening to the white man in Africa. All this was very important. It was part of a preliminary digestion of themes, words and concepts, part of a literary pioneering process on a cultural frontier.

CHAPTER 3.

THE EXPLORERS.

"What ails him?" said his comrades.
"He is mad," said one.
"No; but he is worse," said another; "he would see that
which none of us have seen, and make himself a wonder."

Olive Schreiner.

By the middle of the nineteenth century English publishing houses were cashing in on the popularity of books about Africa. Hunters, traders, travellers, missionaries - even soldiers and their wives - seemed to think it a duty that they should report their acquaintance with the continent; occasionally they attempted to weave these experiences into novels and verse romances. Many of their books are now collector's pieces - classic Africana.

A brief glance at one or two of such writers is relevant here for, as A.C. Partridge has remarked:

It is in the diaries, memoirs and travels of these personalities that we must look for the first evidence of a cultural pattern... (1)

Such prose is usually frankly informative, a travelogue to the strange and remote, a description of the "lost arcadian scene", of what was to become for some South Africans:

the wistful by-gones,
When the bland century and our budding fancies
Were both eighteen. (2)

There were times when these writers did more than they probably intended; when their books became more than early versions of tourist brochures, when they revealed not only their reactions to Africa but reflected as well the modifications and changes in the minds of many who were confronted by the Frontier.

The first expedition to attempt a serious exploration of the Cape's Eastern boundary had been dispatched by Governor Tulbagh in 1752 under the leadership of Ensign Beutler.⁽³⁾ From then onwards Kaffirland saw many enquiring white men. Henry Francis Fynn arrived at Port Natal in 1824 and eventually found himself dressing Shaka's wounds after an attempt had been made

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1. PARTRIDGE, "Poet and Humanitarians in the Wilderness", English Studies in Africa, vol, 2, Sept.1959, p.203.
 2. BREITEL, "Giraffes", A Book of South African Verse, ed.BUTLER, (1959) p.87.
 3. FORBES, "Beutler's Expedition into the Eastern Cape, 1752", Archives Year Book, vol. 1, 1953.

to assassinate the tyrant. Fynn's diary has only recently been published (he kept the original dry by wrapping it in an elephant's ear) ⁽¹⁾ but George Thompson's Travels (in which Coleridge read "Afar in the Desert") appeared in 1827. Earlier still John Barrow had "travelled in that spirit of scientific enquiry which was to distinguish the next century." ⁽²⁾

One of the most popular nineteenth century books on Africa (it had run into five editions by 1852) was the work of an engineer on the staff of the East India Company who had been granted two years leave by the Bombay Medical Board. ⁽³⁾ The arrival of Capt. William Cornwallis Harris at the Cape coincided with the "emigration of a large body of Dutch farmers... to effect an establishment in the wilderness." ⁽⁴⁾ Harris announced in his preface that a desire "to trace the steps of the wanderers" gave an added incentive to his explorations. His "passion for veneris" had, so he assured his reader, implanted in him a wish to study the Geography and Natural History of the Cape. He was also most anxious to draw the animals which he shot for "delinations in books of Natural History of the larger quadrupeds" were "far from being correct..."⁽⁵⁾

Harris was conscious of his social status as "an officer and a gentleman" among a savage people - white and black.

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1. According to Fynn's son he would wrap "his manuscripts in the ear of an elephant he had himself shot, place the parcel in a sack and....carry it on the heads of natives or pack oxen." When short of ink he used "a certain white flower which, when bruised, turned black." See The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, 1950.
 2. FORBES, "The First Modern Geographer and Geologist in South Africa: Sir John Barrow," The South African Geographical Journal, vol. XXVI, 1944, p. 44.
 3. At one time the Cape was a favourite resort for convalescents from India. Notes on the Cape of Good Hope by "A Bengali", (1847) lists prices for almost everything a visitor might need, from the cost of a ticket from Bombay to Cape Town to the price of South African beer (for the servants). Books at the Cape, so we are told "sold at the London prices."
 4. HARRIS, The Wild Sports of Southern Africa, (1852 ed.) p. XV. "Afar in the Desert" quoted on the reverse of the dedication leaf.
 5. See "Captain Harris and his Book" for information on the various editions and a description of the coloured lithographic plates. Africana Notes and News, vol. 1. No. 4. August, 1944, pp. 2 - 12.

Having the contempt of his class for anything which smacked of "trade" he was indignant when

"The profession of a gentleman being quite unknown in the colony, we were ourselves constantly taxed with being itinerant pedlars, the tea and snuff-loving vrouws never failing to rush out as we passed their houses to inquire what we had in the waggon." (1)

This snobbery was natural at the time in a man of his education and tastes. Harris was no fool, on the contrary he was an intelligent observer while his drawings of warriors, of Bechuana belles and Bush girls (and particularly his famous animal portraits) are charming. A fearless, enterprising traveller, Harris trekked north and penetrated the territories ruled by Moselekatse as far as the neighbourhood of Louis Trichardt in what is to-day the northern Transvaal. He returned by an unexplored route, through the country in which Boer and Bantu were fighting for control.

On the whole Harris reveals the greatest disgust and contempt for the Bushman, the Hottentot and the Bantu; his eulogies are nearly all reserved for the animals which he never tires of calling noble and majestic. He writes graphically of barbarians quarreling over the entrails of the game he has shot, devouring the meat raw, wiping the gore all over their bodies:

Nothing can be conceived more horribly disgusting than the appearance presented by the savages who, gorged to the throat, and besmeared with blood, grease, and filth of the carcass, sucking marrow from the bones, whilst their lean, famished curs were regaling themselves upon the garbage. Every bush was garnished with flaps of meat, and every man had turned beef-butcher, whilst swollen vultures were perched upon the adjacent trees, and others yet ungorged were inhaling the odours that arose." (2)

While in Moselekatse's country Harris's party (which consisted of eleven men including a Parsee servant) was surrounded by Matabele warriors returning with their spoils from an attack on the laager defended by Erasmus and his trekking companions. Harris writes sympathetically of the fate of the emigrants. While horrified at the barbarism of the warriors, he shows a certain detached admiration for the courage of the Matabele. This is his pen-portrait of

1. HARRIS, The Wild Sports of Southern Africa, p. 53.

2. Ibid. p.164.

'Lingap whom he depicted in one of his coloured plates; it emphasizes the savage's delight in slaughter:

Himself a warrior of tried courage, he had formed one of the commando that captured Erasmus's waggons. His eyes glistened as he spoke of the pleasure he had derived from feeling his spear enter white flesh. It slipped in, he said, grasping his assagai and suiting the action to the word, so much more satisfactorily than into the tough hide of a black savage, that he preferred sticking a Dutchman to eating the king's beef. When sufficiently sated with roast meat, and primed with snuff, he treated us to a love ditty, in the course of which he looked most killing." (1)

There is a realism and an impartiality about such descriptions which it was relatively easy for Harris to achieve because, although he was in the Frontier he was not in any way committed to it - he had the means and the money to escape from it whenever he wished.

It was principally the animals which drew Harris to Africa. He wrote of them with meticulous detail:

Majestic in its carriage, and brilliant in its colour, this species may with propriety be styled the king of the tribe. Other antelopes are stately, elegant, or curious - but the solitude-seeking koodoo is absolutely regal!! The ground colour is a lively French grey approaching to blue, with several transverse white bands passing over the back and loins; a copious mane, and deeply ringed, tri-coloured dew-lap, setting off a pair of ponderous, yet symmetrical horns, spirally twisted, and exceeding three feet in length. These are thrown along the back, as the stately wearer dashes through the mazes of the forest, or clammers the mountain side. (2)

His admiration of the game grew, whereas closer acquaintance with "the barbarous tribes" of the interior led Harris to summarize his views on the African:

How truly has it been remarked...that the state of these countries which have had little or no intercourse with civilized nations, is a direct refutation of the theories of poets and philosophers, who would represent the ignorance of the savage as virtuous simplicity - his miserable poverty as frugality and temperance - and his stupid indolence as laudable contempt for wealth; widely differing indeed were the facts which came under our observation; and doubtless it will ever be found, that uncultivated man is a compound of treachery, cunning, debauchery, gluttony, and idleness. (3)

This hunter, at any rate, had dismissed the "noble savage".

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1. HARRIS, The Wild Sports of Southern Africa, p.153.
 2. Ibid, p.185.
 3. Ibid. p.142.

The presence of vast herds of game (combined with the possibilities of acquiring a fortune through the ivory trade) lured many white men beyond the legal boundaries of the Colony. One of the most colourful of these characters was Roualeyn Gordon Cumming who resigned his commission in the Cape Mounted Rifles to become the best known Nimrod of his day and the subject of a portrait entitled "The hunter 'in his habit as he lived.'"

Cumming claimed that he was the first explorer to reach the interior of the Bamangwato country. He kept a journal which he published, begging the reader not to

...look for the graces of style. The hand, wearied all day with grasping the rifle, is not the best suited for wielding the pen. If I have in simple language given pleasure to the sportsman, or added one page to the natural history of Southern Africa, or to our knowledge of its tribes, I shall think myself amply repaid for my many wanderings and (1) watchings in a wild and savage land.

In spite of his apologies Cumming's book is more entertaining than Harris's; his style is simpler, less self-conscious and more intimate. Unlike Harris, who thought it beneath his dignity to particularize about the domestic details of his expedition, Cumming leaves little out. The long list of the provisions for his safari included:

"Two sacks containing 300 lbs of coffee", tea, sugar, rice, meal, flour, pepper, salt, vinegar, "half a dozen hams and cheeses, two cases of gin, 1 anker of brandy...24 boxes of snuff, 50 lbs of tobacco.. 2 English hunting saddles...10,000 prepared leaden bullets...300 lbs of coarse gunpowders... and £200 in cash." With this equipment some of which was for barter he considered himself "prepared to undertake a journey of at least twelve months amongst Boers or Bechuanas, independent (2) of either."

Harris admired the beauty of the animals he shot but there is evident in the pages of Cumming's book a fanatical devotion to the chase coupled with an awesome delight at the grace and grandeur of the victims which amounts, at times, almost to a Mithraic obsession - to a primitive "mystique" of the hunt:

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1. CUMMING, A Hunter's Life in South Africa, vol. 1. p.X.
 2. Ibid. p. 17.

This day was to me rather a memorable one, as the first on which I saw and slew the lofty graceful-looking giraffe or camelopard, with which, during many years of my life, I had longed to form an acquaintance. These gigantic and exquisitely beautiful animals, which are admirably formed by nature to adorn the fair forests that clothe the boundless plains of the interior...Some writers have discovered ugliness and a want of grace in the giraffe, but I consider that he is one of the most strikingly beautiful animals in the creation. (1)

Later in the same passage Cumming recounts his single-minded pursuit of a giraffe. Having wounded the animal several times he at last brings her to a stand:

There we stood together alone in the wild wood. I gazed in wonder at her extreme beauty, while her soft dark eye, with its silky fringe, looked down imploringly at me, and I really felt a pang of sorrow in this moment of triumph for the blood I was shedding. Pointing my rifle towards the skies, I sent a bullet through her neck. On receiving it she reared high on her hind legs and fell backwards with a heavy crash, making the earth shake around her. A thick stream of dark blood spouted far from the wound, her colossal limbs quivered for a moment and she expired. (2)

This is not the same thing as the cool, scientific butchery which occupied Harris. On another occasion Cumming encountered:

...an antelope of the most exquisite beauty, and utterly unknown to sportsmen or naturalists...It was a princely old buck...On beholding him I was struck with wonder and delight...At that moment I would have given half what I possessed in this world for a broadside at that lovely antelope... (3)

The hunter's emotions are closer to those of the young man in Henry de Montherlant's novel:

The truth was that he loved these animals too much to be able to go very long without killing them. (4)

This preoccupation with the hunt, particularly with the symbolic grace and power of African animals, is nowhere else in modern literature so strikingly evident as in the poetry of the South African, Roy Campbell. Long after he left Africa, Campbell wrote:

I am often haunted by the beautiful forms that symbolised those free happy times camping in the veld. Whenever I doodle absentmindedly, I find the koodoo, eland, sable, waterbuck, impala and bushbuck nostalgically bounding on to the paper from the old index-finger, whose trigger has now become a pen. (5)

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1. CUMMING, A Hunter's Life in South Africa, p.266.
 2. Ibid. vol.1, p.271.
 3. Ibid. vol.II, p.164.
 4. de MONTHERLANT, The Matador, 1957.
 5. CAMPBELL, Light on a Dark Horse, p.87.

As Cumming had been Campbell was particularly struck by the loveliness of giraffes who

with their ponderous gait, appear to be moving in a slow-motion film, oaring the air, as if it were water, and moving their left legs simultaneously in the same direction, forward or back, and their right legs simultaneously in the opposite direction. They rock from side to side and give the illusion of a clumsy slow gait. Yet they are covering the ground at a very great speed indeed; furthermore, one daren't follow too closely. They commanded the absolute awe and respect which I expressed in my poem "Dreaming Spires." (1)

This similarity of tastes between the 19th century hunter and the twentieth century poet, this preoccupation with "the sun-dappled herds" is not merely coincidental, it is an intoxication to which man in a frontier society (whether in Africa, America or elsewhere) is naturally prone.

The successful hunter occupies a place of esteem in Frontier society. Cumming obviously enjoyed the prestige he acquired, claiming that the tribes in the interior for whom he provided meat hailed him as "king of the white men." This admiration for his exploits appears to have been current among the Settlers as well. The diary of Adams (a private in the 7th Dragoon Guards at that time stationed in Grahamstown) gives a number of vignettes of "Young Hopeful" as Cumming was then called by his brother officers. Adams records that Cumming repeatedly arrived late for parade in a cap he had cut to ribbons by hurling an assegai at it from a distance of sixty yards:

When he wanted a larger target at a greater distance he would take off his jacket, hang it on a bush, and very soon it would be converted into rags. (2)

Once Cumming had left the regiment (according to one rumour his departure was not unclouded - there seems to have been some matter of cheating at cards) the legends of his

1. CAMPBELL, Light on a Dark Horse, p.92.

In this fantasy (which appeared in Talking Brance in 1946) the giraffes symbolize, not freedom and power but:
The City of Giraffes! - a People
Who live between the earth and skies,
.....
Chimneys of silence! at whose summit,
Like storks, the daydreams love to nest;
The Earth, descending like a plummet
Into the oceans of unrest,
They can ignore. - "Dreaming Spires",
Collected Edition, p.279.

2. ADAMS, The Narrative of Private Buck Adams, p.58.

remarkable prowess as a hunter began to grow. His success was confirmed when he returned to the Grahamstown market

with two waggons laden with ivory, ostrich feathers, and valuable skins, which had been sold and realized a considerable sum of money, which enabled him to start again, this time with five waggons. (1)

According to Adams, everyone courted the hunter's society; he was the local Lothario as well as the lion slayer. On one occasion on his return to Grahamstown

a grand ball was given in honour of his visit. He went in full Highland costume. I had the job of polishing up his silver-mounted pistols, sword, dirk and sundry other articles. (2)

Cumming himself writes of his arrival at Colcaberg at the end of his last expedition:

As my waggons advanced into the town, the news of our arrival spread like wildfire, and multitudes both of men and good-looking young women rushed to see the old elephant-hunter, who had been mourned as dead. We were soon surrounded by nearly one-half of the population, who mobbed us until night setting in dispersed them to their homes. (3)

The romantic myth of the hunter (the typical Frontier hero) as well as the idealization of his way of life was possibly a kind of escape from reality, a compensation for much that was lacking in Frontier society.

It was not a compensation which appealed to everybody. The ranker Adams, for instance, was far more interested in people than in killing animals; in his diary we meet Susan, the effeminate Dragoon; the Female Sailor of Fort Beaufort; Private Marley who died on the scaffold and Long Tom Coffin, the deserter who was hunted down in the Oliphant's Hoek Forests.

Though occasionally tedious, Adams was not without some ability as a writer and his prose has a simple directness which makes for realism. Adams realized that frontier life furnished good material for narrative for he wrote a verse romance, Past Events in Kaffirland.⁽⁴⁾ That the value of this verse did

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1. ADAMS, The Narrative of Private Buck Adams..., p.61.
 2. Ibid, p.96.
 3. CUMMING, Op.cit. vol. 11, p. 367.
 4. "I wrote some verses entitled Past Events in Kaffirland, The copyright I sold to the Editor of the Cape Town Sam Slick for five pounds and fifty copies. The latter I distributed among my friends." The Narrative of Private Buck Adams, p.269. This probably refers to Sam Sly. His African Journal does not appear to contain any reference to these verses; Samons probably had them printed for Adams.

not rise above the level of doggerel we may conjecture from the following lines which appeared in the Graham's Town Journal on the 25th July, 1846 and which, on the evidence of comments in the diary, is almost certainly by Adams. The allusion is to an incident at Burns Hill near the Amatolas where the Kaffirs plundered a baggage train and the officers of the 7th Dragoon Guards lost a very large quantity of wine.

Maccomo, Kaffir Chief, to Messrs. Bell, Rennie & Co.,
Wine Merchants,
Edinburgh.

Gentlemen;
Having lately drank some sherry
Which really was delicious, very
The same as near as I can guess
You furnish to the Seventh Mess,
And finding in the Amatola
Good sherry is the best consola,
I request that you will send me
And 'twill very much befriend me
A pipe or two of the same wine,
A liquor truly most divine.
I've now drank all was in the waggons
We lately captured from the Draggons,
And though I feel quite loath to spare it
I fear shall have to broach the claret,
This order therefore pray fulfill
And with it send at once your bill.
A draft on some good house at Home-o
You'll quickly receive
From yours,
Maccomo.

An early example, for South Africa, of the rudimentary use of rhymed lines for humorous and ironic comment on the social scene.

Adams was much in demand as a singer of his own compositions at officer's parties (unfortunately none of these have been traced with certainty) but he may have taken part in the rendering of Kaatje Kokkelbek: or life among the Hottentots which was sung to the tune of "Calder Fair" in the Graham's Town amateur theatre. This satire on the philanthropists, (especially on those who ran the Hottentot missions) was popular in the Colony and doubtless brought the house down:

My name is Kaatje Kokkelbek,
I come from Katrivier,
Daar is van water geen gebrek,
But scarce of wine and beer.
Myn A B C at Ph'lipes school
I learnt a Kleine Beetje,
But left it just as great a fool
As gekke Tante Maitje. (1)

1. Published in San Sly's African Journal, vol, IV, Aug.20,1846.
p. 4.

It is a far cry from Kaatje to the satires of Campbell and the biting wit of Anthony Delius's The Great Divide.

That there should have been two private soldiers writing verse on the Cape frontier in the 1840s is a coincidence. So far no clues have been found to the identity of "Bahroo, a private" - as he signed himself - in the 91st regiment.

"Bahroo" found plenty of time to versify in spite of the hazards of campaigning; many of his compositions appeared in The Graham's Town Journal. The majority express the usual sentiments of the exile - whether soldier or civilian:

They tell me that the wild weeds grow
Around my childhood's home;
They say that all its summer flowers
Have died, and ceased to bloom;
The rank grass chokes their blossoming -
The buds that breathed the breath of spring. (1)

These lyrics are of no interest, but they have been preserved; this does not seem to have been the fate of Hintza; A poem by "Bahroo" which was reviewed by Sammons in his Journal in 1846. Sam Sly's comments emphasize the general view held at the Cape on the function of poetry:

"The Graham's Town Journal" he writes, "also, has been frequently relieved in its murderous and plundering reports, hard facts, and stern realities, by a happy sprinkling of sentiment and ideality from the same pen." (2)

A "happy sprinkling of sentiment and ideality" was what the reader expected from poetry. It was not frontier warfare as "Bahroo" must have known it - and as Adams described it - with its burning thirst, its assegai wounds and its memories of sights such as that of the soldier who had been bound to the waggon wheel and burnt alive - that we find in the extract from Hintza. It is romantic narrative in the style of Scott:

The mountains of Kaffraria loom'd
Through morning's mist; the valleys bloom'd
With Spring's young herbage, and look'd gay:
The rising sun with glittering ray
Peer'd o'er the Amatola heights,
As Hintza, with a band of horse,
Innurd to war and sleepless nights,
Rode forward tribute to enforce.
Come on, ye devastating horde!
Come on, swart Chief, rebellious lord!
Tribute ye crave? Justice is thine,
Rapacious wretch! They wait for thee:
Approach but the Colonial line,
And hearty shall thy welcome be.

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1. Also published in Sam Sly's African Journal, vol. 3, Nov. 27, 1845, p. 4.
 2. Sam Sly's African Journal, vol. 3, Feb. 26, 1846.

The gallant Smith for long had lain
In wait for this audacious Thane;
The camp was eager for the fray; (1)

We are back in the world of Marmion. The metre, the diction, the whole conception of Hintza "this chief of regal blood" who arrived in the British camp mounted on "A black steed with a shaggy mane," is in terms of Scottish border warfare, of feudal rebellion against a leige lord. Scott, popular in every place where English was read, must have struck a particularly sympathetic note on the Cape Frontier. "Bahroo" was probably familiar with such passages as this:

Next Marmion marked the Celtic race,
Of different language, form, and face,
A various race of man;
Just then the chiefs their tribes arrayed,
And wild and garish semblance made,
The chequered trows, and belted plaid,
And varying notes the war-pipes brayed
To every varying clan;
Wild through their red or sable hair
Looked out their eyes, with savage stare,
On Marmion as he passed. (2)

Sam Sly saw nothing incongruous in a version of Kaffir warfare based on romantic tales in a different setting, for realism appears to be the last quality he looked for in verse:

It will be seen amidst our advertising columns, that our poet, satisfied with his present productions, intends to issue others shortly; a happy proof that, notwithstanding the disturbances which surround him - being a soldier, and now in the very centre of the uproar - he still finds time for the pleasures of invention and the solace of the Muse. Long may he be happy with such companions, the comfort emanating from which the world can neither give nor take away - the trumpet disturb, nor the call "to arms" paralyze or remove. (3)

Whether "Bahroo" derived much comfort from his muse or whether he found it in a grave in Kaffirland we will probably never know. Harriet Ward, the wife of an officer in the same regiment, (a woman interested in everything and everyone around

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1. Extract from Hintza... quoted in Sam Sly's African Journal, Feb. 26, 1846. vol. 3. p.4.
 2. SCOTT, "Marmion", Canto V, The Poetical Works of...
 3. The advertisement to which Sam Sly refers ran:
"In the Press, and will be Published on the 15th March next, in One Vol., Foolscap, 8vo., Price 4s.6d. neatly bound in cloth, ROSABELLE, a Lay of the Sixteenth Century; RAPINE, a Poem in two Parts; and other Poems. By "Bahroo", author of "Hintza", etc. etc."

her) makes no mention of his name; neither does Adams. (1)

Mrs. Ward's novel, Jasper Lyle, A Tale of Kafirland (published in London in 1851 in two volumes) is, as far as I can ascertain, the first attempt of a writer in English to spin a narrative of any length out of first hand experience of life on the Cape Frontier. (2) Most of the events in Jasper Lyle... are based directly either upon the novelist's own experiences during the 1840s or upon tales which she probably heard first hand. Mrs. Ward occasionally published stories and articles in English journals; her best known work was a sort of guide to the Eastern Frontier. (3) In 1851 a Mrs. Lewins wrote about the novelist to Mrs. Hockly at Graaf-Reinet:

'Five years in Cafferland' - by which in this foolish country she got much fame and profit - Mother-Goose-Girl was her nickname on the frontier. A sensible, unpretending matter-of-fact (not of theory) account of things now going on. That is a great want at the present time. (4)

Mother-Goose-Girl's introduction to Africa was as the survivor of a shipwreck in Table Bay:

I sat on a chest with my child, near the fore-hatch, the ship continuing to drive, every moment striking against the sand, and our only hopes resting on the coming of the dawn, which would show us where we were, the floods of rain preventing the lightning - vivid as it was - from doing this distinctly. (5)

Mrs. Ward, her family and companions were saved because their ship, which was "very stout" withstood the battering of this storm long enough for the passengers to be rescued in boats and taken up onto the beach through the surf. The convicts in the "Waterloo" (which was also in the bay at that time) were not so lucky:

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1. Adams knew Mrs. Ward: "For some time past one of the Officers of my Regiment, Captain Bainbrick, had been very kind to me. (He) had introduced me to Mrs. Ward, wife of Captain Ward of the 91st Regiment. This lady was a great contributor to the Cape papers, also to several magazines at home... I have every reason to be proud of the great kindness I received from that lady." The Narrative of Private Buck Adams, p.90.
 2. The South African Novel in English does not include Jasper Lyle but Snyman mentions an earlier publication The English Boy at the Cape, (1835) by Edward Augustus Kendall, which, however "only covers the boy's journey to the Cape".
 3. WARD, Five Years in Kaffirland... 2 vols, 1848
 4. See the Pringle Letters, microfilm, Cory Library, Rhodes University.
 5. WARD, Five Years in Kaffirland... vol. 1, p.14.

In half an hour afterwards, her mainmast fell over her side, the ship parted in four different places, and in less than ten minutes upwards of 200 unfortunate beings were precipitated into the raging surf...many were crushed beneath the falling spars; ghastly faces gleamed up from the boiling waters, and with outstretched arms implored help from the shore. Eyes, glazed with agony and despair, burst from their sockets as the rising heads of the sufferers got jammed between floating timbers. (1)

These experiences of storm and shipwreck are almost exactly paralleled in the novel when the convict, Jasper Lyle, escapes from a sinking ship, swims ashore and eventually makes his way to the Eastern Frontier.

Mrs. Ward contrived to weave everything she learnt of Africa into the story of Jasper Lyle: - social life at Cape Town, the terrors of Kaffir attacks on isolated farmhouses, skirmishes between Boer and British, the gun-running racket, Boers on trek, mission life, Kaffir councils and torture. All this was grist to her mill.

Harriet Ward's first impressions of the frontier as she travelled up behind the regimental column marching from Port Elizabeth to Graham's Town, is reminiscent of Pringle's comments in his Narrative on a similar occasion. The officer's wife wrote:

Imagine a vast plain of fair green meadow-land, intersected, and in fact divided into parterres, by tall, thick bushes, which here and there grew in clumps and copses, giving the ground the appearance of a vast park laid out with a great deal of taste. (2)

Even allowing for the more luxuriant, less eroded scene of that date one cannot help wondering if the countryside ever bore such a civilized aspect. However, as Mrs. Ward was to discover, though there are parts of Albany which might be fairly called "park-like" the similarity was a very superficial one. When she came, after some experience of Africa, to describe Kaffirland in her novel, she wrote:

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1. WARD, Five Years in Kaffirland... p.19.
 2. Ibid, vol.1, p.61.

It is a beautiful land, with its open savannahs, its wooded glens, its heathy mountains, its green and undulating parks - nature's plantations... But from these scenes the traveller may suddenly find himself translated to the most sterile moors, stretching out in apparently illimitable space, or bounded by bald rocks, which offer no "shadow from the heat", no "refuge from the storm"... There is nothing living to be seen in these inhospitable regions, save when the hungry travellers pause to "kill and eat", and lo! as the scent of blood rises in the atmosphere, a solitary speck hovers in the sky, another, and another, and, like airy demons waiting for their prey, the asphogels, the gigantic vultures of South Africa, keep watch over the bivouac". (1)

Elsewhere she comments:

Everything in Africa is in extreme. The air is at one moment perfectly calm, the next wild with terrific storms... For months, the long droughts parch the earth, the rivers may be forded on foot, the flocks and herds pant for refreshing waters and green herbage. Suddenly, "a cloud no bigger than a man's hand" appears on the horizon, and lo! the elements rage and swell", thunder booms upon the air, darkness covers the land, the arrows of the Almighty dart from the angry heavens, striking death and terror wheresoever they fall. (2)

Mrs. Ward is often guilty of that bathetic and sentimental gushing which seems to have found a market in her day; for instance her heroines are apt to break out into such exclamations as, "Marmaduke, my love, my husband, do not send me from you". She is at her best when she remains as faithful as possible to her own considerable powers of observation. A passage such as the following (for all its grandiloquence and false rhetoric) shows a greater degree of awareness of Africa as well as a greater sensitivity to words and to prose rhythms than can be detected in the "poems" of most of the early frontier versifiers:

There go the gnocs, tossing their manes,
leaping, plunging, half in play, yet dangerous even
to their fellows: see how they wheel round, advancing
with eyes glaring through their shaggy forelocks. A
herd of zebras are comparatively tame to these eager
restless things; but in greater contrast to the gnocs
are the heavy eilands, fat and sleek, fit mark for the
hunter's poisoned arrows. There are ostriches, too,
stalking about; and nearer the bushmen's haunts, but
wary of her neighbours, the pauw, or the wild turkey
of South Africa, has her brood; far up in the air,
between the clear sky and the fertile plain, rises the
secretary bird, with the doomed snake in his beak.
The serpent writhes in its new element, swinging to
and fro; up! up! above the rocks and sea, the bird
swoops higher and higher to drop its prey upon a
table-rock; its back is broken. Lie there, powerless,
terrible and fatal, and doomed wretch, till your
tormentor returns and finishes the deed begun! (3)

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1. WARD, Jasper Lyle, vol.1, p.1.
 2. Ibid. Five Years in Kaffirland, vol.1, p.235.
 3. Ibid. Jasper Lyle, vol. 1, p.21.

Very probably some of the descriptions of hunting, of African animals and of birds in Jasper Lyle were borrowed from conversations with men like Gordon Cumming.

Not unnaturally for a soldier's wife, Mrs. Ward emphasizes that the Kaffirs are savages and not to be trusted. Her opinions on such matters were circumscribed but she was a woman who tried to make objective judgments and, in some ways, her outlook is realistic and refreshing without being too doctrinaire:

"It was worthy of English philanthropy" she wrote,

To rescue the Fingoes from their captivity, under their hard task-masters, the Kaffirs; but their permitted idleness is abominable... The Missionaries are indefatigable in teaching them their catechism; but no attempt is made to fit the women for service. Idle they are, and idle they will be; and we foster their idleness by protecting them with troops, while they absolutely refuse to milk the cows, unless they want money (1) at the moment.

Her philanthropy (though she probably did not realize it) is only a sentimental cloak. She reported what she observed and cannot be expected to have argued that such "idleness" is typical of all primitive economies. Unlike Harris (who seldom detected any good in members of "the lesser breeds") Mrs. Ward developed a particular sympathy for the Hottentot people. She pictures a soldier in the Cape Corps:

There he is, in his bush-coloured jacket, clay-coloured leather trousers, seated on his sturdy little steed, as though nothing had ever parted, or could ever part, the horse and his rider. Before him, on his light dragoon saddle, is rolled his cloak; behind him, his blanket, corn-sack, and nose-bag; a slight change of shoes, trousers, etc., is carried, in the haversack in light marching order, and in a valise on other occasions. His double-barrelled percussion carbine, wrapped in sheepskin, rests its muzzle in a holster adapted for the purpose; and across his shoulder is slung his belt, a pouch containing twenty rounds of ammunition, and, occasionally, a canteen. When it is remembered that the average height of a Hottentot soldier is five feet one, and that he is slight in proportion, it may be imagined what a figure he cuts when accoutred for the field; but he is the most efficient soldier for this colony for all that. He is keen-witted and intelligent, patient of hunger, thirst, and fatigue, active as a monkey, and possessed of a perfect knowledge of the country, and occasionally of the Kaffir language. (2)

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1. WARD, Five Years in Kaffirland, vol. 1.p.110. She continues: "All the miseries of the Colony arise from the mistaken philanthropy displayed towards the coloured inhabitants, who are as insolent as lazy...A treadmill is much wanted in Graham's Town..."
 2. Ibid. p.173.

Mrs. Ward's respect for the Hottentot soldier is coupled with her recognition of the possibility of virtue in the Bushmen (a race despised on the frontier as being almost less than animals). May - a Bushman who had been found abandoned as a child and who is brought up by a missionary - is one of the most appealing and best drawn characters in her novel.

Her portraits of the Frontier Boers are not so flattering. In her descriptions she is supported by most of the reliable travellers of the period, including Barrow and Cumming.⁽¹⁾ In reading her condescending, at times mildly satirical descriptions of the Dutch graziers, Pringle's remark that the Boers in the Eastern Frontier districts were among the most backward and uncivilized of their countrymen, should be remembered. At the same time the officers in Mrs. Ward's novel were over conscious of their God-given destiny as rulers and civilizers⁽²⁾ (a divine gift the authenticity of which it never occurred to them to question) so it is not surprising that they did little to conceal their contempt for a people who appeared to limit their energies to the maintenance of hand-to-mouth existence.⁽²⁾ Here is a picture of a Boer frontiersman from Jasper Lyle drawn, one is inclined to venture, from the life:

The captain of the bivouac, Lodewyk, a hunter, with a face almost covered with hair, arms bared to the elbow, but garnished, Kafir fashion, with bangles of brass, and a ring of ivory, a large straw hat on his head, and equipped with leather trousers, girded with a belt containing immense pistols and carrying besides an elephant gun, stepped forwards." (3)

Lodewyk was obviously not typical, but he sounds a real enough eccentric.

On another occasion the British officer, Ormsby (one of the principal characters in Jasper Lyle) is depicted as being somewhat over fastidious in his reluctance even to shake hands with these Dutch peasants. However his hesitation is more or less justified (in the opinion of the novelist) when

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1. For an a priori account of this subject see VAN ZYL, The Afrikaner Way of Life as depicted in South African English fiction.
 2. "I could not but commune in my own mind on the ways of that inscrutable and unquestionable Providence, by the working of whose will, England, from her original state of ignorance, insignificance and barbarism is now the chief ruling power in the world and sendeth her ships and her soldiers...even to the uttermost parts of the earth."
WARD, The Cape and the Kaffirs, 3rd ed. 1851. p.59.
 3. WARD, Jasper Lyle, vol.11, p.306.

Ormsby and his brother officer are shown inside the Boer dwelling:

The aspect of the principal apartment and only sitting-room of the house did not strike the travellers as inviting, and to Ormsby, the slaughtered sheep suspended from the roof, with his head downwards, and dripping with blood, was particularly revolting; turning his back to it in disgust, he found himself face to face with two enormous people, the grandfather and grandmother of the family. He might have doubted their being alive, but for the pipe in the patriarch's mouth. The ancient dame sat almost immovable, but a slight tremor in the head indicated a palsy. A teapot stood on a little table beside her, and with her feet turned backwards round the legs of the chair, and her arms folded under her apron, she looked as if she had dressed herself in the round-eared cap and ample gown of voerchits, a coarse print, manufactured in England, for once and for aye, never to be changed. (1)

Many of the characters in Jasper Lyle belong peculiarly to the Cape frontier but they are drawn, as it were, from the outside; they are born of the kind of detached and superficial observation adequate in a guide-book but not in a novel.

Nearly thirty years were to pass before a bulky brown paper parcel, sewn up in a piece of coarse cotton cloth, was sent from this same frontier district to Mrs. John Brown, a friend of Olive Schreiner's, living in Lancashire. Years later Mrs. Brown wrote:

When I opened it in those wintry surroundings... a flood of emotion came over me, for I was met with the strange, pungent smell of wood fires, familiar to those who know a Karroo farm...but I felt as if the story belonged to me, because there, in that town, with its thousands of people, there was only one besides myself who had seen the great African moon, or knew how it glinted on the corrugated iron roofs, or threw the shadow of the milk bush on the dry earth. (2)

The manuscript was very indifferently written, with blots and erasures on nearly every page as well as grease marks from the dripping of a tallow candle. A little later, re-written and published under the title The Story of an African Farm (5)

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1. WARD, Jasper Lyle, vol. 1, p.10.
 2. BROWN, Olive Schreiner, Memories of a Friendship. C.T. 1923.
 3. "I insisted on An African Farm being published at 1/- because the book was published by me for working men. I wanted to feel sure boys like Waldo could buy a copy, and feel they were not alone." See J.Cronwright-Schreiner, The Letters of Olive Schreiner, p.209.

this novel brought fame to a poverty-stricken governess, the daughter of a German missionary and his English wife.

It is not possible here to attempt a full assessment of the work of Olive Schreiner but, in any study of the emergence of a body of South African literature her writings cannot be ignored. She was the first to write in English not merely "about" Africa but in a way which demonstrated that this continent and its people were an organic part both of her life and of her work.

"I would like to show you Africa, my Africa," she once wrote to Havelock Ellis, "I'm glad I wasn't born in any other land on earth." (1)

Olive Schreiner's first published novel is largely autobiographical. It is so not simply in the sense that the three major characters, Lyndall, Emily and Waldo are all to some extent facets of her own personality; not that the endearing Uncle Otto is a portrait of her own father; not that Tant Sannie is a half serious, half slap-stick caricature of an Afrikaner woman whom she disliked; it is rather that the hardness, the solitude, the introspection and often the despair of her early life are an essential quality of the book.

"There is too much moralising in the story," she wrote in another letter to Ellis, "but when one is leading an absolutely solitary life one is apt to use one's work as Gregory used his letters, as an outlet for all one's superfluous feelings, without asking too closely whether they can or cannot be artistically expressed there." (2)

Olive Schreiner's parents had landed at the Cape in 1838; it was not long since Maccoono had invaded the colony while the settler city of Grahamstown was still an outpost of civilization on a turbulent frontier. The missionaries trekked into the wild Kat river area; from there they went on to Philipolis in the Free State. In 1855 Olive was born at the Wittebergen Mission station on the borders of Basutoland.

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1. CRONWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The Letters of Olive Schreiner, p.200.
 2. Ibid. p.12.

According to her husband, Cronwright-Schreiner, Olive retained a vivid memory of her childhood on isolated mission stations, far from doctor, teacher or neighbours, in a country still teeming with game and among a native people but lately decimated by the great cattle killing of 1857. She remembered the journey to Healdtown when she was six,

the camp fires at the waggon...the cries of the
kiwietjes round the outspans at night, the (1)
still nights and the stars.

It is on such a night that The Story of an African Farm
begins:

The full African moon poured down its light
from the blue sky into the wide, lonely plain.
The dry, sandy earth, with its coating of stunted
"karroo" bushes a few inches high, the low hills,
that skirted the plain, the milk-bushes with their
long, finger-like leaves, all were touched by a
weird and an almost oppressive beauty as they lay (2)
in the white light."

Nowhere before, in either the prose or the verse written
since Englishmen had settled in the Cape, had there appeared
descriptions of Africa so true and so evocative as these.

The buildings and the people are an integral part of the scene:

The farm by daylight was not as the farm by
moonlight. The plain was a weary flat of loose red
sand sparsely covered by dry karroo bushes, that
cracked beneath the tread like tinder, and showed
the red earth everywhere. Here and there a milk-
bush lifted its pale-coloured rods, and in every
direction the ants and beetles ran about in the
blazing sand. The red walls of the farmhouse, the
zinc roofs of the outbuildings, the stone walls of
the "kraals", all reflected the fierce sunlight,
till the eye ached and blanched. No tree or shrub
was to be seen far or near. The two sunflowers
that stood before the door, outstared by the sun,
drooped their brazen faces to the sand; and the
little cicada-like insects cried aloud among the
stones of the "kopje".

The Boer-woman, seen by daylight, was even
less lovely than when, in bed, she rolled and
dreamed. She sat on a chair in the great front
room, with her feet on a wooden stove, and wiped
wiped her flat face with the corner of her apron,
and drank coffee, and in Cape Dutch swore that
the beloved weather was damned. (3)

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1. CROWWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The Life of Olive Schreiner, p.65.
 2. SCHREINER, The Story of an African Farm, (Collins) p.1.
 3. Ibid, p.5.

Passages such as these depend for their effect but little on an occasional local word like "kopjie" or on the literal translation of colloquial phrase "die lieue wear is vervloek"; they are memorable by virtue of the simplicity and directness with which the author has re-created the very sight, texture and atmosphere of the Karroo farm.

Later in her life Olive Schreiner made a distinction between what she called "plain" and "ribbed" writing:

I will explain to you about my style when I see you. I never know why I write things in a certain way when I write them, but I can generally find out if I think afterwards. What you mean is what I call "writing ribbed". I don't know when I invented that term for a certain style of writing. I am changing a whole chapter of From Man to Man from what I call the plain into the "ribbed" style. Sometimes the plain is right, sometimes the ribbed. I think I generally write descriptions in the plain (1) and philosophize or paint thought in the ribbed.

And again, in another illuminating letter:

Long ago I used to think that it was quite a discovery of mine that there is as much structure in prose as in verse. The difference is that in verse...you are able to see clearly by looking at the work what the structure is, whereas in prose (of course, I am not speaking of unstructural prose, but of prose which has an artistic structure) it is sometimes next to impossible to discover the law according to which it has been constructed. ...take the first three chapters in Revelations in our English translation, one feels the structure, but I have not yet been able to bring sufficient analysis to bear on them to discover their law. With regard to my own work, I feel what I must, and what I must not, do; I know perfectly when a line or a word or a sentence breaks the law, and it causes me agony to let it go. But what law it breaks I don't know. I suppose that I could find out if I gave enough time to the analysis. But it wouldn't help one a bit in one's work, one must only follow one's feeling there. I found out when I was quite a child that if I changed one word I had to change the whole sentence, and that writing "ribbed" was quite a different thing from writing plain. But I didn't know what writing "ribbed" meant, nor do I know now. (2)

As these extracts from her letters explain it was not a theory of style which Olive Schreiner held but an instinctive feeling for the rightness of a word and for the appropriate

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1. CRONWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The Letters of Olive Schreiner, p.36.
 2. Ibid, p.70. See p.161 for further comments in a letter to Havelock Ellis on the same subject.

prose rhythms for a particular passage. On the whole The Story of an African Farm appears to substantiate her belief that she generally wrote descriptions in the "plain" and attempted to "paint thought in the ribbed." It is, however, not possible to make a clear distinction between them in practice for there are passages in the novel (particularly those in which detailed and realistic descriptions help to transmit and vitalize her ideas) in which it would simply be artificial and arbitrary to state that here she is writing "plain" and that elsewhere her style is "ribbed".

Olive Schreiner's letters reveal her critical introspection. This is especially remarkable considering her lack of formal education and her dependence during the most impressionable period of her life, on the few books which had been given her, (of which the most influential seem to have been Spencer's First Principles and Gibbon's Decline and Fall) and on those which an enterprising doctor had induced the frontier dorp of Cradock to stock in its library. As was natural for the child of a missionary, Olive made an early acquaintance with the Bible from which she could repeat long passages from memory.

In spite of her precocious reading, she never really learnt to spell or punctuate correctly. Cronwright-Schreiner, in his life of his wife, quotes a passage from her journal written at the age of ten. The paragraph is unusual for a child in the sweep of its sentences and in its insistence upon the necessity of solitude:

Moses learned truths from the time when he wandered in the lonely wilderness of Sinai to the days when Martin Luther wept and prayed in the convent cells and cloisters of Auhse down to this nineteenth century all great truths have first seen the light (and) the found (foundations?) of all great works been laid in hours of solitude and silence whether it were in the heart of great cities or the solitude of everlasting mountains, all the greatest truths and works the world has known have first been laid or had their power laid in hours of solitude and quiet. (1)

1. CROWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The Life of Olive Schreiner, p.69.

For both Waldo and Lyndall, in the novel solitude is essential; the solitude to be found in the vast, open tracts of veld for which Olive (when she was in Europe) so often pined and of which she wrote, paradoxically, that in them "one never is alone".

Waldo is so much at one with the veld, with its plants and its creatures that there are times when it seems as though the very stones are speaking to him:

Sometimes...I lie under there with my sheep, and it seems that the stones are really speaking - speaking of the old things, of the time when the strange fishes and animals lived that are turned into stone now, and the lakes were here; and then of the time when the little Bushmen lived here, so small and so ugly, and used to sleep in the wild dog holes, and in the "sloots", and eat snakes, and shot the bucks with their poisoned arrows. It was one of them, one of these old wild Bushmen, that painted those,...one who was different from the rest. He used to kneel here naked, painting, painting, painting; and he wondered at the things he made himself...Now the Boers have shot them all, so that we never see a yellow face peeping out among the stones."

(1)

That passage is memorable for itself but it is memorable too in the history of South African literature for in it the Karroo is as much part of the narrative as *Wuthering Heights* is in the Bronte novel. In addition the yellow face of the Bushman artist is the face of an individual human being.

Waldo is not even aware how much the fauna, how much the Karroo, means to him. He thinks that the stranger is mocking when he turns upon him:

"Boy," he said, "you are happy to be here."

At the end of the story Waldo sits upon the ground with his arms folded and his hat slouched down over his face; he "looked out into the yellow sunshine that tinted even the very air with the colour of ripe corn, and was happy". That is how Waldo dies, in his sleep, with the fauna chickens climbing companionably over him; one "rubbed its little head softly against his black curls" - alone in the sunshine and solitude of the Karroo.

1. SCHREINER, The Story of an African Farm, p.17.

Inevitably The Story of a South African Farm has either been overestimated or dismissed with contempt. Compared with the work of the great nineteenth century novelists writing in England it is not a great book, but Francis Brett Young came near the truth when he pronounced it "the most perfect example of an imperfect masterpiece ever written". Certainly, in comparison with Jasper Iyle or with any other fiction written in South Africa up to the time of its publication, it is a work of literature. No one was more aware of the novel's defects than its authoress:

The only thing that comforts me is that, one day just before I left, I sat with The African Farm by my stream at Lelie Kloof, ...and such disgust came over me at the way I had expressed what was so clear to me, that I nearly threw it into the water and let it drown for ever. One day, if I live, I will do work that satisfies me, but all I have done I hate.

(1)

If Olive Schreiner's novel marks the first true flowering from the African soil of the creative spirit in English literature, so her work provides a landmark for another reason. The hardships, dangers and cruelties of frontier life tended to condition the average settler to regarding his black and brown neighbours as less than human; but the effect of her experiences upon this woman was quite different. Olive Schreiner was not afraid to question or to doubt accepted values. On the contrary she was prepared to examine the reality of a multi-racial society.

All her writing reveals an intense compassion for those who suffer but it is particularly in Trooper Peter Maket of Moshonaland that Olive Schreiner strove to express her views on the subject of the black man and his relationship with the white man. Her purpose in writing the novel was frankly political and moral; the book is a condemnation of the activities of the Chartered (British South Africa) Company, of which Cecil Rhodes was chairman. Published at the time of the Jameson Raid with a Frontispiece (From a Photograph taken in Matabeleland) depicting six or seven white men standing nonchalantly round a tree, smoking their pipes while they watch three Africans dangling in their death throes, Trooper Peter... was intended to arouse indignation. The sincerity of the author's purpose is

1. CROWWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The letters of Olive Schreiner, p.97

proved, not only by the sincerity of the tale itself but by the fact that Olive had detected much to admire in Rhodes (1) and it does not seem to have been easy for her to denounce his actions publically:

The book I have written has cost me more than anything I ever wrote, and I am broadening my back already for the Chartered Company attacks. (2)

Trooper Peter Halket is a simple young man who hopes to make his fortune in Africa. One night he is separated from his comrades and finds himself alone in the veld where he sits beside a fire and dreams of his childhood in England, his good mother (who takes in washing) and of his prospects:

He resolved he would make a great deal of money, and she would live with him...All men made money when they came to South Africa - Barney Barnato, Rhodes - they all made money out of the country...why should not he! (3)

Christ appears to Peter, introducing himself as a Jew of Palestine. A long dialogue ensues which takes up the greater part of the novel enabling the author, through the words of Christ, to condemn those white men who show no brotherly love for the African. This is mainly a very thinly disguised attack on the atrocities perpetrated by the Company during the Matabele rising of 1896.

Rhodes is quoted as saying, "I prefer land to niggers", while the unfeeling, unChristian attitude of those men who simply adopt the views of others who should know better is revealed in the artless conversation of Peter. Peter confides to Christ:

It's better fun...having these black women than whites. The whites you've got to support, but the niggers support you! And when you've done with them you can just get rid of them. I'm all for the nigger gals. (4)

The Trooper naively explains how good he was to two girls he had, and how one had the impudence to run off with her own

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1. "One naturally feels anxious about him. Any accident to him would, I believe, mean the putting back of our South African development for fifty years."
Letter to W.T. Stead, CROWWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The Letters of Olive Schreiner, p.206.
 2. Letter to J.T. Lloyd, CROWWRIGHT-SCHREINER, The Letters of Olive Schreiner, p.223.
 3. SCHREINER, Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland, p.27.
 4. Ibid. p.55.

husband. One of the women was going to have his child:

I expect they did away with it before it came;
they've no hearts, these niggers; they'd think
nothing of doing that with a white man's child.
They've no hearts; they'd rather go back to a
black man, however well you've treated them. (1)

Gradually, through this simple, very clumsy literary device, the brutality of the Chartered Company's policy (as well as the immorality of the views held by so many white men in Africa) is exposed. The theme is developed further through a series of dull and somewhat mawkish parables. Eventually the stranger tells Peter that he belongs to:

the strongest company on earth...We have among
us men of every race and from every land. (2)

Christ converts Peter to a Christian, humanitarian theory of race relationships:

In that small spot where alone on earth your
will rules, bring there into being the kingdom
to-day. Love your enemies; do good to them
that hate you. (3)

In Part II Peter finds his comrades and angers his Captain by telling him that he has no moral right to hang a wounded nigger whom the soldiers have found hiding in a cave. As a result the infuriated Captain orders that the nigger "be potted first thing in the morning" and that Halket is to do the shooting. During the night Peter releases the prisoner. In doing so he is discovered and deliberately murdered by his commanding officer. After the incident one of the Englishmen in the company exclaims, "There is no God in Mashonaland."

As a literary work the novel is very poor. It has even less plot than The Story of an African Farm, and neither the atmosphere nor the language compensate for this lack. It is too frankly evangelical in tone; its simplicity - though sincere enough - is without the passionate imaginative intensity which is responsible for so much of the attractiveness of the earlier novel. Nevertheless the story of Trooper Halket embodies (what even the most superficial observer of modern South Africa will recognize) two totally divergent attitudes towards the black man which are part of the fabric of our society. A very slight incident will serve to illustrate this.

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1. SCHREIFNER, Trooper Peter Halket in Mashonaland, p.69.
 2. Ibid. p.102.
 3. Ibid. p.187.

The stranger in the novel questions Peter. He asks him why he thinks it right that the Armenians should resist Turkish domination when he thinks it wrong that the black man should rebel against the rule of the Chartered Company. Peter replies, "but we are white men, and so are the Armenians - almost - " Then he glanced at the stranger's dark face, and added quickly, "At least, it's not the colour that matters, you know. I rather like a dark face, my mother's eyes are brown - but the Armenians, you know, they've got long hair like us."

"Oh, it is the hair, then, that matters," said the stranger softly.' (1)

To anyone familiar with South Africa this extract has a strangely contemporary ring. For all its jejune structure Trooper Peter Halket in Mashonaland captured with frightening clarity, the emotional chaos and the muddled thinking on the question of race which perpetually harasses so many English speaking South Africans. Nor is this, by any means, the only example of the uncanny insight displayed by Olive Schreiner into the mind of her countrymen - both English and Boer. Thoughts on South Africa (2) (collected and published by her husband three years after her death) but written before the Anglo-Boer war, deserves to be better known. These essays are far more than accurate observations on social life among the frontier farmers; they are, in many cases, sensitive, profound studies of the people she knew and loved, linked with an almost poetical and prophetic comprehension of the complexities of the South African scene.

Two of the best of them, The Boer and The Psychology of the Boer stress the extraordinary isolation of the Boer - more than that of any other emigrant to Africa - from his parent peoples in Europe:

he has not lost his race by mingling it with the barbarous people among whom he settled: yet he is as much severed from the lands of his ancestors and from Europe, as though three thousand instead of two hundred years had elapsed since he left it. (3)

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1. SCHREINER, Trooper Peter Halket in Mashonaland, p.98.
 2. Ibid, Thoughts on South Africa, Fisher Unwin, 1923.
 3. Ibid, p.69.

Olive Schreiner gives, among other reasons for this isolation, the emergence of the "Taal" which cut the frontier Boer off almost completely from Europe because he could no longer speak a European language. The conservatism and illiberalism which were already so marked a feature of South African frontier society were increased by this further severance from the Europe of the French Revolution and the Romantic Revival. The isolation of the Afrikaner did not leave the English speaking settler and his descendants unaffected, for the Frontier was acting as a continual solvent; breaking down barriers between Boer and Briton.

Olive Schreiner, for many years, stands almost alone in her recognition of her African environment as an organic whole. She wrote of the one subtle but

"very real bond, which united all South Africans, and differentiates us from all other peoples in the world. This bond is our mixture of races itself." (1)

By this she did not mean that she was an advocate of miscegenation (she was not) but that the various races in South Africa were so interdependent upon one another that:

"Wherever a Dutchman, an Englishman, a Jew, and a native are superimposed, there is that common South African condition through which no dividing line can be drawn. The only form of organization which can be healthily or naturally assumed by us is one which takes cognizance of this universal condition." (2)

This is a far cry from Mrs. Ward who exclaimed "People are beginning now-a-days to know where Kafirland is" but who was scarcely in a position to conceive of "Kafirland" in such terms as occurred to Olive Schreiner who described it, as she knew it, from the inside:

Here and there a few tufts of grass or small succulent plants had sprung up among its stones, and on the very summit a clump of prickly-pears lifted their thorny arms, and reflected, as from mirrors, the moonlight on their broad, fleshy leaves. At the foot of the "kopje" lay the homestead. First, the stone-walled "sheep kraals" and Kaffir huts; beyond them the dwelling-house - a square red-brick building with thatched roof. (3)

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1. SCHREINER, Thoughts on South Africa, p.61.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid. The Story of a South African Farm, p.1.

Before that description could be written, men like Harris had to explore the frontier, to discover what they could of the actual physical nature of the southern part of the continent. At the same time, parallel with this process of exploration, the hunters were familiarizing English speaking people with the names and characteristics of the indigenous wild life of Africa. From Cumming's giraffe to the green fly which Olive Schreiner described as laying her silver eggs on the karroo-bush there were a multitude of living forms strange to Europe to which both writer and reader needed to be introduced.

One final example may help to show the significant development in this process of acclimatization which had taken place between Harris and Schreiner. This example is the use which the novelist makes of the ancient theme of the hunter in the story which the Stranger tells Waldo.⁽¹⁾ There is nothing necessarily "African" about this allegory; that is, nothing obtrusively so. However, the descriptions, such as that of the "vast white bird, with silver wings outstretched, sailing in the everlasting blue," do not belong entirely to Europe. On the other hand, the theme, man's search for truth, man's ability to achieve greatness through his own efforts, through his own suffering, is drawn from ideas which Olive Schreiner had learnt from her contacts with "Western European Civilization". Part of the interest of the story lies in this union and in the fact that in "Waldo's Stranger" the hunter on the African Frontier is no longer concerned, like a butcher, with meat, but has become a hunter in search of Truth.

1. "Waldo's Stranger", Part II, Chap. 2 in The Story of a South African Farm. Republished separately as "The Hunter", in South African Stories ed. WRIGHT, 1960.

CHAPTER 4.

DIGGERS AND DOGGEREL.

Prospecting in the brain's recesses
Seek now the nuggets of your prime,
And sift the gold dust of your dreams
From drifted sands of time.

"Johannesburg", William Plomer.

From the day in 1867 when a farmer named Van Niekerk noticed a group of children playing with a strange bright stone, began a series of events which radically affected the history of Africa south of the Limpopo. For three centuries and more the world had sailed past the Cape of Good Hope in search of the riches of the east, little dreaming what wealth lay hidden northwards:

It was too good to believe - or to some perhaps too bad - that there should suddenly come a plethora of diamonds from among the Hottentots. (1)

Less than twenty years later - when the Kimberley diamond diggings had grown to a sprawling town - the future of a relatively simple frontier society was bedevilled still further by the discovery of "the greatest gold-mines of all history, ancient and modern". (2)

A predominantly rural community was faced with the prospect of urbanization; a new and complex element had invaded South Africa. Where the buck had fallen to the hunter's gun, where the hard-boy still guarded the cattle through the hot summer's day, the frontiersman watched the beginnings of an industrial revolution. In Europe such a revolution had been painful enough but here, in Africa, there was to be almost no period of transition to ease the pangs. Within less than a man's life-span cities would replace the outspans, while a miscellaneous population of miners, technicians, financiers, traders, adventurers and remittance men was projected into frontier society.

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1. TROLLOPE, South Africa, p. 153.
 2. DE KIEWIT, A History of South Africa, p.114.
"From 1886 the story of South Africa is the story of gold".

The gold deposits of the Witwatersrand were in low grade ores, making cheap labour essential if mining was to prove profitable. As a result the black man as well as the white was caught up in the strong currents disturbing the old pastoral, patriarchal way of life. Antony Trollope, a shrewd, painstaking observer, recorded his impressions of Kimberley in 1877. The diggings, he noticed, were attracting thousands of black men to work for money. Work, Trollope believed, was the best civilizer so he saw in the expanding industry a hope that the savage might be transformed:

They are not Christians. They do not yet care much about breeches. They do not go to school. But they are orderly. They come to work at six in the morning and they go away at six in the evening. They have an hour in the middle of the day, and know that they have to work during the other hours. They take their meals regularly and, what is the best of all, they are learning to spend their money instead of carrying it back to their Chiefs. (1)

In the past men had been too busy building and protecting settlements to write verses; now, for the most part, they were too busy making and losing fortunes. Here and there a man, the merchant Albert Broderick (2) for instance, scribbled away in odd moments light-hearted doggerel which is still capable of revealing glimpses of his world; particularly of Uitlander society before the Anglo-Boer war.

The sense of estrangement is still present in Broderick, as in "The Exiled Bell":

And all is left behind! an exile, I
Must never more be heard where I was born.
No more brown English lasses in the corn
Shall turn to hear me as the eve draws nigh. (3)

However the nostalgic tone is no longer the dominant one: this Kimberley trader acknowledges in his writing that he belongs to Africa in a way that would have been impossible to the first

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1. TROLLOPE, South Africa, p.171
 2. BRODERICK, (Brodrick) A, Many of his verses appeared in local newspapers under the pseudonyms of "Vaalpens" and "Transvaal Englishman" (the latter a pen-name soon to be made impossible by the Boer War). Broderick published two volumes: Fifty fugitive fancies in verse, Pretoria, Celliers, 1875, and A Wanderer's Rhymes, Lond. 1898. The second volume was popular enough for a second edition to be published in 1905 with forty-one illustrations.
 3. Ibid. "The Exiled Bell", Fifty Fugitive Fancies in Verse, p.5.

English settlers. Broderick's domestication in Africa is evident (to give but one instance) in the natural way he recites place names:

Is it past the Blueberg, and through the fly,
Where the men of Zoutspansberg used to die?
Is it north of Mapog or Sekookoon,
... ..
Near Origstadt or St. Lucia's Bay, (1)
Where heaps of the bones of our fathers lay?

Reading Broderick one becomes aware that Pringle is still the dominant "literary" influence upon South African versifiers. "On the Road" is the merchant's version of "Afar in the Desert". The theme is identical, even to the inclusion of "old Swartboy" as a substitute for "the silent Bushboy".

Oh! give me a 'Spider', with four trotting nags,
When the sun is just tipping the thorn-dotted crags!
When the veld is all sparkling with dew-drops of light
That have fall'n from the fringe of the mantel of Night!
With a good chum in front, and old Swartboy behind -
And not e'en the tiniest cloud on the mind;
When the Town with its day, full of trouble and care,
Fades away like the smoke from our pipes in the air!
And the 'rhythmical beat' of the hoofs on the ground,
Like the music of some brave old war song may sound!
Oh, it's pleasant to live for long days on the road, (2)
Far from Man and his 'digging', or settled abode:

This has certainly no pretensions to "poetry". All the same the romantic theme of the traveller across the veld, across the desert, the lone man in search of peace, away from "the busy hum of men" is becoming established as a recurrent one, in South African English writing.

The characters in Broderick's pages are conventional types. Most of them are in no way peculiarly African; they might just as well be in California, or Australia or the Klondyke. The digger especially has been other places before and will possibly be encountered elsewhere in the future, but here he is for the first time in Southern Africa:

Here lies a digger, all his chips departed -
A splint of nature, bright, and ne'er down-hearted:
He worked in many claims, but now (though stumped)
He's got a claim above that can't be jumped.
May he turn out a pure and spotless "wight",
When the Great Judge shall sift the wrong from right,
And may his soul, released from this low Babel,
Be found a gem on God's great sorting table. (3)

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1. BRODERICK, "The Better Land", Fifty Fugitive Fancies in Verse, p.3.
 2. Ibid, "On the Road", A Wanderer's Rhymes, (New ed.1905)
 3. Ibid, "Epitaph on a Diamond Digger", Fifty Fugitive Fancies in Verse. p.80.

We are reminded of the uneasy marriage between frontier and a mushrooming urban society as the figure of the idealized hunter pops up again beside the digger:

In the wild forest half his life was spent,
His book was Nature, and in leaf and tree,
And rock, and bird, and beast, his eye could see
The great Creator's message earthward sent.

... ..
And on this Hero's grave (scarce known to fame),
Who in all trials still lived undefiled,
Let only this be written 'neath his name:
"BRAVE AS A LION, SIMPLE AS A CHILD". (1)

At times Broderick describes the petty irritations, the discomforts of frontier life from the point of view of the educated Englishman who has not yet managed to forget his exile. The verse has no distinction but the effect aimed at is realistic. The unfortunate "Rocinek" is pictured tormented by ants, ticks, snakes, locusts and the heat of the sun. Flies swarm over the food, the mutton is high, insidious white ants crawl

Down through the thatch, in through the wall
Eat up your rafters, swallow your beams,
Come down your bookshelves in tiny streams. (2)

African scenery offers this exile no consolation. In the evening he wanders "O'er the green" (a ridiculous word for the multitudinous yellows, browns and lilacs of the district Broderick was describing). The sense of space is not felt as exhilarating:

This endless waste can never start
Dear slumbering memories from the heart.

The absence of any imprint of man upon the landscape, of any sign of civilization, depresses the exile:

Where are the songs, the deeds of fame?...
Where are the Castles? ancient Halls?...
Where are the groves, the stately trees,
Breathing of old-world histories. (3)

Worse than the monotony of the landscape is the lack of any cultural stimulation:

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1. BRODERICK, "Hartley, the Hunter", A Wanderer's Rhymes, p.19.
 2. Ibid., "African Bitters", A Wanderer's Rhymes, (new ed.1905)
 3. Ibid.

It's a shame
To pass one's life in this dull way;
What shall we do? or think? or say?
Shall we sit together, dear, and read
What's said of the Author of "Adam Bede"?
Or what Miss Braddon lately tells
Of horrid secrets, and drops in wells?
Or shall we read in pleasant pain,
Forster, while Dickens "lives" again?
Or shall we lighter matter seek?
A magazine! a smart critique? (1)

To the digger, the hunter, the exile, Broderick added the by now familiar figure of the Jew; particularly the "snous" who had made a fortune huckstering and was now anxious to establish himself in colonial society:

I have a place "up West",
I'm always neatly drest,
Just like the real "hereditary swells",
Not a diamond will you see,
Not a jewel upon me -
For simplicity, in Greatness, always "tells". (2)

The real or phony Barney Barnato was a comparative newcomer to the veld but the Boer was not. He was still there, particularly in the Transvaal and the Free State, with his flocks, his herds and his faith in his destiny and he represented forces inimical to the gods of the Rand. The explosive political issues of the day which were largely the result of this clash can be detected in Broderick's satirical verse. He tilts at the Afrikaner's boorishness, at his simple manner of life and lack of sophistication, his dedication to the "Volk":

Wanted, a President...
He must hold with the people, although bored to death,
He must speak of their faults only under his breath:
He must think them the wisest and best in the world,
Or else from his seat by "Besluit" he'll be hurled.
... ..
Wanted, a President - one who can eat
Raw biltong and biscuit, and still keep his seat:
He must drink, without sugar, burnt barley or corn, (3)
He must wear a felt hat, and a coat overworn:

If Broderick had his crude fun at the expense of his Afrikaans neighbour it was not entirely from a distance. "Jong Koekoer" (a parody of "Lochinvar") shows a close acquaintance with Boer society in the remote country districts and at least a superficial

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1. BRODERICK, "African Bitters", A Wanderer's Rhymes, (new ed.1905)
 2. Ibid. "A Millionaire",
 3. Ibid. "Wanted, A President", A Wanderer's Rhymes.

smattering of the "Taal".

Oh! Jong Koekemoer, from Marico's come out - (1)
His schimmel Paard 'Ruiter' is sterk an gezout,
And, save some peach brandy, refreshment he'd none;
But he had his 'Martini', that 'Son of a gun!' (2)
So faithful a vryer, so fluks with his roer, (3)
There na'er was Keral like the Jong Koekemoer. (3)

There is no venom here, no bitterness, but rather an easy familiarity - condescending but friendly enough - a relationship which would have been impossible to the entirely English Mrs. Ward.

It is not so much the Boer (with whom he lived and traded and swopped stories) who is Broderick's butt as the Missionary - by now the traditional bogey man of white South Africans:

I saw a Mission-airy, his face was fat and fair,
He's been among the natives - in fact been everywhere;
He's toiled and ridden 'neath the sun of Africa to be (4)
Inserted in the journal of some Home Society.

The indications in Broderick are that the attitudes of the Frontier on race relations are capturing the town. He reflects the standard South African belief - the rural native is good (or at least manageable) the urban native is corrupt:

But as to making niggers good, ask every one who knows -
A black (like Eve) shows wickedness as soon as he wears
clothes... (5)

In the same way 19th century writers in England had contrasted pre- and post industrial revolution "Sweet Auburns".

The merchant attacks the overseas critics:

I wish the sanctimonious prigs, who stick up for the
Niggers
Would come and live among 'em here, and see their
real figgers;
I wish the silly Muff's at home would come, and act
as Boers,
And see what Nigger Cuffy does on these eternal shores.
... ..
And so the lies go round the world, that Settlers do
the sin,
When Missionary renegades egg Blacks on to begin... (6)

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1. "strong and salted", i.e. immune from horse-sickness.
 2. so faithful a lover, so handy with his rifle.
 3. BRODERICK, "Jong Koekemoer", A Wanderer's Rhymes.
 4. Ibid, "The Mission-airy", A Wanderer's Rhymes, (1898 ed) p.61.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid. "Our Black Brothers" p.86.

Occasionally Broderick attempted a simple narrative such as "The Black Dog of Klip River". The Black Dog is a shadow of the Hound of the Baskerville's but he haunted a valley:

Where the Klip River brightly flows
And gladdens many a pleasant farm,
Where gardens, hedged by quince and rose,
Add to the valley's simple charm. (1)

Allen, who had bought the haunted farm, arrived one evening to find:

The place dismantled, save one room
Wherein he spied, in partial gloom
An old worn "Cartel" roughly tied,
In true Boer style, with strips of hide.
The horses out-spanned, turned adrift,
Knee-haltered in the veld to shift -
He made a fire, the kettle filled
With water from the sluit, then grilled
A piece of biltong - (2)

The details are relevant, creating a suitable environment, there is some slight building up of tension to support old Han's warning, "Pas-op! The Dog is out to-night". However the verse lacks vigour and verve while the denouement is too infantile to allow the narrative to be taken seriously. Compared, for instance, with the early literary history of America, South African English literature is very poor in, if not completely destitute of, popular narrative and folk-ballad.

The miners on the diggings had only recently pegged out their claims when the attention of the British public was once more focussed upon southern Africa. In 1879 the news reached London that a Zulu army had massacred eight hundred troops and a similar number of native levies at a hitherto unheard of place - Isandhlwana. British pride had scarcely had time to recover from this shock before another force of Regulars suffered the ignominy of Majuba:

For the five-day sleepless sentry stood
And snored at his post above the wood,
While down upon the stirring plain
The night brought up its Dunsinane.

The moon went skulking from the sky
And hid its face as the wood passed by,
A few score Boer and bearded trees
Scaling the mountain on their knees. (3)

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1. BRODERICK, "The Black Dog of Klip River", A Wanderer's Rhymes, (1905)
 2. Ibid.
 3. MACNAB, "Majuba Hill", A Book of South African Verse, p.180.

The Zulu rebellion (which encouraged the Boer Republicans) was followed by the Basuto War, the formation of the Afrikaner Bond and the outbreak, in 1880 of the first "Vryheidsoorlog". The clouds were gathering for the tempest which was to be so tragically destructive of unity between Boer and Briton.

The years between the first and second Boer Wars saw the publication, not only of the works of Olive Schreiner but, on a different plane, of numbers of pamphlets such as Charles Utting's Isandula: and Rorke's drift: poems of the Zulu War (1) and of verses like "The Diamond Diggers' Ditty" and "Isandala!" (2) by Stafford Cruikshanks.

Utting and Cruikshanks celebrated the courage of those who had withstood the Zulu onslaught. In addition they gave vent to the fears of the English colonist aware of the restiveness of the black masses crowded into the areas bordering Natal. Cetewayo, a "Chaka redivivus in the eyes of his people" as the historian Walker has called him, was threatening the uncertain peace of the frontier. The local bards naively expressed the popular colonial sentiment:

Slow fell our brave - by tenfold odds borne down.
A volley thunders! heroes, 'tis your last!
Hark, what a volley! Zulu King, your crown
Is knelled - the reign of Kafirdom is past! (3)

The popularity at the time of Cruikshank's Lays of South Africa was certainly not owing to their literary merit, though it may possibly have had something to do with his outspoken views on subjects of South African interest. In the opinion of this Irishman the black man is depraved, he does not even spring from the same human stock, he is an altogether different being not to be treated as though he had the potentialities of a man with a white skin. (4)

The liberal tradition in South African English writing (Olive Schreiner excepted) was withering in the African sun. Few writers (either in prose or in verse) seriously attempted to see their neighbours as human beings. However, there were some settlers to whom the belief in the destiny of the sons of Ham as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" had a less positive appeal.

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1. UTTING, pub. Darters, C.T. 1879.
 2. CRUIKSHANKS, These verses appeared in Lays of South Africa, (improved ed. 1881).
 3. "Isandala!", op.cit. p.145.
 4. See APPENDIX D.

Joseph Forsyth Ingram (who had been born in Belfast in 1858 and had spent the first nine years of his life in Scotland), was a colonist more interested in people than in catch phrases. In 1864, his father Daniel Ingram, had lost his money as a result of the American war crises. With what was left he chartered a brigantine, the "Lone Star" and sailed with his wife, four daughters, three sons and Thomas Dawson, a son-in-law, for Natal. Ingram settled his family near Durban where he struggled desperately to make a living. After four years Daniel died, leaving his dependants a thirty acre farm near the Little Umhlanga River and practically not a penny to their name. As a result the boy Joseph left home early for the hamlet of Blackburn where he worked for four years in a country store. From Blackburn the young man set off into the heart of Zululand

Where he became a favourite with the people. Now as a trader, now as a landscape artist, and anon as a newspaper correspondent, he won his way into almost every corner of South Africa, visited and learned the languages of many tribes, and by his published descriptions served to open up avenues of traffic to the cramped and poverty-stricken traders of the Portuguese and English settlements. (1)

Ingram fought in the Zulu war and was decorated for valour. In 1882 he explored Pondoland, successfully interviewing Native chiefs in order to ensure security for traders in the area. Later he went to Swaziland where he lived for a time at the Great Place of King Umbandine. His life was often in danger from Boer filibusters who resented the presence of an Englishman among the Swazis, for Ingram was in the habit of sending reports of affairs in the territory to the Commissioner. Ingram's travels took him up the East Coast to Mozambique and along the valley of the Zambesi. He was shipwrecked twice and seems not to have exaggerated when he claimed:

I have braved the deserts and dared the seas,
I have toiled as few men toil,
And have lived where the poisonous deadly breeze
Is foul as the rotting soil.

I have heard the forest king's awful roar
Ring out o'er the still lagoon,
And have dwelt on Zambesi's silent shore
In the land of eternal gloom... (2)

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1. INGRAM, Poems of a Pioneer, with biographical note by Charles W. Cowey, 1893.
 2. Ibid. p.66.

Back from his Odyssey, Ingram (who sometimes adopted the pseudonym "Odean") became the editor of a Johannesburg daily paper until, his health failing, he returned to Natal and Zululand.

His Poems of a Pioneer, published in 1893, is divided into three sections: Travel and War; Legends and Lyrics; Ethical and General. Ingram wrote in his Preface:

In the turmoil of an active life of journalism and travel, it is not possible to devote much time to the production of highly polished literature. The Author has written poetry because he felt it, and was impelled to cast certain thoughts into verse for the simple reason that, in his opinion, those thoughts could be better expressed in that way... he has striven more earnestly after elocutionary effect and artistic vividness than for mere metrical accuracy... (1)

Unfortunately "artistic vividness" is the very quality which is entirely lacking, particularly in the supposedly descriptive lyrics. Almost the only fact which strikes the reader is that Ingram, like Cruikshank, greatly admired Longfellow. (2) The effect of his reading of Hiawatha upon Ingram's account of the English settlers arriving at Port Natal is ludicrous:

At the place where cloud and ocean
Meet and mingle in the distance,
Lay a tiny speck of wonder,
As the sun arose the natives,
Dressed in skins and plumes of feathers,
Stood upon their bluff-like mountain
Gazing at it and exclaiming
In their quaint and beauteous language,
"Tis a bird upon the waters!" (3)

The attraction which the verse of the Harvard Professor of Modern Languages had for Ingram proves nothing except Longfellow's popularity. His reputation had grown steadily since the publication of Hiawatha in 1855, but his fancy-dress Redskins were bad models for Zulu warriors.

It is a pity that Ingram had no talent for writing verse for his themes (reflecting his wide experience of life in Africa)

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1. INGRAM, Poems of a Pioneer, Preface.
 2. Ingram's verses include "To H.W. Longfellow on his birthday".
"Oh! thou poet, best beloved
Of all bards and gifted singers,
Thou hast oft-times charmed the sorrow
From me, when I wandered lonely
In wild Afric's desert places....." Zululand, 1875.
 3. op.cit. "The Discovery of Natal", p.17.

are more varied and appealing than those of men like Broderick. For instance in "The Colonist" Ingram attempted to describe the labour of building a pioneer's house:

Loudly the axe blows scoured over the hills and vales,
Clearly the hammer rang as it smote the spikes and the nails,
And crowds of dusky natives came up in slow marching trains,
With bundles of thatch on their heads from the thickets
and plains -
Bundles of vlei grass and wattles, supple and strong,
and light,
Coils upon coils of untwasi (1) to bind them firm and tight,
Post of the knobthorn (2) for upright, cross-piece, wall-
plate, and rail,
Stones for the fireplace and doorsteps - sandstone, whin-
stone and shale. (3)

This is almost the best of Ingram's poor verses. It is a little more than a catalogue of events for it suggests something of the reality of the scene, something of the sights and sounds of the scene; of the textures of the stones and grasses; of the remembered days when, as a boy of ten, Ingram must have helped his father clear the land and build a house.

As Pringle had done Ingram wrote several Bantu war-songs. "The Battle of Kambula" shows his appreciation of a Zulu warrior's bravery (of which he probably had an uncomfortably close knowledge) while "A Swazi War song" is refreshing from a man who knew what it felt like to be at the wrong end of the spear. This knowledge did not prevent him from writing:

Anaswasi, Anaswasi,
Who is there so great as we are?
White men, red men, black men tremble,
When they hear us, when they see us -
So! So! gleam, ye spearheads.
When we about the eagle trembles,
When we chart the war clouds lower,
When we charge whole nations perish -
So! So! gleam, ye spearheads. (4)

Native legends attracted Ingram's attention. He collected and published some of them in The story of a gold concession, and other African tales and legends. Bantu folk-lore was a hitherto unexplored mine of material for the English writer.

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1. "Untwasi" - bark rope.)
 2. "Knobthorn" a kind of) Ingram's note.
hard wood)
 3. INGRAM, "The colonist", Poems of a Pioneer, p.24.
 4. Ibid, "A Swazi War Song, op.cit. p.48.
"A Zulu War Song" is similar in sentiment to "Makanna's Gathering".
Then will all the white ones tremble;
When they hear us, they will fly.
Thus! and thus! we stab and slaughter,
Thus we drive them to the water,
To the white waves of the sea.

"King Zaweete" (the legend of a great Zulu king whose people were terrorized by mysterious voices of the dead in the forest) is an opportunity missed. The dying king - who is sacrificing his life for his people - counsels them:

Never more at spirit wailings
Let a warrior bow his head,
For remember, oh, my people,
Ye have friends amongst the dead. (1)

Ingram had the opportunity but (like so many others) he had not the talent. He might otherwise have left us some original frontier ballads for his "Wild George" (the story of a Boer adventurer who lived by pillaging the Makatee tribes in the Waterberg hills and who, with his sons and followers, was ambushed and killed by the tribesmen) is the very stuff of which Border ballads are made. The robber chief fell and was buried on the present Gold Fields of the Zoutpansberg, but his memory does not live in the school-boyish:

Wild George and his brigands grim -
King of the Waterberg hills.
Red-handed and evil famed. (2)

Ingram knew a savage when he met one. He had endured the barbarities of frontier war and was familiar with the primitive conditions of tribal life; yet he recognized the African as being capable of fear and hope, joy and sorrow, treachery and fidelity - in other words - as a man.

The verse of another Natal settler of the period had been, like Ingram's, almost completely forgotten, until in 1959 Guy Butler included some extracts from Barter's work in A Book of South African Verse:

He has a good eye for detail, and his material is intrinsically interesting. These two factors, rather than any verbal skill, make him worth reading. His versification is adequate; it seldom draws attention to itself for downright badness or particular felicity. (3)

In the same year in which Butler resurrected him Barter appeared as one of "A little gallery of South African portraits" under the title Oliver the Spy and others.⁽⁴⁾ This short

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1. "King Zaweete, a legend of Zululand", op.cit. p.75.
 2. "Wild George, a tale of the Waterberg", op.cit. p.52.
 3. BUTLER, A Book of South African Verse, p. xxlv.
 4. HATTERSLEY, Oliver the Spy and others, 1959.

biography reveals that Barter was a type of pioneer not so very unusual in his day but difficult to parallel in our own age. He had been born in 1820. His father, rector of Sarsden in the Cotswolds, was a man of ample means "pre-eminently a country gentleman" who "lived among his neighbours very much as they did, and was certainly free from all extremes of doctrine and ritual".⁽¹⁾ His father before him had been a Balliol man, vicar of a Devonshire village where he had composed graceful verse and kept sixteen couple of harriers; hunting being the hall-mark of the landed gentry.

Charles's early life seems to have been happy. He survived the rigours of Winchester where "he won a prize for translating a passage of Shakespeare into Greek isabics;"⁽²⁾ he went up, in due course, to New College, where he automatically became entitled to an Oxford fellowship but the new world proved more alluring than the senior common room and Barter sailed for North America. There, particularly in forested New Brunswick, the "Oxonian" (as he was called) travelled extensively, interesting himself actively in sport, lumbering and colonization. He returned to England after three eventful years.

Such a heady draught of pioneering life must have been difficult to get out of the blood stream, so it is scarcely surprising to discover Barter, in the year after his home coming, planning a voyage to Natal. According to Professor Hattersley, Barter had read Gordon Cuzning's book and had almost certainly visited the museum in Piccadilly where the hunter displayed his wagon and his live Bushman dressed in skins. Whatever the inducement, Barter visited Natal in 1850 and settled there permanently two years later, publishing The Dorp and the Veld ⁽³⁾ which he described as a "slight sketch" of his adventures in the colony. In spite of the fact that Barter found among Natalians "very little of that stubborn energy which characterizes the Canadian backwoodsman", and in spite of his immediate sensitivity to the disunity between the two major white groups which boded ill for the future, Africa must have appealed to Barter. He bought a farm, married, imported thoroughbreds and bred horses for the Indian Army. Nearly forty-five years later, during which time

1. HATTERSLEY, Oliver the Spy and others, 1959, p.105.

2. Ibid, p.109.

3. BARTER, The Dorp and the Veld, or six months in Natal, Lon.1852. (The book describes the author's travels in 1850.)

he had become a member of the Natal Legislative Council, had edited the Natal Guardian and the Times of Natal and had acted as magistrate at Inanda and Pietermaritzburg, the "Oxonian" published Stray Memories of Natal and Zululand: A poem. (1)

Barter claimed that he had named characters in this narrative "without hesitation" and that he would

be content if his fellow colonists, amongst whom he has spent the greater part of a not uneventful life, shall recognize the truth of his narrative, the accuracy of his descriptions and the sincerity of his opinions. (2)

The first of these four thousand odd lines promise a work not entirely without merit - particularly when one remembers the sort of publication which had been finding a market in the colony in the years since Pringle. Barter describes the onset of winter:

Cool morns and sunny noons; and nights
Of frost that speak of northern heights;
And not a drop of moisture near
To darken mould, or rust a spear.
The grass is withered all and dry,
One cloudless blue the canopy.
The fields are empty, brown and bare,
No song of birds is in the air;
Low, 'tween its banks the shrunken stream
Flows sluggish 'neath the noonday beam. (3)

The "cloudless blue" and "noonday beams" remind one of "Evening Rambles" but the passage is simple and direct, appropriate (particularly in the second couplet) without any self-conscious parading of local knowledge.

The main theme is an account of Sir Theophilus Shepstone's diplomatic handling of the crises in Zululand:

I strive to train my wandering verse
To frame a wreath for Shepstone's hearse.

Barter had commanded the volunteer Natal Carbineers when they had escorted the Administrator into Zululand. He describes how they marched, "Gainst Umfutshani's rebel force" and how, on Shepstone's advice, the chief disarmed his warriors and the white commando turned back to cross the flooded Unkomanzi. Here we come across one of the lifelike vignettes which enliven this long narrative and justify the author's claim to accuracy

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1. BARTER, pub. Munro Bros. Pietermaritzburg, 1897.
This narrative, like that written by "Bahroo" is reminiscent of Scott.
 2. Ibid, Stray Memories of Natal and Zululand; a Poem. Preface (1897)
 3. Ibid, op.cit.

and verisimilitude. The wagons are being pulled across the river:

High on each tent a driver stood
And waved his voorslag o'er the flood;
Far, as the mighty lash rebounds
Up the lone heights the crack resounds,
While shriek and whoop, and wild halloo
Rise upwards in the unclouded blue.
The swimming oxen strive amain
'Gainst the strong flood the trektouws strain;
Each shakes the water from his flank,
As rising slow, the tents emerge
All dripping from the boiling surge.

Barter admired what he called "smooth-flowing members",⁽¹⁾ however, his subject matter often lends dramatic quality to lines which otherwise suffer from a pedestrian sameness of tone. This heightening of the verse occurs in description of such incidents as the attempted murder of Shepstone; the British defeat at Isandhlwana and, most graphic of all, Dingaan's treachery and the butchery of Retief.

The latter has been anthologized so that it would be more interesting here to quote from Barter's account of the Zulu victory, "a lesson dread to British arrogance". Barter emphasized the foolhardy, tragic lack of preparation on the part of the British - whose commanding officers had disdained the lessons which the Trekkers had learnt so well:

No laager form'd protecting square,
Or rallying point for sudden scare;
No shelter from the whizzing spear
Should unexpected foe appear.
In open line the wagons stood,
Defenceless, useless block of wood;
And save for what each soldier bore
In belt or pouch, his dally store,
The very cartridges were stowed,
Far out of reach, beneath a load
Of lumber, not removed with speed;

... ..

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1. We get an idea of the attributes which Barter valued in verse when we read his eulogy of his friend "John Bird, C.M.B. formerly Judge of the Native High Court, and compiler of the Annals of Natal, and author of several poems.....
Thy verse too, fram'd in measures sweet
Steals o'er the page with even feet,
Without the slightest jar to test
Whether it motion be or rest.
So motionless to human sight
The eagle steers his steady flight
Through realms of air! we cannot see
The delicate machinery."

Chelmsford a thousand men had ta'en
To reconnoitre on the plain,
A thousand more in camp await,
All unprepared, the coming fate.
At noon it came: a rushing sound
Of bare feet stamping on the ground,
And now along the ridge appears
A sea of feathers, shields, and spears;
With yell, and shout, and bounding leap,
Downward the foremost squadrons sweep,
The centre dense, the horns extend
In crescent thinning at the end...
Then twenty thousand demons bound
On the doom'd camp, the horns close round;
The deadly assegai has sway
And blood and slaughter darken day. (1)

Interspersed among comments upon Shepstone's policy are scenes of camp life, the interest centering upon the hunt and the hunter. There are thumb-nail sketches of such frontier characters as Dunn who (in spite of the extreme cleanliness and comfort of his house which Barter stresses) is censured for his polygamous habits, accused of living like

...Kafir in his kraal,
Or Moslem in his marble hall,
Or like a porker in his sty,
And rear'd a sable progeny. (2)

Barter includes the usual catalogue of African animals which, by this, has become a subject which no writer seems able to ignore. The animals are merely listed, seen from the point of view of the cook rather than that of the hunter:

....Rietbok, with annulated horn,
By weary steed on crupper borne;
Or boschbok of the sable hide,
Or pallah, with its yellow side,
Or partridges, with speckled wing,
Or bustard - dish to serve a king. (3)

Very occasionally a vivid detail animates them:

little brown ipwiti, shy,
That whistles as he scuttles by.

The hunters (whether men of his own Carbineers or Retief's followers) are depicted with more care:

By each a mighty gun was borne,
While o'er each neck the cumbersome horn
With ample store of powder swung,
And from the belt the pouches hung,
With bullets, shot, and loopers fill'd,

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1. BARTER, Stray Memories of Natal and Zululand; a poem.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.

Raw spirit, from the peach distill'd,
Tobacco, in Cape gardens grown,
In bag of soft skin, deftly sewn,
With flesh of ox or eland dried
Their ordinary wants supplied.
The tondeldoos with flint and steel,
Could light a flame for pipe, or meal,
The lucifer was yet unknown;
Their pipes were of the porous stone
That in Magaliesberg is found
Embedded in the rocky ground.

Barter felt a real sympathy for the sufferings of the
Trekkers. He pictured:

Children, writhing on the spear,
Or infants swinging by the heel,
Then dash'd against the wagon wheel.

This understanding led him to plead for wider recognition of
the Boer's contribution to the history of South Africa:

When bitter words on either side
Rouse gusts of anger and of pride,
If in the Dutchmen's inmost heart
Old wounds have never ceas'd to smart;
If sense of injury remain
Or only sleep to wake again,
Whene'er the winds of faction blow:
Was there not cause? who answers, "No?"
Bid him of history's page enquire,
Or if a son, of aged sire:
And he will form, on basis sure,
A fairer judgment of the Boer.

One cannot help suspecting that Barter's plea for under-
standing was principally motivated by his belief in the
necessity of uniting English settler and Dutch pioneer against
black savage. At the end of a long passage reminding the
reader of the Trekkers' sufferings, he sums up with the
arrogance of his kind:

Then while we claim for England's race
On Afric soil, the foremost place,
And will no derogation see
From England's just supremacy;
Be ours the widening breach to close,
And make them friends who erst were foes: (1)

Barter admired the "primitive" Zulu. He regarded the
African as an object of interest and curiosity who should be
handled sternly, but justly. Professor Hattersley has
remarked (with unconscious humour) that Barter's "upbringing

1. BARTER, Stray Memories of Natal and Zululand; a poem.

in a rural atmosphere, learning to ride horses and to look after hounds, made it easy for him to mix with tenants, servants and Zulu employes on terms of mutual respect..” (1)
It is, of course, true that this background made it easier for him to adopt a paternal attitude towards those over whom he exercised authority. It may also have accounted for his doubts on the wisdom of imposing European civilization upon the savage. His portrait of the once rebellious Zulus bowing before Sontseu (Shepstone), hailing him as "Chief" is indicative of the "Baaskap" of which Barter approved.

Describing the coronation of Cetuyayo he emphasizes the contrast between the Zulu in his tribal finery and the figure of fun he cut in the scarlet robe (much too small) which was presented to him by Shepstone:

The prince on entering the tent
Had neither dress nor ornament,
Yet by his gait and aspect told
He was not made of common mould;
The chain that from his shoulders hung
Of lions' claws together strung
Might well a savage king beseech -
The picture vanish'd like a dream!
A form before the mirror stands,
And nods its head and waves its hands,
In scarlet mantle partly dress'd
Which scarce conceal'd the naked breast;...
Self admiration from his face
Had banished every kingly grace.

This is the typical frontier attitude; the conviction that the African is better off naked; that he is corrupted by the much vaunted "Western Civilization". In his book on Natal, Barter had attacked the "pseudo-philanthropists" as he called them, who gave no thought to the ruined colonist and sowed rebellion among "the pampered Hottentot, taught to consider themselves an oppressed and plundered people". (2) Discussing the causes of the Kaffir wars Barter dismissed the Bantu as "Almost destitute even of natural affection...By profession a warrior, by education and habit a thief, by nature bloodthirsty, cruel, and treacherous...most formidable and most dangerous as a friend". (3)

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1. HATTERSLEY, "Oxford Collegian"; Oliver the Spy and others, p.125.
 2. BARTER, The Dorp and the Veld, In Chap. XII the author expressed his views on this subject at some length.
 3. Ibid.

The inclusion of the profession of a warrior among the Kaffir's vicious traits seems curious in view of the author's origin from a class which, until 1939, supplied nearly all the officers of the British regular army.

Barter favoured the registration of all natives. He considered that, instead of forcing the Boer beyond the Vaal the British should have driven the blacks before the whites, entirely clearing the south eastern corner of Africa of Bantu. On the question of the Bushman, Barter was even more implacable:

There is but one remedy for this evil - the entire extermination of these Children of the Mist, whom it is impossible to reclaim, and difficult to hold in any check, and this would long ago have been effected by the colonists themselves (1)

if the Government had not refused its sanction.

Barter's verse Narrative (although not entirely without literary merit; his descriptions being at times vivid and realistic) is chiefly remarkable as an extreme example of the Frontierman's attitude towards indigenous native races. It is interesting, if profitless, to speculate to what extent his considerable knowledge of other pioneering societies had helped to form in this settler such an extreme racialist view.

In the desultory, generally worthless rhyming of this period the principal theme which emerges is that of Conflict. South Africa presents itself as a theatre upon which the drama of racial conflict - white against white, settler against savage - is unceasingly enacted. The constant tensions were not always disruptive and sterile for there were men, like Ingram, who were widening and deepening their human sympathies through their experience of life in a multi-racial society. That these experiences were not yet being crystallized in poetry is very evident from the calibre of the writers under discussion. Even William Charles Scully (almost the only poetaster of the gold-rush period to acquire a little local fame) still belongs to the class of writers whose achievement must be judged in terms of literary pioneering rather than artistic merits.

1. BARTER, The Dorp and the Veld.

Scully has been given the least space here because he is the best known. His "Poems relating to South Africa", (1) especially " 'Nkongane" and the charming "The Bushman's Cave" are (with the exception of some of Barter's descriptive passages) better than any other verse written in South Africa at the time. Scully's best work is in prose, particularly in the two lengthy stories comprising the volume Between Sun and Sand. (2) The characters, scenery and atmosphere in these two stories are drawn with sympathetic insight. At times Scully's touches of humour - as in his portrait of Old Schalk Hattingh - are reminiscent of the style of Bosman. Scully's years in the Cape Civil Service undoubtedly furnished him with some of the realistic material for his tales. Between Sun and Sand is still worth reading for such things as its description of the migration of the "trek-bokken" and its tender delineation of Gert Gamsbok, the Koranna Hottentot who lived on what he could salvage from the flooded Orange River, and consoled himself by playing ingenious variations upon his "rankee". If some of the incidents appear to verge on the melodramatic - (for instance Gert's discovery of the diamonds on the rotting body of the white man lashed to the raft) - they do not seem improbable in their setting. These two stories are dramatic representations of the ferments at work in frontier society; the conflicts between miner and trekker and, in "Noquala's Cattle" the contrasts between Bantu lore and custom and the imported knowledge of a more advanced culture.

Scully's stories reveal indirectly that the days of the hunter and the pioneer were numbered. As yet, however, conditions did not favour the creative writer. As Barter had written about Natal:

There are no men of leisure; literature and fine arts have neither scope nor opportunity for their development; time and means are wanting for the cultivation of the elegancies and refinements of domestic or social life...

(3)

Everything was against the probability of any worth while

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1. See MILLER & SPURGHANT, A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English, pp. 42 - 43.
"Poems relating to South Africa" appear in Poems (1892).
The latter are largely a reprint of The Wreck of the Grosvenor and other South African poems. (1886)
 2. SCULLY, Between Sun and Sand, Methuen, (1898)
 3. BARTER, The Dorp and the Veld, p.25.

literature being produced in such a society. However, if English speaking South Africans had produced no epic poet to record their pioneering struggle they already had their myths and of these the most generally respected was the myth of their superiority and their privileged position.

CHAPTER 5.

THE TUMULT AND THE SHOUTING.

Up behind father with little bright spurs
I dreamt I was galloping, gravely horsed,
I dreamt of a sceptre; I cried and I cried,
Till rock and shire were divorced.
Division incarnate! An unhappy role!
My country has given me flint for a soul.

"Roy Kloof" Sydney Clouts.

While the "people of the Book and rifle" refused to grant the franchise to the Uitlanders in the Transvaal, the Victorians celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen's reign, taking for granted that nothing - least of all a few thousand hunters and graziers in ill disciplined commandos - could shake the power and prosperity of an Empire unrivalled in the history of the world. The only note of warning against such complacency came, ironically enough, from the man who was later to be derided as the "king's trumpeter" and "the mouth-piece of the Empire".

In the Jubilee year Kipling published "Recessional" in The Times, pleading particularly for humility amidst "the tumult and the shouting". It is on the strength of this lyric that T.S.Eliot called Kipling a

great hymn writer...it is one of the poems in which something breaks through from a deeper level than that of the mind of the conscious observer of political and social affairs - something which has the true prophetic inspiration. (1)

Kipling tells us in his autobiography, Something of Myself, that "Recessional" was the direct result of a "certain optimism that scared" him; an optimism that he detected in contemporary English society. (2) He added that he gave the verses to The Times "because for this kind of work I did not take payment" and went on to insist:

"I should not like the people whose good opinion I valued to believe that I took money for verses on Joseph Chamberlain, Rhodes, Lord Milner, or any of my South African verse in The Times. (3)

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1. ELIOT, A Choice of Kipling's Verse, p.16.
 2. KIPLING, Something of Myself, p.147.
 3. Ibid, p.148.

The verse to which he refers has been almost completely forgotten but Kipling has as good - or in terms of length of residence - an even better title to be remembered as a South African writer than Pringle has. Kipling had first visited the Cape as a young man of twenty-six. Later in life, partly he tells us, sickened by the boastful and cocksure atmosphere of England, he journeyed south again with his family at the end of the Jubilee year to

"a boarding-house at Wynberg, kept by an Irishwoman, who faithfully followed the instincts of her race and spread miseries and discomforts round her in return for good monies. But the children thrived, and the colour, light, and half-oriental manners of the land bound chains round our hearts for years to come." (1)

It was on this visit that Kipling first met Rhodes and found him "as inarticulate as a school-boy of fifteen." Later on Rhodes was to offer the Kiplings the use of the house - for artists to dream in - which he had built in the grounds of Groote Schuur:

To this Paradise we moved each year-end from 1900 to 1907 - a complete equipage of governess, maids and children, so that the latter came to know and therefore, as children will, to own the Union Castle line - stewards and all. (2)

Kipling seriously considered settling permanently at the Cape. Although, for various reasons, he did not do so, he obviously relished these annual pilgrimages into the sun:

"Ship-board life", he wrote, "going and coming, was a mere prolongation of South Africa and its interests. There were Jews a plenty from the Rand; Pioneers; Native Commissioners dealing with Basutos or Zulus; men of the Matabele Wars and the opening of Rhodesia; prospectors; politicians of all stripes, all full of their business." (3)

Remembering the passionate interest which Kipling always took in what men did it is reasonable to assume that he learnt a great deal, not only on those voyages, but during the warm Cape winters, about Africa and the men who worked in her who were fashioning the Africa that was to come.

Kipling was certainly an Imperialist, but the term needs clarification. As he claimed, he had learnt about the Empire

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1. KIPLING, Something of Myself,
 2. Ibid. p.167.
 3. Ibid.

from men who did its dirty work and who, in many cases, expected - and got - little reward. The Empire was a concept which stirred his poetic imagination; he wished to interpret it to the British people at home; he saw in it the material for a great epic:

For Kipling was doing for England what Whitman did for America a generation earlier - he was describing a vital period of energy and expansion in poems which could be understood by rich and poor alike.

(1)

In no sense a racist as the term is used to-day (Kim alone supports this statement) Kipling sincerely believed that the British Empire was a promoter of progress and happiness; a guardian of civilization, of "The Law" by which men must abide if they wish to prevent themselves falling into the pit of barbarism and chaos.

This idealistic view of the Empire underwent some clarification and modification as he grew older. Edward Shanks, in his study of Kipling, has suggested that the Anglo-Boer war was a crucial event in the poet's life and that it was, in part, responsible for the direction in which his thoughts began to move so that

before 1914 he had already begun to think that the salvation of the world could not be left to the British Empire or even to a league of the English-speaking peoples. He had begun to dream of an effective combination of those elements in all nations which believe in orderly and peaceable government.

(2)

Whatever the trend his thoughts were to take in the future Kipling greeted the outbreak of war in South Africa with "The Old Issue, October 9, 1899". This lyric, an appeal to Englishmen in the Transvaal not to suffer the indignities of Kruger's dictatorial rule, must be read in the light of events in the Boer Republic prior to the Jameson Raid:

'Here is nothing new nor aught unproven,' say the
Trumpets,
'Many feet have worn it and the road is old indeed.
'It is the King - the King we schooled aforetime!'
(Trumpets in the marshes - in the eyot at Rumymede!)

The so-called "Uitlanders" were to remember:

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1. READE, Main Currents in Modern Literature, p.19.
 2. SHANKS, Rudyard Kipling, p.112.

"All we have of freedom, all we use or know -
This our fathers bought for us long and long ago.
Ancient Right unnoticed as the breath we draw -
Leave to live by no man's leave, underneath the Law." (1)

This plea on behalf of the voteless Englishmen in the Transvaal was written two months before the heavy defeats inflicted upon British troops by the Boers in what came to be known in England as "Black Week". The British casualties of this week were about 3,000 (a minor skirmish compared with the 1,100,000 men lost by both sides in the Battle of the Somme), but such figures were a shattering experience for the Victorians - doped by the tradition of imperial invincibility - and they could scarcely credit the news.

The shock felt at the casualty lists is reflected in the Handbills of the period. This one bears the imprint of "F. Jones, Printer, 55, Lambert Street, Sheffield". It announced in gigantic black capitals:

DISASTROUS BATTLE.

DENSE LOSS OF BRITISH SOLDIERS IN THE TRANSVAAL.

Verses on the fearful slaughter of British Troops at
Laing's Nek, February 27th, 1881.
Air: Teddy o'Neale.

Sad tidings we hear from our gallant soldiers,
Who are fighting the Boers on Africa's shore, etc. (2)

At the beginning of the second Anglo-Boer conflict Kipling seems to have been convinced of its necessity:

(Time itself is witness, till the battle joins,
Deeper strikes the rottenness in the people's loins.) (3)

He was to be far less sure of the healing nature of the sword by the end of this futile fratricide.

In order to raise money to buy "comforts" for the soldiers in South Africa, Kipling wrote "The Absent-minded Beggar", which was set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan and recited and sung from Hull to Hong Kong. According to Julian Ralph, the Special War Correspondent to the "Daily Mail", Kipling once replied when congratulated on being the author:

"I have heard that piece played on a barrel-organ,
and I would shoot the man who wrote it if it would
not be suicide". (4)

1. KIPLING, "The Old Issue", October 9, 1899" The Five Nations, p.107.
2. HANDBILL in Johannesburg Public Library, Africana collection.
3. KIPLING, "The Old Issue, October 9, 1899", The Five Nations, p.107.
4. Quoted by Julian Ralph in War's Brighter Side, p.112.

Whatever the author's feelings were, The Absent-minded Beggar Fund raised about a quarter of a million pounds, some of which was spent on tobacco. Kipling's comment that the verses "had some elements of direct appeal but...lacked 'poetry'" (1) is not only an obvious enough statement but it supports Eliot's argument that it is possible to contrast verse with poetry without necessarily implying a value judgment:

I do not mean, here, by verse, the work of a man who would write poetry if he could: I mean by it something which does what 'poetry' could not do... he knew perfectly well what he was doing; and from his point of view more 'poetry' would interfere with his purpose... (2)

In this case more poetry would probably have bought less tobacco.

Kipling was himself aware of a distinction between verse and poetry:

Sir Ian Hamilton quotes a letter from Mrs. Fleming in which she says that all his life her brother 'drew a careful distinction between verse and poems': at one of their last meetings he credited himself with a dozen "poems", an estimate which he immediately afterwards reduced by half: "The rest were just verses". (3)

During the war Kipling left his family in Cape Town and travelled about the country, getting as near to the front line (in so far as one ever existed) as possible, and working hard as an Associate Editor of The Friend

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1. KIPLING, Something of Myself, p.150.
 2. ELIOT, A choice of Kipling's verse, p.35.
 3. BROWN, Rudyard Kipling, p.206.

in Bloemfontein. (1) Julian Ralph left the following description of Kipling as he knew him at that time:

A man of such broad build and short neck that you do not realise him to be of the average stature, wearing a broad-brimmed, flat brown hat of Boer pattern, and below that a brown short coat and very full trousers to match; a vigorous figure, quick in movement as a panther, quicker still in speech; a swinging and rolling figure with head up and hat well back out of the way of his sight which is ever thrown upward as if he searched the sky while he walked. His face is quite a match for his body, being round and broad as well as wide-eyed and alert. His eyes are its most notable features, for they are very large and open, and each one is arched by the bushiest of black eyebrows. They are habitually reflective and sober eyes, but, like a flash, they kindle with fun, and can equally quickly turn dull and stony when good occasion arises. It is not the typical poet's or scholar's face so much as it is the face of the man among men, the out-of-door man, the earnest, shrewd observer and the irrepressible hard worker. (2)

Kipling devoted the whole of a fairly lengthy chapter in his reticent Something of Myself to his South African observations. The superior, somewhat cynical tone of many of

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1. "Lord Roberts entered Bloemfontein on March 13, 1900. His Governor, General Pretymen, sent for Arthur Barlow and asked him to continue the editorship. Barlow refused - 'it would have been a traitorous act for a Free State burgher to edit an enemy newspaper during a war', he declared afterwards - and so Lord Stanley, the chief press censor, arranged with Percival Landon, the correspondent of "The Times", London, H.A. Gwynne, chief correspondent of Reuter's Press Agency, Julian Ralph, the American correspondent, and F.W. Burton, of "The Star", Johannesburg, to produce "The Friend". They formed a committee of management and called in the assistance of other distinguished journalists, among them being Lionel James, Melton Prior, Bennett Burleigh, A.B. ("Banjo") Patterson, of Australia, and numbers of others from Great Britain and the Dominions - and, most famous of them all, Rudyard Kipling. " 'Never again will there be such a paper', wrote Kipling. " 'Never again such a staff! Never such fine larks!' " Special Centenary Supplement to "The Friend", June, 10, 1950. p.11. See War's Brighter Side by Julian Ralph for a breezy account of his association with Kipling on The Friend. The existence of proofs corrected by Kipling show the struggles which occurred between the editors and the Boer compositors who remained at their work.

"For a striking picture of the minor characters who figured as our foremen and compositors in the newspaper office the reader will do well to read Rudyard Kipling's 'A Burgher of the Free State', one of the short stories he wrote after his return from South Africa in the early summer of 1900.

"It showed us associates of the master storyteller how instantly, broadly, and accurately he is able to imbibe and absorb the colour and spirit, and even the most minor accessories of any new and strong situation around him. It will show the reader better than any amount of another man's writing the characters of our helpmeets and neighbours, and the atmosphere in which they moved." RALPH, War's Brighter Side, p.11.

2. RALPH, War's Brighter Side, p.113.

his remarks:

Each commando had its own reputation in the field, and the grizzlier their beards the greater our respect. There was an elderly contingent from Wackerstroon which demanded most cautious handling. They shot, as you might say, for the pot. (1)

and

At long last, we were left apologizing to a deeply-indignant people whom we had been nursing and doctoring for a year or two; and who expected, and received, all manner of free gifts and appliances for the farming they had never practised. We put them in a position to uphold and expand their primitive lust for racial domination, and thanked God we were 'rid of a knave'. (2)

can easily be used to support the charge that he was bitterly, even besottedly, anti-Boer. This is a judgment on Kipling which is not supported by his poetry. In "General Joubert", to take but one example, he both commemorated a Boer leader (not something one would expect from the bard of imperialism) and hinted that the motives which led to the war were - on both sides - far from pure:

With those that bred, with those that loosed the strife
He had no part whose hands were clear of gain;
But subtle, strong, and stubborn, gave his life
To a lost cause, and knew the gift was vain. (3)

Most of the verses inspired by the conflict in South Africa appeared in 1903 in a volume called The Five Nations. The themes are noteworthy. This supposedly rabid Jingo writes no triumphant peans to celebrate the dearly bought British victories; he writes no "hate" poems such as his vituperative "the Hun is at the gate" provoked later by the first World War, nor does he attempt to lampoon Kruger - a favourite British indoor sport of the time and one which has its adherents even to-day. Instead Kipling's verses describe the hardships of campaigning in the veld; they criticize the mishandling of the war; they look forward to a peacefully united future in "The Settler" and they make the frank admissions of "The Lesson". Significant too is the fact that he included the hymn "Recessional" and placed it last in the volume.

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1. KIPLING, Something of Myself, p.164.
 2. Ibid. p.166.
 3. Ibid. "General Joubert", Rudyard Kipling's Verse, inclusive edition. p.239. First published in The Friend, together with Lord Roberts' Telegram of Sympathy to President Kruger. March 30. 1900.

However, it is not in its opening that the poem's appeal lies, but in the objectivity of the lines describing the group of weary, bored men whose job it was to guard the railway bridge. The railway played a vital role in a war in which the country itself was almost a greater enemy than the Commandos. The destruction of communications was more damaging to the "Rocinek" (who could not live off the land) than it was to the indigenous Boer. However, Railway picketing was an inglorious occupation. Kipling captures its loneliness and monotony:

The twilight swallows the thickest,
The starlight reveals the ridge;
The whistle shrills to the picket -
We are changing guard on the bridge.

(Few, forgotten and lonely,
Where the empty metals shine -
No, not combatants - only
Details guarding the line.)

Skilfully the poet shifts our attention from the surrounding veld, the distant mountains (their suggestion of space and immensity emphasizing the isolation of the men) to the pathetic details which constitute the routine of a sentry's life:

We slip through the broken panel
Of fence by the ganger's shed;
... ..
We stumble on refuse of rations,
The beef and the biscuit-tins;
We take our appointed stations,
And the endless night begins.

As the light fades the pictorial images yield to the distinctive sounds of such a night:

We hear the Hottentot herders
As the sheep click past to the fold -
And the click of the restless girders
As the steel contracts in the cold -
Voices of jackals calling
And, loud in the hush between,
A morsel of dry earth falling
From the flanks of the scarred ravine. (1)

It is so true and exact that Kipling might have been on guard duty himself. The sharp, recurrent tapping of the sheeps' hooves on the hard veld is admirably suggested in "click", while the detail of the falling fragment of dry earth, a noise "loud in the hush between", shows that Kipling knew how distinctly

1. KIPLING, "Bridge Guard on the Karroo", The Five Nations, p.113.

sounds carry across the veld. Such verses are an example of his gift of entering imaginatively into and then recording, the experiences of other men. With the exception of passages in Olive Schreiner's prose this is the truest, most realistic description of a night in the Karroo that had yet been written in English. The fact that the lines were not written by a man to whom we can ascribe that somewhat ambiguous epithet, South African, but by an Englishman who struggled, (during his residence here) to comprehend the nature of the white man's life on this continent, proves nothing more than what has already been said - it is dangerous to link the concept of Nationalism too closely with the development of a national literature.

Verses such as these as well as his expressions of hope for a united South Africa:

Later shall rise a people, sane and great,
Forged in strong fires, by equal war made one;
Telling old battles over without hate - (1)

(a hope shared with passionate intensity by Olive Schreiner) are a truer reflection of Kipling's considered judgment upon the tragic fiasco of the "War for Freedom", than many of his more widely publicized remarks on the subject. His autobiography for instance, is a singularly sad, one feels, deliberately superficial record - a sort of "public face", while much of his writing at the time (the Fables for the Staff)⁽²⁾ for instance, were dashed off in odd moments for the entertainment of troops.

Edmund Wilson's verdict on the Kipling of this period, "venomous, morbid, distorted," is an oversimplified analysis of a complex personality:

When the Boer War finally breaks, Kipling is at once on the spot, with almost all the correct reactions. He is now at the zenith of his reputation, and he receives every official courtesy. And though he may criticize the handling of a campaign, he never questions the rightness of its object. (3)

Kipling undoubtedly thought that the war was necessary but

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1. KIPLING, "General Joubert", The Five Nations, p.65.
 2. KIPLING, published in The Friend.
 3. WILSON, The Wound and the Bow, p.128.

his misgivings about the England which had brought it about (1)
and his contempt of the way it was handled increased as the
campaign dragged on. This disgust is trenchantly expressed
in "The Way that he Took", of which he recorded that almost
every word was based on fact. (2)

There are a number of things in this slight tale which
are indicative of Kipling's gift as a story teller. The
contrast between the Boer commando and the British force is
skillfully drawn, the conversation of the South African
nursing sister, brought up on the Karroo, rings true in content
and tone, tension is created and maintained while there are
some excellent descriptive touches:

A rolling plain of red earth, speckled with
loose stones and sugar-bush, ran northward to
the scarps and spurs of a range of little hills-
all barren and exaggerated in the heat-haze.
Southward, the level lost itself in a tangle of
scrub-furred hillocks, upheaved without purpose
or order, seared and blackened by the strokes of
the careless lightning, seamed down their sides
with spent watercourses, and peppered from base
to summit with stones - riven, piled, scattered
stones. Far away, to the eastward, a line of
blue-grey mountains, peaked and horned, lifted
itself over the huddle of the tortured earth.
It was the only thing that held steady through
the liquid mirage. The nearer hills detached
themselves from the plain, and swam forward like
islands in a milky ocean. (3)

Most of Kipling's Boer war stories were published in
"Traffics and Discoveries" in 1904. On the whole they are
written from the point of view of the Tommy so that the
Afrikaner comes in for a fair amount of ridicule and criticism.
"A Sahib's War", for instance, which recounts the devotion of
a Sikh to his English officer, represents as wily and treacherous
a group of Boers who ambush the enemy from a seemingly innocent
farmhouse. But Kipling was not, in such writing, giving his
considered opinion of the whole futile struggle or of the
necessity to

atone

For the set folly and the red breach,
he was merely yarning about some incident or perhaps describing
some personality who had caught his fancy. Artistically

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1. A corrupted England which he attacked in "The Islanders",
a people who had (in Kipling's view) desecrated their high,
imperial office and deserved chastisement:
"Then were the judgments loosened; then was your shame revealed,
At the hands of a little people, few but apt in the field".
"The Islanders," The Five Nations, p.133.
 2. See KIPLING, "The Way that He took", Land and Sea Tales, p.25.
 3. Ibid, p.26.

Kipling's South African tales do not rank high among his stories - "The Way that He took" is one of the best of them. Their inferiority is an indication that they did not lie very close to his heart.

Kipling often wrote about war in the spirit of a romantic Boy Scout. This attitude (evident in many of his stories as well as in much of the verse in The Five Nations) is a particularly unsympathetic and incomprehensible one in the twentieth century. But even before 1914 the author of Barrack Room Ballads had come, largely, it seems, through his Boer War experiences, to the bitter realization of the futility of the sword, of "the black waste of it all". This is a wiser Kipling, a Kipling who talks of "the senseless bullet" and "the barren shrapnel"; who cannot bear to think that the sacrifice of life on the earth "where we rode to slay or be slain", will not eventually be redeemed by love "unto life". These quotations from "The Settler" (1) come from a man who was far from "venomous, morbid, distorted" however tragically his prophecies may have failed to materialize:

Here, where my fresh-turned furrows run,
And the deep soil glistens red,
I will repair the wrong that was done
To the living and the dead.
Here, where the senseless bullet fell,
And the barren shrapnel burst,
I will plant a tree, I will dig a well,
Against the heat and the thirst.

And when we bring old fights to mind,
We will not remember the sin -
If there be blood on his head of my kind, (2)
Or blood on my head of his kin -

This is pleasing in the sincerity of its theme, as in its matching simplicity of diction and rhythm. It expresses the sentiments that one might have expected to find cherished by Englishmen in southern Africa who were faced, after the turn of the century, with helping to resettle a scorched and ravaged land. However there were few who heard the fervency of Kipling's prayer

That we may repair the wrong that was done
To the living and the dead.

The second part of The Five Nations was entitled "Service

1. KIPLING, "The Settler", The Five Nations. p.153.

2. Ibid.

Songs" and should be judged accordingly; they are for the most part the balladist's simple dramatization of the ranker's point of view.

The first of these, "Chant-Pagan English Irregular: '99-02" is a re-construction of the effect of his African experiences upon a campaigner. He wonders how he can ever return to

'ouses both sides of the street,
And 'edges two sides of the lane,
And the parson an' 'gentry' between,
An' touchin' my 'at when we meet -
Me that 'ave been what I've been?

Eventually he decides to trek back to the south to discover

If it's only my fancy or not
That the sunshine of England is pale,
And the breezes of England are stale,
An' there's somethin' gone small with the lot;
For I know of a sun a' a wind,
An' some plains and a mountain be'ind,
An' some graves by a barb-wire fence;
An' a Dutchman I've fought 'oo might give
Me a job were I ever inclined,
To look in an' offsaddle an' live
Where there's neither a road nor a tree -
But only my Maker an' me. (1)

This is the exile in reverse, an account of what in fact did happen; for many who had come to fight returned to settle.

The versatile creator of *Kim's Lama*, and of "The Man born to be King", the story teller who left the portrait of Good Queen Bess before her looking glass, felt also an instinctive sympathy for those who fell in love with Africa. Kipling admired and extolled the adventurer, the frontiersman; not simply because the pioneer was the advance guard of Empire, the herald of "The Law" but because Kipling venerated the man of action. To him, as to Carlyle, work was holy, the sacrament through which man fulfills his destiny. That he held such a philosophy is recognized by some critics:

It is a mistake to regard him as a mere trumpet of Imperialism. With him, Imperialism was an accident; it gave him scope for expressing his philosophy of action. Action (since thought without action is incomplete) was for him the only means man has for combating the nothingness that surrounds him... (2)

This philosophy led naturally to a respect for the manly virtues of independence and courage, to esteem for the

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1. KIPLING, The Five Nations, p.162.
 2. DOBREE, The Lamp and the Lute, p.97.

Afrikaner who could ride and shoot and hold his own in the wilderness. Kipling expresses this in "Piet" through the mouth of a regular:

Ah there, Piet! - be'ind 'is stony kop,
With 'is Boer bread an' biltong, an' 'is
flask of awful Dops;
'Is Mauser for amusement an' 'is pony for
retreat,
I've known a lot o' fellers shoot a dam'
sight worse than Piet.

... ..

I ain't more proud of 'avin' won,
Than I am pleased with Piet.

(1)

Beneath the deliberate understatement, the veiled allusions and the rancourless chaff one can discern a real admiration for the Boer who had given the English "no end of a lesson".

Perhaps the best of Kipling's soldier pieces in this volume is the well known "Boots", the simplicity of which conceals considerable technical skill. The first stanza is built around a variation on the three heavy monosyllables - foot, slog, boots - and ends with the refrain:

There's no discharge in the war!

The effect is one of maddening monotony; of weary, indifferent men tramping endlessly across a battleground whose potential area stretched from Cape Town to the Zambesi:

Don't - don't - don't - don't - look at what's in
front of you
(Boots - boots - boots - boots, movin' up an' down
again);
Men - men - men - men - men go mad with watchin' 'em,
An' there's no discharge in the war.

(2)

Although the bulk of Kipling's South African work is small he deserves recognition in the history of the writings inspired by this continent. For one thing he understood (however lacking at times in subtilty of form and rhythm the manner in which he expressed it) the profound attraction of Africa for the pioneering Westerner:

Lived a woman wonderful,
(May the Lord amend her!)
Neither simple, kind, nor true,
But her Pagan beauty drew
Christian gentlemen a few
Hotly to attend her.

1. KIPLING, "Piet", The Five Nations, p.199.

2. Ibid, "Boots", p.185.

Africa's beauty, like Cleopatra's, was "pagan"; the English pioneers could expect little in return for their devotion, yet

They esteemed her favour more
Than a Throne's foundation.
For the glory of her face
Bade farewell to breed and race -
Yea, and made their burial-place
Altar of a Nation. (1)

The eclipse of Kipling's reputation, an eclipse brought about not only by his imperialism and his topicality, but also (somewhat paradoxically) by his suspicious ability - the almost disastrous ease with which he could handle so wide a range of forms and subjects, makes it difficult to grasp the extent to which his verses were read, recited and imitated. In 1900 Kipling's reputation was at its height; his immense vogue did not fail to have its repercussions - both conscious and unconscious - upon nearly all the English balladists and versifiers of the period. Neither were South Africans so isolated that they escaped the general fever. It is not true to state that

the Anglo-Boer war was left to the interpretation of Rudyard Kipling and Henry Newbolt, and that there were comparatively few echoes of these two poets from the English-speaking South Africans, at a time when their verse was derivative of English models. (2)

An external factor which had helped to popularize Kipling's verse throughout the English speaking world was the development of the cheap Press which catered for a huge, semi-educated readership. As a young journalist in India, Kipling had written his first ballads to fill blanks in The Civil and Military Gazette; he often did much the same thing later in Bloemfontein. The extent to which Englishmen were interested and absorbed by the events of the South African war was intensified by the Press:

The new journalism was preparing to show its paces for the first time in a major war... reporters were in a rush for South Africa. They were to include famous men. (3)

The arrival of these journalists (Kipling, Conan Doyle and Churchill may be numbered among them) marks another phase

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1. KIPLING, "South Africa", The Five Nations, p.149.
 2. MILLER & SERGEANT, A Critical survey..., p.34.
 3. KRUGER, Good-bye Dolly Gray, p.54.

in the slow, hesitant growth of English writing which could, in any sense, be regarded as South African. The journalists succeeded the missionaries, the travellers, the settlers and the fortune-seekers, as the next influx of Englishmen to enter the country. For the most part they were overwhelmingly curious about a land whose unpronounceable place names they were to mint into the familiar coinage of Victorian conversations. Most of these men were professional writers and many of them were profoundly stirred by their encounters with Africa. Furthermore the majority brought with them the literary and cultural influences of the England of their day; it was the England of Kipling and Chamberlain, of Browning and Tennyson, of the Great Exhibition and of the first Colonial and Imperial Conference. It was an atmosphere very different from that which had nurtured Pringle. It contained, however, a significant element which, although it travelled out under another name, bore a remarkable similarity to the philanthropic views imported at an earlier period by the abolitionists. This element was the belief in the type of Imperialism which had prompted "Recessional":

It has been a fashion latterly, especially among those who have never borne it, to sneer at the 'white man's burden' and allege that it was taken up for the sake of the loot it contained. That is not how it appeared to hundreds of young men and women who went out to spend the best years of their lives working for others in uncongenial and often deadly surroundings for the sake of a public ideal that was greater than themselves. They, and the churches, missionary societies, schools and universities behind them, answered to the call of the humanitarianism that had lived on since slave emancipation days, the realisation that there were less fortunate folk overseas who needed help, the hope that the world might be left a little better for all this imperial endeavour. Nor, since imperialism was a spirit that worked mightily in the British Empire, was the idea of liberty lacking. British and colonial publics alike regarded the South African war as a campaign to win, in Rhodes's famous phrase, 'equal rights for every civilized man south of the Zambesi' and heard once more with Kipling 'the trumpets round the scaffold at Whitehall'. The beliefs shared by Huskisson and Ruskin were not dead; the Empire must have a moral basis, for only so could its extension or maintenance be justified. (1)

This lofty conception of Empire had its seamier side; in

1. WALKER, The British Empire, p.132.

English verse it led to a spate of rhymes and jingles, the illegitimate offspring of Barrack Room Ballads.

The Handy Man and other verses by Harold Begbie is a fair example of the sickening drivel for which the war provided a market. (1) Begbie disseminated the sentimental propaganda lapped up by his contemporaries:

There's a little wife in Clapham with a baby
 in a pram,
 She is spending rather less on shopping now,
 And she does not meet her husband by a crowded
 scarlet tram
 That comes twinkling in the twilight to the
 Plough;
 In the parlour there's a portrait of a gallant
 youth in grey,
 With an order that was posted from Pall Mall,
 And she talks to all the neighbours in a
 military way
 Of "My husband with the Army in Natal". (2)

Such pious ejaculations as

God save the Queen that she may see
 The Federation of the Free;

and

One nation, one in aim and birth
 Shoulder to shoulder circling Earth. (3)

express the popular Imperialist view. The vision of man like Rhodes and Kipling appears less exalted when hashed up in Begbie's verses which are so appalling as to give the impression that he had intended them to be read as parodies. It is with a sense of shock that one encounters such things as "Buller's Bulldog's":

Then to the battle's shock -
 Hark to the thunder!
 Buttress of jagged rock
 Bursting asunder!
 Red is the foaming tide,
 Red, stones and grasses -
 On, on, they rush and ride
 Into hell's passes!

Not content with this imitation, Begbie next applies himself to a version of "Gunga Din". In "The Bearer" a wounded soldier

Looked up from the hell of the battle, looked up
 and beheld
 The Crown of sharp Thorns, the sad Beauty....

1. BEGBIE, The Handy Man and other verses, Grant Richards, Lond. 1900.
 The first of these verses is dated "Ladymith, October 30, 1899".
2. Ibid., "Brought Forward, The Volunteer".
3. Ibid., "Hymn for Federation".

he discovered, not Christ but

Lo, my hands clasped the hand of an Indian who
gave me to drink.

Begbie and company were extremely popular - a measure perhaps of the emotional state into which the English speaking world had been whipped. Publishers in London brought out volume after volume of Boer War "lyrics" during the first years of the century. Many of these such as "Goodbye Dolly, I must leave you" became the popular songs of the day. Public recitations were the rage and verses like Smedley Norton's Bramcote Ballads, which included "A Brief Diary of the late Conflict in South Africa", were declaimed and published in illustrated editions.

One of the more lively of these generally dreary collections is Ballads of the Boer War selected from the Haversack of Sergeant J. Smith and dedicated to His Majesty's Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards. (1) From their general style and content it seems likely that "Coldstreamer" was an officer in the regiment who was fond of reading Kipling - but this is mere guesswork.

These nine ballads were probably modelled on Kipling's "Service Songs". They comment upon such subjects as the press, the officers, the Army Chaplain and the Native. Occasionally some slight narrative is introduced as in "The Mail Cart", where a captured private and a "Cap'in H'Everard Stanesby Gore" turn the tables on a party of Boers.

"Coldstreamer" blends the sentiments of the day with a realism which was rare in any treatment of the South African scene.

"The White Flag; A Regrettable Incident" is the story of
Just a 'ardful o' men that day
On Doornberg 'ill, near Quagga's Vlei.

These five men are exhausted:

We'd trekked two days from Driefontein,
In a steady storm of driving rain;
An' it isn't no catch for man nor brute
To go sloppin' and slippin' thro' Spate 'n spruit,
When the track's as 'ard as the moon to find,
And the badger and merccat 'oles is blind,
An' you're riding a blooming h'Argentine
Which is mucky enough when the weather's fine. (2)

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1. "COLDSTREAMER", (Possibly Capt. Harry Graham) Author of Outposts.... Ruthless Rhymes for heartless Homes, Grant Richards, Lond. 1902.
 2. Ibid. "The White Flag...", Ballads of the Boer War.

The diction here is startlingly different compared with the "coursers" and "brakes" of Bringle's ballad "The Forester of the Neutral Ground". Helped by the wide currency given to them in the reports of war correspondents as well as by their adoption into colonial speech, the words "trekked" and "spruit" and the name "Driefontein" are now in no need of explanation; they are perfectly natural in the context. The slangy "blooming", "mucky" and "it isn't no catch" are obvious Kiplingese; so is the objective and accurate touch of the "merecat 'oles".

The party are ambushed, their sentry having gone to sleep on duty. Overwhelmingly outnumbered by the Boers - who have killed three of the men and wounded a fourth - the senior N.C.O. orders his companion to surrender:

I orders 'im "Show 'em something white!"
"Not while I've breath", says he, "to fight!"
... ..
Once more I ordered 'im, "Stand up, there,
and wave your 'andkerchief in the h' air!"
Then 'e stood an' waved - but they shot 'im dead.
"Thank Gawd", says 'e, "as my 'andkerchief's red!" (1)

The assumption that all British soldiers are heroes "You won't find cowards among that Breed", and that it is glorious to die (even fruitlessly) for the Empire, is the major theme, but the ballad is rescued from the depths to which Begbie sinks by such details as have already been pointed out, by glimpses of the actual experiences of campaigning. There is a touch of tough cynicism in "Coldstreamer", which rescued him from the morass of Begbie's sentimentalities:

"Look out!" 'e yells, "they're on us, Jim!"
Then a Mauser bullet ripped 'is side,
An' 'e gave a kind of a korf, and died.
(I don't deny as it served 'im right -
Ho, well, 'e paid for 'is sleep that night!)

"Coldstreamer's" attitude towards the enemy betrays none of the grudging admiration which Kipling accorded Piet:

...
But You're hall the same, you blooming Dutch,
With a hinnercent look in your childlike heyas,
An' it's nothing but lies, an' lies, an' lies!
Till we finds you hout - when you doesn't care,
But you lies some more, just to make things square!"
An' I looked at that treacherous lead, an' guessed
Not 'ad made that 'ole in the trooper's chest. (2)

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1. "Coldstreamer", "The White Flag...", Ballads of the Boer War.
 2. Ibid.

The author of these verses was not troubled by any desire to shoulder "the white man's burden". He had obviously come under other influences than Kiplings; in other words he had lived, for a time at least, in contact with the African labourer and had assumed the average colonial's belief in the rightful position of the Black man. "The Native" airs the Tommy's disgust that the Bantu levies on sentry duty should earn

Three pounds a month...
Two blankets an' their rations found, (1)
while the enlisted soldier drew only "six bob a week". This is a natural enough complaint but the frontier mind asserts itself more strongly as, with rough humour, the balladist satirizes the humanitarians:

The Dutch they gives 'em plenty work,
An' keeps 'em off the wish to shirk
By 'itting of their back.
The H'English, on the other 'and,
'Ave never learnt to H'understand
The way to use a black.
They gives 'im "schoff" and treats 'im kind,
Instead o' striking 'im be'ind.

The Boers are plainly accused of using dumdum bullets and then lying about it. They are depicted throughout in the worst possible light.

A sjamboking to such as 'e
Is like a Sunday at the sea
To ooves like me or you;
It braces 'im and does 'im good,
Gives 'im a h'int'rest in 'is food,
An' finds 'im jobs to do.
You'll get more willing work that way
Than wot you'll h'ever get by pay. (2)

The views expressed here are a light-hearted vindication of the truth of Kipling's comment:

I am against slavery...if only for the
reason that the white man becomes demoralised
by slavery. (3)

Not that the "Blacks" in question were slaves - indeed their comparatively high wage was the main reason for the grouse - but the verses reflect the opinions of a society which would eventually become infected throughout its body by the fact that cheap African labour was readily available.

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1. "COLDSTREAMER", "The Native", Ballads of the Boer War.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Quoted in HOPKINS, Rudyard Kipling, p.197.

The most vivid of "Coldstreamer's" ballads is "The Blockhouse" which recreates the plight of the British sentry cooped up in one of Kitchener's iron cylinders. These metal ovens with projecting A-shaped roofs held seven men, and before the end of the war "About 10,000 were strung across nearly 5,000 miles". (1)

'Ere an I in a Block'ouse,
Like a 'ornet under a glass;
Nothin' to do but sentry-go,
H'up an' down, an' to'an'-fro,
Watchin' the trains as pass.

Very inferior stuff, scarcely to be compared with "Bridge Guard in the Karroo" from which it was probably derived, but it does bring back to us, however fleetingly, the frustrations endured by some luckless private in Africa:

I misses my daily paper,
An' my 'alf-an'-alf out 'ere;
You can 'ave my tot o' the ration run
An' my share o' the magazines as come
For a Star an' a pint o' beer.

... ..
For what you h'asks at present
Is more than my shilling's worth,
An' it ain't my bloomin' ideo at all
O' what Mister Kipling likes to call
The "Gawdliest life h'on hearth!"

Give me a 'ard day's trekking,
Give me a bit of a scrap!
H'open veldt an' a bivouac fire
Is 'eaven compared to this cage o' wire,
Where I feels like a rat in a trap. (2)

"Coldstreamer" had some first-hand knowledge of life on this continent. An interest in Africa was not always discernable in many of the verse collections of this period which were more often so imbued with the thoughtless arrogance, the Podsnappery, which had discomfited Kipling during Victoria's Jubilee celebrations, that their writers had time for expressing little else.

John Huntley Skrine, the author of a volume The Queen's Highway..., (3) found less inspiration in Africa than in the fact that The Gordons preferred to wear the kilt - though given the option of fighting in khaki as the kilt had drawn enemy fire by its conspicuous colouring in the veld. The choice was

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1. KRUGER, Good-bye Dolly Gray, p.459.
 2. "COLDSTREAMER", "The Blockhouse", Ballads of the Boer War...
 3. SKRINE, The Queen's Highway and other lyrics of the war 1899-1900. Elkin Mathews, Lond. 1900.

applauded by Skrine:

Will we leave the hill-tartan at home?
Will a Highlander cover the knee
For a dread of the bullets that come
The thicker where Highlanders be? (1)

Such crass stupidity was not the only reaction to the unprecedented loss of life during the South African war. There exists, for instance, an unsigned pamphlet, The Black Watch at Magersfontein,⁽²⁾ which consists of twenty-three verses blaming the arm-chair command at the outbreak of hostilities and demanding why the facts were not known in England:

Tell you the tale of the Battle; Well
There a'int so much to tell
Nine hundred went to the slaughter, and
Nearly four hundred fell.
Wire, and the Mauser rifle,
Thirst, and a burning sun,
Knocked us down by the hundreds,
E'er the day was done.
... ..
Why wer'nt we told of the trenches?
Why wer'nt we told of the wire
Why were we marched up in column
May Tommy Atkins enquire? (3)

However, even before we have come to the end of Skrine's volume a change of tone is apparent for reverses had made the writer less cocksure of the invincibility of British arms. There is a note of genuine emotion in "Digging the Grave" written after Magersfontein when sixty-three Highlanders were laid in one grave "and the engineers who dug were crying all the time".

Shovel and pick, and a moonlight broad
On the soil of the veldt up-heaven.
Pillow and bed for dreamless head -
Comrades nine times seven.
... ..
To-morrow we'll up when our lads are hid,
And batter the Dutchman's door.
What is it to these who wins, who flees, -
Eyes that see it no more?
Wonder of battle and men that die,
A wonder that will not away.
Ours is the good they have bought with blood: -
What of the good have they? (4)

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1. SKRINE, The Queen's Highway and other lyrics of the War, 1899-1900. "Kilt or Khaki" p.17.
 2. Unsigned pamphlet dated 11th December, 1899. Johannesburg Public Library.
 3. The Black Watch at Magersfontein.
 4. SKRINE, "Digging the Grave", The Queen's Highway and other lyrics of the War, 1899-1900. p.33.

This note of uncertainty was not the popular one. More typical of the attitude towards the War expressed by the average English versifier is The Little Bugler and other war lyrics, by Norman Bennet. This volume, dedicated to "The Public Schoolmen at the Front", is redolent of that patriotic spirit which is said to be instilled upon the playing fields of Eton:

Hurra for merrie England in the thickest of the fight!
Hurra for merrie England in the battle for the right!
And the bugler boy he sounds a blast, the veldt takes
up the cry,
While Britain's sons, in brave array, to conquer or
to die
Go riding up the hollows, their gallant hearts aflame
For the honour of their country, and England's mighty
name.
They hear the shots go hissing as they scatter far
and near;
But Britain's sons are soldiers born, they falter
not nor fear. (1)

Norman Bennet, like Dugmore, was using his rhymes to stiffen morale. He inculcates the correct, gentlemanly attitude towards the enemy:

The foes are silenced, and soon they lie
On the mountain tops in their long, last sleep,
... ..
Though ye are foes, ye fought full well,
And when the lions of war are dead
Many a father his son will tell
Of the willing blood that was bravely shed. (2)

This sort of nonsense might have been written anywhere in the British Empire at the beginning of this century. There is no question of the supreme rightness of the British cause - Kipling had taught a faith which was held more firmly than he held it himself:

The battle they fought was for England's God.
Da nobis pacem Domine,
And a full speedy victory. (3)

It was a faith which God must have regarded with some irony when He weighed it in the balance with the fervent prayers of the Boer leaders who were even more firmly convinced that they were fighting a Holy War - a veritable Jihad.

Of all those who rushed into print few sank below the level of Marston Rudland who would have made a suitable Laureate for Sir Oswald Mosley. Like many a man since, Rudland was obsessed

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1. BENNET, "The Little Bugler", The Little Bugler and other war lyrics, p. 9.
 2. Ibid. "Silence the Guns", p.13.
 3. Ibid. "The Brave 2,000", p.24.

by the delusory concept of "racial purity". In this case his Poems of the Race extolled the superiority of the English:

Here's to White, the gray-haired hero,
and to all the hero-class!
Let us sing the race-song proudly.
Now, in silence, drain the glass,
Unto all who died to keep the flag a-flying! (1)

These examples should be sufficient to demonstrate that the majority of English writers and readers (both in South Africa and in Britain) regarded verse as a means of encouraging patriotism and the "correct" imperialist view on the war. There were, however, those who harboured grave doubts about the validity of the conflict and who watched, grief-stricken, as a barrier was erected between English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans. Some pro-Boer sympathisers (of which there were many in England and in Africa) had lived in friendship with their Dutch neighbours and had shared the common hardships of a pioneering society. They also resorted to the lyric and the ballad to popularize their views.

As early as 1898 a pamphlet entitled The Boer Ride was published in London. This was dedicated to President Kruger "a great pioneer of civilization in Africa". It attempted to describe the recent Jameson Raid from the point of view of an old Dutch colonist:

Just of gold is moral cancer
With the death of virtue fraught;
Changing honest men to devils
Poisoning the springs of thought. (2)

This morality tale was continued through eighty-seven stanzas - a measure of the powers of endurance of the Victorian reader.

On the reverse of the copy of this pamphlet in the Johannesburg Public Library is a printed sheet bearing, (beneath the Transvaal crest and motto "eendragt maakt magt"), some lines signed by two "Inboorlingen van Transvaal":

...
Gedenk aan land en volk
Getrouwe Hemels Heer
Ziet gunstig of one neer
En red ons van den vyand weer,... (3)

These sentiments, expressed in both English and the "Taal", are

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1. RUDLAND, "The Leaguer of Ladysmith", Poems of the Race, (1901) p.90.
 2. SHORT, The Boer Ride, John Long, Lond. 1898.
 3. WILLEMSE, BOTHA, (Pamphlet, Johannesburg Public Library).

a sign that the breach between the two pioneering white races in Southern Africa was not complete.

Another collection of the period expresses a sense of the pity of war as well as respect for the fighting men on both sides. There is no evidence to show that the author ever came to Africa, but his verses are based upon incidents quoted from the dispatches of war correspondents or from private letters written at the front. Although Rawnsley dedicated his volume "To Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, his brave men fighting and fallen, and his gallant foes", his lack of partisanship is reflected in his themes, which range from "The Wounded piper of Elands-Laagte", (a young Scot more concerned for the loss of his new bag-pipes than for his wounded arm) to "After the Battle":

And presently, propped by a boulder grey,
A grey and grizzled old Boer I saw;
His whole right hand had been blown away;
But, quiet and calm,
He was reading a Psalm
From a blood-stained book of the ancient Law. (1)

These ballads lack those details which might convince one that Rawnsley was describing personal experiences. His vignette of a Boer sniper, for instance, although much more convincing than the rubbish written by the racialists, contains nothing that the writer might not have gleaned from an intelligent second-hand report:

With rifle, bible, luncheon-bag, and pipe,
We saw him going forth each day to snipe;
We watched him on the foemen get his bead
Then fire, then turn his Holy Book to read,
Some chapter from the Kings would suit his case,
That told how Israel smote a godless race,
How hip and thigh, at Heaven's august command
The Hebrew drove the Hivite from the land;
He could not wish the modern Hivites well
Seeing we hid in holes from shot and shell;
Or else from Kings he turned for hope and calm
To Kruger's late commended battle-psalm. (2)
Then could we note how he would luncheon take
- His bit of biltong and his barley-cake,
Or sudden sighting scouts upon the hill
Would lay his rifle true again with skill;
Then scratch his head and fill his ancient pipe,
Puff clouds, till chance once more should bid him snipe;
And so till evening sit and smoke and read,
Or on the far-off foeman get his bead,

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1. RAWNSLEY, "After the Battle", Ballads of the War 1900, p.6.
 2. Psalm xxxiii.

Then rise, and from his boulder steal away
In hopes of more success another day.
We called him "Old Mortality", and came
Almost with love to think upon his name -
This Bible-reading, smoking, sniping Boer,
Whose shots were frequent tho' his bag was poor;
And tho' his humour was a little grim
We sighed when Death the Sniper called for him! (1)

More than a little sentimental, with a fixation about Boers and bibles which turns the enemy into a bearded patriarch, Rawnsley was preaching brotherly love and compassion through the medium of the verse narrative. This motive emerges even more clearly in "Bible v. Bullet", said to be based upon an incident in the war when a British officer, expecting to be shot, was presented with a bible by an elderly Boer, who then walked away into the mist:

There are more bullets than man can make,
In a single page of the printed Word:
The God of battles with Truth can break
Rifle and canon and spear and sword.

And tho' I was only an ignorant Boer,
Fresh from the Veldt with my rifle at trail,
I knew that the Vision of John was sure,
And the Spirit of God, not might, would prevail. (2)

On the whole, Rawnsley's sermons in verse are not modelled on Kipling, but "Recessional" is echoed in "The Day of Intercession":

God, in Whose hand the issues are,
When nations rage with fire and sword,
By Whose decree the scourge of war
Fulfils a more than mortal word,
Let battle-pride and warrior-lust
Henceforth lie silent in the dust.

... ..
Give strength and calm in good and ill,
Be with the fallen, foe or friend;
Lord God of Hosts, if, by Thy will
We stand victorious at the end,
Give us Thy help divine to be
More just, more merciful for Thee. (3)

Pro-Boer sympathy was not confined to the "Little Englanders", some of whom may never have met a Dutchman in the flesh. At intervals during the war an anonymous writer in Cape Town published verses in The New Age, a London journal proclaiming

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1. RAWNSLEY, "Old Mortality", Ballads of the War, 1900. p.49.
 2. RAWNSLEY, "Bible v. Bullet", p.27. The incident was reported in The Cape Times as having occurred to The Hon. George Peel at the battle of Belmont.
 3. RAWNSLEY, "The Day of Intercession", p.72.

itself a

democratic review of politics, religion and
literature. Stands for Human brotherhood,
Political Liberty, and Economic Justice. (1)

The existence of these verses show that the shared experiences of life in Africa had moulded some English speaking settlers into something different from their immigrant ancestors. In spite of the ties of language and of blood which bound them to England, there were colonists ready and willing to identify themselves with the so-called rebels. In "The Last March of Lotter's Commando" the brave boys of the Empire have become "foreign soldiers" and it is Africa, not Europe, which is the "native land":

Then they marched them through the township,
For their friends and foes to see;
They were "ignorant Bywonders",
Rich in neither land nor fee:

But they marched with head uplifted,
Men of upland veld and farm,
With their bearded country faces,
And their air of stately calm...

The bywonder clenched his hand,
For he saw the foreign soldiers,
Trampling down his native land;... (2)

It might be argued that the liberal, humanitarian element (always a strong feature of sections of English society) had here been diverted not into activities connected with slave emancipation, with evangelizing the black races or with an idealistic imperialism - but with a campaign to support the Boer's right to independence:

Fredon spoke to the Transvaal Boer
When the Empire shouted "Yield!"
And his answer was Modder and Spion Kop
And Colenso's flaming field... (3)

Such partisanship expressed in the teeth of the hysterical Imperialism of the popular cause may be ascribed, in part, to the natural impulse felt by many Englishmen to leap to the defence of the chap who was, by this, getting the worst of the scrap. It was more than this however, more than the expression of a traditional liberal wing. By this time, as Olive Schreiner so passionately testified, "Rooinek" and Boer had intermarried and a generation of English speaking men and women was growing up

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1. The New Age "published at the request and at the cost of the readers of that journal" Songs of the Veld... (1902)
 2. Written Cape Town, Sept. 1901, Songs of the Veld... p.7.
 3. "A Song of Freedom", Songs of the Veld, p.8.

which looked to South Africa, not to England, as home.

Very occasionally the Pro-Boer writers forsook their opposition pulpits and attempted a more imaginative, a more personal approach as in "The Young Burgher's Mother":

Ah! What a blast swoops down from yonder hill!
How the panes rattle, and the pine-tops sweep!
Out on the kopje - God! he lies so still!
- Piet! Piet! Are you asleep?... (1)

But such attempts at dramatization were rare no matter what the writer's sympathies. Understandably Kipling came in for a good deal of derision, for by now his name stood for a number of things which he himself might well have abhorred. It was easy enough to parody him:

This is the cup that Raiders drain
When they make of Right a Wrong;
This, the cup of the world's contempt,
Bitter and deep and strong.
...
This is the lie that Raiders lie
When they start to annex a land;
Right under foot and Cant overhead,
And a devil on either hand.
We have gone that road - a guilty, ghastly road -
With greed for our god and guide.
Ah! Woe for the world when good men march
With Raiders - side by side. (2)

The best of the Boer War versifiers (apart from Kipling) was A.M. Buckton who published The Burden of Engela in 1904. (3) The two extracts, "At the Garden Rail" and "At Welbedacht" anthologised for the first time in A Book of South African Verse are the best of Buckton, but the whole volume, enlivened by obviously authentic details and by realistic incidents is strangely moving - strangely because the style is in no way remarkable. The simplicity and sincerity of the approach account for much of the appeal of these verses which recount the experiences of a Transvaal family from the point of view of the mother.

Buckton is at her best describing the homely details which go to make up the life of Engela:

I went to meet him yester eve;
The honey sky was pale,
The scented parsley filled the air
Beyond the garden rail.

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1. Written from Cape Town. Songs of the Veld... p.8.
 2. MONEY, "A Song - after Kipling", Songs of the Veld... p.7.
 3. BUCKTON, The Burden of Engela. A Ballad-epic. (Methuen & Co.) Lond. 1904.

The men were braving cattle-hides
All day within the kraal;
The maidens stripping mealie-cobs
In rows beneath the wall. (1)

Such stanzas support the statement that

"The incidents in the tale are true in the
high sense of the word: many of them are
founded on fact, and are faithful to the
smallest details". (2)

A.M. Buckton writes with tender understanding of the
Boer frontier farmer, his family and his traditions. Their
simple faith permeates every aspect of living: Engela's
husband, Piet, speaks of the necessity of dipping his stock
to prevent their becoming infested with ticks:

He holds it good; though Oma says
No pagan wash can keep
The scab away, if 'tis His will
To doom a flock of sheep! (3)

The slow rhythm of the seasonal farming activities, as well
as the close relationships between Bantu and Boer, is pictured
in "The Reaping":

Two hundred morgens stood in oat,
Three hundred more in maize;
And ere they put a sickle in
I heard their song of praise.

Piet was foremost with the scythe;
The women stooped to bind;
And many a swarthy mother bore
Her baby tied behind.

Jan with solemn gesture led
The steaming waggon-train,
The medicine-woman at his side,
Chanting charms for rain.

... ..

With blackened ash of a heifer's foot
She strewed the living air;
And turned her into her painted hut,
To make her potions there.

The girls are grinding at the quern
With voices glad and free...
The master is among his men,
As he was wont to be! (4)

Much of the diction of this volume has strong associations
with English pastoral verse: "maiden", "harvest home", "bleating

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1. BUCKTON, "At the Garden Rail", p.41.
 2. Ibid: p.141.
 3. Ibid: p.42.
 4. Ibid: "The Reaping", p.40.

flocks" and "milch cows". The simple device of narrating the family's history through the mouth of Engela, the mother, not only helps to arouse pity for the Boer cause but it unifies the collection so that the impression made by the verses is stronger if they are read as a whole. The pastoral diction, married as it is to such local words as "kraal" and "mealie", does not disturb this unity for the words do not call attention to themselves, the reader accepts them naturally in the context.

These ballads succeed to some extent in dramatizing the Afrikaner's faith in his cause, a faith which supported him throughout the long agony of the war. The strength of this belief is very successfully evoked in the tale of an old widow who had lost her only son in the fighting and who is left alone, except for two children, to face British troops requisitioning horses for the army. They demand her two stallions:

Toals my husband bred, and prized the most of all,
To bear strange men, and ride to the enemy's bugle call!

This thought is more than the widow can bear. She steals out at night to the stables and feeds the stallions by lantern light:

Their lips and nostrils quivered to feel the wholesome
corn;

She combed their massy manes with a comb of yellow horn:
'We must be ready, ready to meet the coming morn'.

She looked abroad from the threshold: the dawn was very
near!

The manger-meal was done: why did she linger there?
She turned her into the stable, steady, without a fear...

Four pistol-shots rang out in the silence of the night -
The cow-boy started forth from his hut in sudden fright.
And met a reeling woman bearing a stable-light.

... ..

Two troopers came at dawn, with a sergeant at their head.
'Yield us the stallions, woman! The brown one and the red.'

She gazed as one that wanders: 'Take them,' was all she
said. (1)

There is a tension, an economy of incident and significant detail in this ballad "At Welbedacht" with its restrained, suggestive ending which make it one of the best contemporary poems about the war.

A.M. Buckton did not identify herself so completely with the Boer cause that she was unaware of the tragedy of the English lives which were being lost:

1. BUCKTON, "At Welbedacht", The Burden of Engela, p.53.

They die like sheep upon the hills;
By fever and thirst they fall
In an alien land, marching to death
At a trumpet's call.

(1)

In fact her story of the wounded British scout who is sheltered in an enemy farm-house and has his bullet removed by Ter Winckel, the man who shot him, as well as the tale of the Irish school-master who flies into Basutoland because he loves both Boer and Briton, are deliberate attempts to emphasize what a post of a later generation was to call "Unlucky soldiership, spent in a bad quarrel".

Engela, who loses husband and child, homestead and friends, is a somewhat idealized figure who remains remarkably unembittered by suffering. Such a breadth and generosity of tone suggests perhaps that the writer had not lived in the Transvaal during the war (although she may have done) but that, like Olive Schreiner, she knew and loved the Afrikaner and was intensely aware of the folly of the conflict.

Of all that was written at the time urging unity between Boer and Briton, the most dramatic and moving apologia was made by Olive Schreiner in the pamphlet The South African Question, which she published under the pseudonym of "An English South-African". This plea for love and unity between the two white pioneering groups was censored during the war and copies were often burnt. In it the novelist speaks of what was happening to white men in southern Africa prior to the conflict:

...in another generation the fusion will be complete. There will be no Dutchmen then and no Englishmen in South Africa, but only the great blended South African people of the future, speaking the English tongue, and holding in reverent memory its founders of the past, whether Dutch or English. Already, but for the sorrowful mistakes of the last years, the line of demarcation would have faded out of sight... we are one people... Neither Dutch nor English South Africans desire to see any other power installed in the place of England. Cultured Dutch and English Africans alike are fed on English literature, and England is their intellectual home... Do not think, when imported Soldiers walk across South African plains to take the lives of South African men and women, that it is only African sand and African bushes that are cracking beneath their tread; at each step they are breaking the fibres, invisible as air, but strong as steel, which bind the hearts of South Africans to England. Once broken they can never be mended whole again; they are living things, broken, they will be dead... You will not kill us with your Lee-Mitfords; you

1. BUCKTON, "News from Bloemfontein", The Burden of Engela, p.63.

will make us. There are men who do not know they love a Dutchman, but the first three hundred that fall, they will know it...Do not say to us, 'You are Englishmen; when the war is over, you can wrap the mantle of our imperial glory round you and walk about boasting that the victory is yours.'

We could never wrap that mantle round us again. We have worn it with pride. We could never wear it then. There would be blood upon it, and the blood would be our brothers'.....

(1)

There was much truth in this but, sadly enough for South Africa in 1960, her optimism on the question of national unity has not been justified. The events of the war years resulted, in most cases, in exactly the opposite of unity; they threw the majority of the English speaking settlers violently back into the protecting arms of their mother country, thus increasing their sense of emotional and cultural dependency. Even Olive Schreiner's own approach - fervent South African that she was - reveals the ambivalent nature of her loyalties. She talks of an emerging nation throwing off the imperialist yoke in the face of what amounted to a civil war, but she is confident that the South African people of the future will speak the English tongue, she asserts that this mythical nation will be unable and, more significantly, unwilling to throw off the cultural links which bind it to England. Olive Schreiner shared in the constant dilemma of the English speaking South African - the tug-of-war that exists between the desire to stand alone, to be independent, to be free of authority as the trek-boers and pioneers desired to be free - and the knowledge that complete separation meant further isolation from the entire heritage of the English speaking peoples.

The Anglo-Boer War, which burnt such a bitter scar upon so many minds, produced in South Africa no memorable English verse. The best lyrics on the subject were written by Kipling, while the sufferings of the Afrikaner were best expressed by A.M. Buckton in such simple trifles as:

Under the wild moon
A rough stone stands,
Raised too soon,
Marked by alien hands,
Glimmering white afar
In the dead lambs' fold -
"Jaapie - prisoner of war -
Ten years old! "

(2)

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1. SCHREINER, An English-South African's View of the Situation, Hodder & Stoughton, Lond. p.92.(n.d.) Written in May,1899.
 2. BUCKTON, "Under the Wild Moon", The Burden of Engels, p.123.
See APPENDIX E.

In dealing an almost mortal wound to white unity, the war may also have dealt a severe blow to the hesitant growth of an English literature in Africa. So many writers were occupied with beating drums; had conditions been peaceful they might have turned their attention to recording the life of the country.

As early as 1909 some South Africans were aware that all was not as it might have been in the field of literary endeavour. In that year an article appeared in The Bulletin:

The war has not produced the effect on English South African poetry which might fairly have been looked for...South Africa has not produced the kind of poetry she might. We want our epic, and there is no reason, since we do not aspire to the classical dignity, why we should not have it... (1)

The author went on to say that there was no reason why a Colonist of English descent, writing in English, should not embrace a subject such as the Boer Trek or the colonizing achievements of the Portuguese:

We have English writers to-day to whom the romance of the Boer appeals. The recent apotheosis of Mistral is a shining example of the triumphs that still await popular literature, when the people and the poet are as one. We have the beginnings of a poetry. The next move is with the people. (2)

A half century later there is still little indication that the people are prepared to move.

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1. The Bulletin No. 2. July, 1909. p.69. The Editorial maintained that the best English verse writers, Lance Fallaw for instance, were being driven out of the country as "South Africa does not know, and, still more, does not buy the poetry that is written for her.."
 2. The Bulletin, No. 2. July, 1909. p.69.

CHAPTER 6.

THE EXPANDING FRONTIER - RHODESIA.

Into the darkness whence they came,
They passed, their country knoweth none,
They and their gods without a name
Partake the same oblivion.
Their work they did, their work is done,
Whose gold, it may be, shone like fire
About the brows of Solomon,
And in the House of God's Desire.
"Zimbabwe", Andrew Lang.

The time was past when enterprising traders like Cumming could regard the Grahamstown market with its hides and ivory as the hub of their pioneering activities. From the Eastern Frontier with its still unresolved conflict between settlers and Xhosa, interest had shifted to Natal, to Kimberley and the Rand, and, eventually, to Mashonaland. In 1888 Rhodes's agents - Charles Dunnell Rudd, his partner in the Goldfields of South Africa Company, James Maguire, a Fellow of All Souls, and Francis 'Matabele' Thompson, who came from the Eastern Cape Province, secured

the famous Rudd Concession, which, in return for 1000 Martini-Henrys, 100,000 rounds, £1200 annually, and, of all things, a steamboat to ply on the Zambesi, gave its holders the monopoly of the minerals in all Lobengula's kingdom. (1)

The discovery of gold and diamonds had led to a fever of prospecting and exploration all over southern Africa. Men dreamt of finding yet another Rand in the territory controlled by the British South Africa Company. In 1890 the Pioneer column of two hundred men (lured by promises of gold claims and a three thousand acre farm each) accompanied by five hundred B.S.A. Company police as well as a large body of Native labourers, began to cut the road north. They were led by one of the last of the great hunters, Frederick Courtenay Selous. On September, 12th, 1890, the pioneers founded Salisbury.

The Frontier had shifted to Rhodesia. To it went two men and a boy who were, each in his own way, to contribute something towards the tradition of English verse written in an African environment.

1. WALKER, A History of Southern Africa, 3rd. Ed. p.413.

Arthur Shearly Cripps, the Charterhouse and Trinity College man, who had won his boxing blue and rowed in the College eight, left the vicarage of Ford End in Essex in 1901 for Mashonaland. With the exception of part of 1915 and the following year (when he served as naval and military chaplain in the East Africa campaign) and of four subsequent years in Essex (1926-30) he worked as a missionary among the Mashonas until his death in 1952. Forty-seven years in all of devoted, self-sacrificing labours for the African people. During the last eleven years of his life Cripps was blind, he continued his work; a man of God whose personal heroism is far more remarkable than his poetry.

Cripp's publications comprise a fairly large number of books and pamphlets, including two sociological studies, stories, novels and verse: all of which helped to contribute towards the support of his mission. One cannot help suspecting that this led him, at times, to print what otherwise he might not have thought worth the paper.⁽¹⁾ He was tempted, one feels, to use his verse as a means of propogating his sincerely held beliefs.

This generalisation aside there is, in the best of Cripp's work, a distinctive and personal note which often revitalizes the scholarly, almost antique mode in which it is cast. This style was derived from his reading and from his beliefs about Africa:

If anybody from a British home were going forth to live in Africa - in a region of her, that is to say, where Africans are living (under the new conditions of British Peace) their old-fashioned life on the land - tilling their own tilths and feeding their own cattle and goats - and if he were to ask advice of me as to what Books he would do well to take out with him, I know what Book I would name next after the Bible Books, none other than the Story and the Songs of that single one of the World's Arch-Poets, who once lived in Africa - I mean Theocritus. I have lived long in an old-fashioned part of Africa myself, and I have seen much there that has seemed to me both sacred and beautiful. Of all Books the Bible Books have helped me most to see the sacredness and the beauty around me in African country-life, but the Story and the Songs of Theocritus and his fellow-poets have helped me too.

(2)

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1. For instance his Carols of Christmas from Africa, S.P.C.K., 1935.
 2. CRIPPS, Introduction, Fifty Years of Rhodesian Verse, ed. Snelling, (1938) p.17.

Cripps made no forced attempt to interpret new things in a new way, instead he wrote of Africa in terms of the vocabulary, rhythms and verbal economy which his upbringing and education had taught him to love. As Lord Tweedsmuir (who knew and admired him) put it:

He has a great tradition behind him, but he has cunningly adapted it to the needs of a new land, and for me the unique charm of his work is that he can sing of the Songs of Zion and at the same time give them the charm and mystery of the waters of Babylon. (1)

To Cripps there was no incongruity in singing of the Mashonas in borrowed tunes from Theocritus or from the 17th century English lyricists. His vision of Africa was a pastoral one and, rightly or wrongly, he mourned its passing:

Although much has been already taken, much is left. Their lot falls in a fair ground for not a few Africans still. There may be a place in the sun yet for many Africans...these may have room to plough, and to pasture their herds in, for many years that are left...What of the old-time customs of that hill-country in Africa?

The patient iron-work with its earthen furnace, its laborious beating-out of the metal with stone over stone, is but a memory too often in many of its old abiding-places now. But the winter's threshing-work for men and its winnowing-work for women - the beating-out of the red millet-corn with clubs and the sifting of it from its golden-green chaff on the rock-floors - may last our own generation. And at least the blue and golden skies of day and those blue and silver night-skies, in which the stars, watching over Africa, slumber not nor sleep, are too far out of reach for Africa's gold-seekers and diamond-hunters and Big-Business agents from overseas to get at them and spoil them. (2)

Judged as a whole the simplest, most moving of Cripp's poems, the most artistically satisfying, are those from his first volume of African verses in which, seeing only what is good in the lives of the Mashonas, he depicts them in an idyllic, pastoral setting, as in the anthology pieces, "Love Pagan" and "A Mashona Husbandman". Some of the lyrics in Lyra Evangelistica (3) have a sweetness of tone and an intensity of conviction which had been almost entirely lacking in the verse of the frontier rhymsters.

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1. TWEEDSMUIR, Introduction, Africa: verses, 1939.
 2. CRIPPS, Introduction, Fifty years of Rhodesian Verse.
 3. CRIPPS, Lyra Evangelistica, Blackwell, Oxford, 1909.

Cripps loved to dwell upon the significance and beauty of age-old country activities: ploughing, sowing, reaping and particularly, the harvest. He made no attempt to use:

the interpolations, the assegais and impis, the 'nkooos, with which too many South African poets have sprinkled their verses. (1)

The result is simple, sincere, reminiscent of Herrick and the vales of Arcady:

So when the sun is almost down
Bright in the slanting light we come,
Bearing our rustling grass-sheaves high
Against the splendour of the sky -
To thatch for Christ a Home.
Thou Reaper God o' daybreaks spread
Its Board with brave wayfarer's Bread,
Our hay-sheaf harvests crown
With corn-sheaf of Thine Own. (2)

The question of whether one can justify Cripps's poetic vision of the African in terms of shepherds, nymphs and swains in a countryside of "ample Wolds", "tarns" and even "elves" is a complicated one. It is complicated by factors which some would consider beyond the bounds of literary criticism but which, nevertheless, influence the judgment of the critic: by the fact, among others, that few of us have had Cripps's experience of life among an African pastoral people before they came to be "tainted" by what passes for Western Civilization. It is further complicated by our own attitudes towards the African and towards Africa. Without entirely condemning his diction which is at least, as Brettell has pointed out, more effective than an artificially "Africanised" one, it is obvious that it introduces an element of unreality into his lyrics. Repeatedly in these verses a cloud of mist descends between the ostensible subject of the poem and the conscious and unconscious associations of the words employed. The word "wain" (to give but one example) recalls harvest-home in a cultivated, cultured agricultural community which takes the mind far away from the wheelless sled and the ponderous ox-wagon of Africa.

It is perhaps partly because of his archaic diction that Cripps's best verses are not those in which he is attempting

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1. BRETTCELL, "Three Rhodesian Poets", *Rhodesiana*, Pub. No 3, The Rhodesiana Society, 1958. p.36.
 2. CRIPPS, "Near Sunset", *Lyra Evangelistica*, p.8.

directly to describe or to praise tribal life as he sees it, but rather those intensely personal, religious lyrics expressing his dedication to his missionary vocation. Such a poem is "Benediction" (Sunrise after night-travelling):

Tho' as it were a crypt I pace
My long night vigil through,
Within the church of God I am -
His dome of frescoed blue.

I pass deep stoups in earthen floors
Where heavenly roof-gems show -
Riches o'er lustral waters set
Where worms' dim candles glow -

Wind-carven pillars of the trees
Where horned owls' Lauds are said -
Slab, plinth, and pile, the cenotaphs
Of the long crumbled dead.

A jewelled Eikon of my Lord
Glitters to East afar -
Louting upon one knee I hail
The Bright and Morning Star.

.....
The ghostly voices of the doves
Croon in the brooding light -
The Christ-taught cock that Peter chide
Scolds the forsaking night.

At last the voices hush and pause,
The vast church fills with dread -
Brow to the throbbing floor I crouch,
My "Judica me" said.

How soon mine ears as I adore
The stir of welcome fills -
God's awful Monstrance is upheld -
The sun is o'er the hills!

(1)

The diction here - (stoups, lustral, louting, chide) is characteristic of Cripps in this mood where he employs Biblical imagery, and liturgical terms with Classical neatness and conciseness. The fervour of tone tends to transcend the archaisms, though the poem is not uniformly successful and the conceit of the last line retains an over conscious artifice which robs the image of strength.

As he repeatedly explained, Cripps saw Africa as another Arcady:

But twice a thousand years too late
You mourn your shepherds' Paradise -
These very years when, wound by wound,
Our true Arcadia dies...

(2)

1. CRIPPS, "Benediction"..., *Lyra Evangelistica*, p.5.

2. Ibid: "To Some Poet in England (From an African Arcadia)". p.65.

but he saw her too as a "field white for the harvest". This double vision accounts for his imagery, much of which is drawn, like that of Vaughan and Herbert in the 17th century, from the 1611 version of the Bible as well as from the pastoral poets. Cripps rings the changes upon favourite images drawn from the Christian symbols of the harvest, from the cock, the road, from light and darkness, especially the light of the stars and the sun.

Sometimes his dual conception of Mashonaland - the Arcadian and the Christian - is fused:

Unto the Church of the Arcadians, write -
"Neatherds and husbandmen, arise, your
Light
Is come, arise and shine". (1)

and again in "The Roofless Child"

...

Years since was Israel ashes, heap on heap.
What now of Europe's Shrine?
The faithless mortar cracks, the seams yawn deep,
Keen roofless nights are Thine.
Great ruins fall from Thee, O little Child,
Wise lands outgrow Thee fast,
Come rest in grass-thatched byre or cavern wild
Of Arcady at last. (2)

At other times the African village is a second Bethlehem in the poverty and simplicity of its people:

Blest is Bethlehem Town -
Thatch'd roofs, earth-walls brown -
There poor shepherds live -
There a wise man's faith
As a child's may thrive!
See the sun dips down!
Nears the blessed night,
With the slanting light -
Where the rocks divide -
Come swart flocks and pied,
Lo! Wee Christs bestride
Cattle black or red! (3)

This is charming, both in conception and execution but, as often in Cripps, it approaches perilously near the sentimental. (4)

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1. CRIPPS, "Advent in Africa (The Native Church)", Lyra Evangelistica, p.25.
 2. Ibid: "The Roofless Child", p.31.
 3. Ibid: "The Holy Night (On a Mission Station)", p.28.
 4. For instance in "All Saints' Day" when he writes:
"Flawed priest, that God should choose to make
of thee
A nursery window, whence His babes may see
Rapture of Saints that are, wonder of Saints to be!"
op.cit. p.42.

It is ironical that Cripps - (the product of a famous English school and University, cherishing all that was finest in European culture) - should so have dreaded the impact of Europe upon Africa. This fear of his, that the white man would destroy "our true Arcadia", may be explained by the fact that in the new frontier of the Rhodesias it was not Western civilization which Cripps feared would corrupt the Mashona but Western greed for power and gold. This was the reason that he preached "A Counsel of Perfection" - bitter comfort for the African:

O little goatherd would you climb to Him?
From your low thatch'd hut is His Vision dim?
Why have you left your tending goats and grain,
Changed your skin-belt for stuffs of gaudy stain?
Will you win thus the white contemptuous Christ -
So vain of temper and so close of fist?

What if you win him, little goatherd mine?
He's but a Devil dressed so tawdry fine.
Give locusts, all you caught at morning light,
Give your own blanket thin this bitter night!
Give all, strip bare and barer so to gain
The only Christ that is not won in vain! (1)

The white man's avarice and closeness of fist provided Cripps with the theme for a number of his lyrics. The most suggestive and evocative of this group is "Lazarus". (2)

The events of 1914 wrenched the missionary's attention away from his almost exclusive preoccupation with

The serf who held his master's fate
In hollow of his swarthy hand, (3)

to the cataclysm of war.

While serving as Army and Naval chaplain in East Africa, Cripps wrote *A Martyr's Heir*, the story of the Jesuit, Goncalo da Silveira. (4) He had already published three novels. The first two are (like *Trooper Peter...*) a vehicle for criticism of the Chartered Company and of Europeans in Mashonaland generally. Cripps attacked their treatment of the African as well as their almost exclusive concentration upon mercenary aims. The quotation which he chose to print on the title-page of *Bay-Tree Country* indicates his theme:

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1. CRIPPS, "A Counsel of Perfection", *Lyra Evangelistica*, p.19.
 2. Anthologized in *A Book of South African Verse*.
 3. *Ibid*:
 4. See MACNAB, "The Man of Grass" (name given to Goncalo da Silveira, a Portuguese Jesuit, martyred in what is now Rhodesia in 1561) *A Book of South African Verse*, p.183.

The merchandise of gold...and fine linen, and
purple...and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and
wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses and
chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

Rev. XVIII, 12, 13.

(1)

Cripps continued to write verse, publishing collections in 1916 and the following year. After the promise of his early lyrics Pilgrim's Joy is a very disappointing volume, containing practically nothing of any interest. The "African land and water verses" which had first appeared in various periodicals, and which were now published under the title Lake and War, are not much better; there is something disquieting both in their themes and expressions. It is disconcerting to find Cripps attempting the "Boots, Boots, Boots" effect in

From Karungu!
(Flea-spoil'd, jigger-vent, Karungu!)
In the gumers' train!
Four miles forward! Four miles backward'.
Seeking - but in vain,
River-horses black - as targets
For our maxims twain.
'Sport and War!' and 'Sport and War!' their
Fierce feet chim'd and cried.
'Peace and Quiet! Peace and quiet!'
Mine in answer sigh'd...

(2)

It is not only the image that is incongruous (river-horses scarcely suggest enemy gun-boats) but the faked Kiplingesque lilt. Perhaps Cripps realized instinctively that his pastoral style did not lend itself to describing war, but he seems to have been unable to find an appropriate substitute.

(3)

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1. "The smooth Bay tree symbolises easy growth, and the book is aimed at Rhodesians who, in 'the Rhodes tradition are feudalising for commercial ends', and do not count men's souls if such men are Natives...plot and characterisation are sacrificed to purpose..."
SNYMAN, The South African Novel... p.73.
 2. CRIPPS, "Marching", Lake and War, (1917) p.11.
 3. He was aware of the difficulty:
"Ships unknown and guns unlov'd
Would you have me hymn to-day -
I that lov'd the peace I sang
Ere I came at war to play.

I would sing of what I knew
In the lonely paths I trod -
Time by time, year out, year in,
Far from many, near to God.

Tracks by brown feet trac'd I'd sing,
Waggon-ways deep-gash'd and worn,
Rhythmic seasons, thudding drums
Of our granite hills forlorn...
"A Singer's Retrospect", Lake and War, p.51.

Occasionally Cripps tried to force the familiar religious image into his new themes. In describing the smoke of a heavy bombardment he wrote:

Like Satan's thuribles
The thatch'd roofs smoke in joyless sacrifice
To a yet joyous heaven. (1)

but it is an artificial imposition. The convinced personal tone is lacking; the verses do not spring from deeply felt spiritual experience.

Lake and War contains a collection of dirges of which the following on Cullen Gouldsbury is of interest for the light it throws on both subject and author:

Cullen Gouldsbury.

(Poet of 'The Pace of the Ox' and 'The Shadow-Girl'.
Late of Lake Staff and 1st King's African Rifles,
died at Tanga on August 27th, 1916.)

So as a war's forc'd loan we've lent thee now,
Our land finds few interpreters, and thou
Wast one. Methought not wisely but too well
Thou would'st chameleon parts aforesime play -
Wearing our hues alike of Heav'n and Hell.
Yet who, that reads between thy lines, would say
Thy fellow-feeling for our petty views
(More narrow than our dorps' gun-avenues,
Was all benevolent complacency,
Ah! For those earthly bests our land may know -
Our veld, its daylight calm, its twilight glow -
Bests money buys not, bests that priceless be -
How broad they love, how big thy reverence!
Much hast thou given us ere thy going hence,
Now take what we may give, and leave the rest, -
Take earth of ours thy world-wide Church hath blest,
Sleep, body, by our sea, beneath our stars!
Go, soul, to peace in honour from our wars,
Interpret there a land than ours more kind -
A land for all its colours - colour-blind!

In 1939 when a collected edition of Cripps's poems were published (Africa: Verses), conditions in Mashonaland had changed very materially since the pioneering period. The missionary had almost outlived his Arcadia; the mines and cities attracted his sheep in ever increasing numbers, while he could find no comfort in any prospect that they might be admitted to a civilized, Christian society. There is an increasing bitterness and disillusionment in the lyrics of this period, though the central theme (which had first

1. cf. "Man goeth forth to his work and labour till set of
the sun,
Rapt at his red Asperges - spraying the shores with
blood!"

attracted him) has not changed:

"And besides all this, between us and you there
is a great gulf fixed..." Saint Luke XVI."

You strands and bars implacably deny
To Africa kinship of human kind;
Africans in th' untended waste must lie:
No African within a bed may find.

Thank God that in that Bourn our life beyond
Gulfs fixt between departed souls appear;
So Africa's forgiving souls and fond
May be too far their masters' moans to hear!

'Arch-Patriarch Abraham, send me Jack (or Jim)
With water - ere I perish in despair!'

'Son, son, remember all thy scorn of him!

'Twixt him and thee there's now no thoroughfare!' (1)

It is not Theocritus who occupies Cripps's thoughts towards the end of his life; instead he becomes haunted by the injustice of the African's position in society, by the image of

The Divine Outcast of a terrible land,
A Black Christ with perch'd Lips and empty Hand. (2)

For all his sacrifice of the English fields he loved (a very real sacrifice as his Essex verses reveal) Cripps never became a Rhodesian citizen. Not that citizenship is in any way a key to the writing of South African poetry, but naturalization is a symbol of commitment, and there was so much in Cripps's verse which remained alien to Mashonaland. His writing is in the same Christian, philanthropic tradition as Pringle's; but his spiritual world was more intense, the literary influences which had moulded his style more precise and - in a sense - stultifying. The best of his work is in his devotional lyrics; a handful of poems of some strength and sweetness which the literary historian is more likely to class with those writers who found their inspiration in Anglicanism and in the Classics, than with any nascent African literature.

1. CRIPPS, "No Thoroughfare..." Africa: Verses (1939) p.59.

2. A frequent image in Cripps:

"If aught of worth be in my psalms
It is the Black Christ's Hands I lay,
In these Nail-groov'd, hoe-harden'd Palms
He holds to me now ev'ry day -

...

If any gift of sight of mine
Our land's veil'd beauty should reveal,
My reader, 'to those eyes of thine,
That gift to Him that gave assign,
To Him (Whose Feet unsandalled steal
Over the granite tracks I tread)
Head-haloed by our rose and gray
Of twilights, or our gold of day,
Who near my red camp-fire will spread
His reed-mat, or on rain-bless'd days
Hoe deep His pattern-work of praise
Full in my sight.

"Envoi..." Peace and War, p.120.

A recent critic has claimed, when writing of Rhodesian versifiers, that although Cripps's

life itself could have been a solecism, his
Franciscan-Theocritan pastoral a mistaken
incongruity, his lonely poetry does stand
out as our one unmistakeable utterance. (1)

This does not seem to me to be the case, nor are Cripps's lyrics likely to have any influence upon the emergence of a South African verse. His poetry was "lonely" in Africa; it was a personal utterance in a foreign land with which it never came to grips.

Lyra Evangelistica appeared in 1909. In the same year two other voices made themselves heard, those of Cullen Gouldsbury and Kingsley Fairbridge, who, each in his own way, was far more representative of the frontier of the Rhodesias than Cripps.

Cullen Gouldsbury (the son of an officer in the Indian Police) came to Rhodesia in the service of The British South Africa Company at the age of twenty-one. He spent the rest of his life in Africa, and died in 1916 when only thirty-five years old. Cripps knew both these men; he reminisced about them in his introduction to the first anthology of Rhodesian Verse:

I came to know Cullen Gouldsbury much better than I knew Fairbridge. He was appointed to The Range (on the Pioneers' Road in Charter District) as a Native Department worker early in 1903, so far as I remember, almost immediately after reaching Southern Rhodesia. We renewed our Southern Rhodesian acquaintanceship long after he had left for work in Northern Rhodesia. It was at Nairobi and again near Lake Victoria (a few days before his early death) that I saw him again, when the war was on in East Africa. He gave me to understand that Northern Rhodesia had won his affection or regard more than Southern Rhodesia had done. But surely many of this small pale dark singer's vigorous lays of Mashonaland date from those very early days in his African career - when he lived not many miles away from me. "Dawn in the Hut" brings a happy remembrance to me of his fair-haired wife, who came out to him to share his exile, and of how they two seemed (as a guest of theirs at The Range described them to me) as it were a boy and girl on the veld together. (2)

This recollection of the young pioneer and his wife, is all of a piece with the light-hearted, youthful spirit of the fifty-seven "Rhodesian Rhymes" in Gouldsbury's first verse collection.

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1. BRETFELL, "Three Rhodesian Poets", Rhodesiana, (1958) pp.29-39.
 2. CRIPPS, Introduction, Fifty years of Rhodesian Verse, p.13.

He is quite without pretensions and this itself is an attraction, for most colonial poetasters take themselves very seriously.

His address to the reader best typifies his general tone:

Tales of heather, necromancy,
Songs of veld and vlei,
Wisps of fact, and threads of fancy,
Topics of to-day -
Take them as I wrote them - lightly,
Testing at the times -
Criticise, at least, politely
These, my random rhymes. (1)

Unlike Cripps, Gouldsbury makes no attempt to impose a preconceived pattern of ideas on African life; his view of it, though superficial, is many sided. His breezy, sometimes caustic rhymes in the tradition of popular verse are on subjects naturally suggested by frontier society. The characters he describes vary from the homesick Transport Rider:

I have sniffed the scent of the open vlei
When the sun climbed up the hill,
And I've heard the song of the new-born day
When all the world was still;
I have trampled the copse at the river's brink
Where the dappled buck lie down,
But give me the lights and the harness-clink
And the glamour of London Town. (2)

to the contented "White Kaffir", the immigrant "gone native", with

A smooth-flanked ebony girl for a wife
And naught of the din and scurry and strife
That reign where the noise of the world is rife -
Look where the piccanins play! (3)

The world of the piccanins is no Aready but the real, pagan world which Gouldsbury encountered into which he did not seek to probe too deeply:

That one, chubby and shorn of pate,
Is Mambo's son - he can barely run -
The pot-bellied imp with the shambling gait
Was spawned, I fear, by a twist of fate,
For his mother had stolen a young girl's mate
And put out her eyes in fit! (4)

Guy Butler has suggested that Gouldsbury belongs to the "school of ballad writers...whose model was Kipling". This is true only in the general sense in which the classification was intended. It is not, of course, to say that Gouldsbury

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1. GOULDSBURY, "To the Reader", Rhodesian Rhymes, 1909.(unpaged).
 2. Ibid: "The Song of the Transport Rider".
 3. Ibid: "The White Kaffir".
 4. Ibid:

could write like Kipling but merely to point out the same fondness for popular narrative, an attraction to similar themes and, in many verses, the adoption of a slangy, colloquial diction to present such types as the tough pioneer:

Dinges and I were trading once, up north by the Zambezi,
Kafir truck you must understand,
The things that "take" in this cursed land -
Beads of yellow and beads of blue,
Knives and matches and limbo, too
To tickle the taste of a heathen crew
(Which is'nt so blighted easy) -
Down by the store the river ran by,
And we used to watch it, Dinges and I.

For a man gets most uncommonly thin
On bully-beef that mias in the tin -
When whisky's in, it's a case of "snakes",
And when it's out, it's a matter of shakes,
And life, on the whole, resemblance takes
To premature damnation -
However, it was'nt much use to cry,
And so, we stayed there, Dinges and I. (1)

It is Kipling all right - at his lowest - for that is invariably what is meant by the "Kipling school" for nobody has successfully imitated his best work. The references to "heathen crew", words like "truck" "tickle" and "blighted", the sentimental tone matched with a false devil-may-care attitude are all in this debased tradition.

The kind of playful jingle which Kipling dashed off on innumerable occasions finds its counterpart in Gouldsbury's railway rhymes:

Ye who designed the C.G.R.,
Ye who evolved the Train-de-luxe,
And planned the dainty dining car,
And chartered staffs of guards and cooks -
Take heed - for ye have had your day!
We much prefer Lobito Bay.

No longer, in the years in view
We'll book our coupes to the Cape -
No longer in the dull Karroo
Sit somnolently on the gape -
Our route should be extremely gay
From Beira to Lobito Bay.

For elephants will gambol by,
And zebra flit their fleecy tails,
And graceful hippopotami
Will play the devil with the rails,
And pigmy heathen, in dismay,
Will book from Congo to the Bay.

1. GOULDSBURY, "Dinges and I", Rhodesian Rhymes.

Meantime - the track is surveyed, true
And dotted lines define the dream,
And that's about as far as you
Or I can profit by the scheme -
Perhaps, in time, Rhodesians may
Reach Heaven by Lobito Bay. (1)

It is, however, in his Native sketches and legends that Gouldsbury achieves some originality. African life was strange to him; he observed it carefully and found himself in sympathy with it up to a point - there was much in savage Mashonaland which he found repulsive. Although it seldom occurs to Gouldsbury that the African is his equal as a human being, he is not without appreciation of

The concrete rules of a savage race that govern the
Simple Life.

In "The Councillor" where Gouldsbury adapted Kipling's idea of "The Law", his portrait of tribal life is drawn with sympathy and understanding. Earlier he had described "The Chief":

Lord of a land where famine lurked amid
The nibbled mealie-cobs that strewed the ground,
King of a realm where fell disease, half-hid,
Bred hideous shadows round.

...
His garb? A blanket dragging in the sand
His kingly robes, a band of bark for crown,
Necklet of beads for royal insignia, and
A rein to belt his gown.

...
Only, it chanced, some tribesmen slouching by,
Stiffened their backs and turned to greet their
king,

With ceremonious clapping and a cry
That made the red rocks ring.

...
I turned and caught the pride that lit his face,
The sudden majesty that fired his brain;
Old and forgotten stories of his race
Glowed in his eyes again.

...

(2)

This blend of realism with imaginative insight was a distinct advance in the field of indigenous rhyming.

Gouldsbury wrote a number of ballads. In such narratives as "The Mvavi Tree" and "The Slaying of Mtikana" he is almost the first English versifier to achieve any success in dramatizing native legends. One of the most striking of the ballads - it is also one of the shortest - is "The Bellows of

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1. GOULDSBURY, "Dreams, idle dreams", Rhodesian Rhymes.
 2. Ibid: "The Chief".

Bungu, the Blacksmith":

Ndanda! - pick me twenty goats
Fat, and sleek of hide,
Slip a rein around their throats,
Bind them side by side;
When the red-hot embers glow
Gaily shall the bellows blow!

Take the goats without the kraal,
Bind them in the sun,
Skin them gaily, one and all -
So - the task is done!
Irons shall be hot and bright
When the moon is full to-night.

Hang the skins upon a tree,
Swinging to and fro,
Come, now, set the captives free,
Look you, there they go!
Raw and bleeding down the vlei -
Sure, they cannot last the day.

See that tough old he-goat there,
Scampering along,
Bleating as he goes. I swear
'Tis a pretty song!
Should he live till eventide
His will be a famous hide!

Cruel, you call it? - well, and then?
What is that to me?
Goats were made to profit men,
And the Gods decree
Ere I mould an assegai
Many, many goats must die.

Ah! - 'tis even as I said -
See, they writhe and fall!
All except the ram are dead,
Drag them to the kraal -
Goats must live till night, you know,
Or the bellows will not blow. (1)

Gouldsbury could not always sustain the directness and clarity which he achieved here in the first four stanzas. Sometimes he was fairly successful on a softer, more lyrical note as in "African Slumber Song":

Sleep, Baby mine! The jackals by the river
Are calling soft across the dim lagoon,
Where tufted rows of mealies stand a-quiver
Under a silver moon. (2)

and in "The Shadow Girl" which Cripps admired. (3) Unfortunately

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1. op.cit. "The above describes what was, till recently, a common native custom." Author's note.
 2. GOULDSBURY, op.cit.
 3. "Is there any trace of African melodies in this book to be compared with "The Pace of the Ox" and "The Shadow Girl". CRIPPS, Introduction to Fifty Years of Rhodesian Verse, p.13.

sentiment and cliché get the upper hand:

Herself a Shade amid the shadows, she,
Silent and slender, supple and serene -
A maiden from the Land of Used-to-Be.
A dusky, heathen goddess, that had been
Brought back by the forgotten hand of Fate,
Out of the World of Shadows, through the gate
That frowns betwixt Man and Eternity. (1)

It is easy to understand why this appealed to the missionary who failed to notice that Gouldsbury is adopting a pose toward his "shadow Girl" far less sincere than his attitude towards Bungu, the Blacksmith, or Zirwa - the chief's daughter who exclaims in another ballad:

"Yea! I have blood - red blood upon my hands". (2)

Gouldsbury's African verses achieved a transient popularity; extracts from reviews throw an amusing light upon his achievement as it appeared to some of his contemporaries:

Mr. Gouldsbury has done for South Africa what Lindsay Gordon did for Australia. He writes verse that will hold the Plain Man. (3)

And from the Spectator:

We are glad to see that Mr. Cullen Gouldsbury in "Songs out of Exile" has collected his Rhodesian rhymes. He has an uncanny gift of keen observation.. and the native poems in the section "Black Man's Twilight" form one of the most noteworthy of recent contributions to South African literature. (4)

The critic of the Western Morning News found himself quite carried away:

Mr. Gouldsbury has already been compared to Adam Lindsay Gordon and Rudyard Kipling. To our thinking, his muse is rather that of a chastened Swinburne, alive to all the beauty of an African earth, stricken with a sense of fate and the inexorable to-day, but quickened also by the dignity of toil and racial pride...In these pages is humour, breezy and caustic as befits the wandering Odysseus who had taken his toll of men and cities. And with it there is a sense of music, and a tenderness of touch, and that curiosa felicitas that marks all genuine poetry. (5)

It is scarcely necessary to comment; the passage does at least indicate that the Rhodesian rhymster enjoyed a temporary vogue.

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1. GOULDSBURY, *op.cit.*
 2. GOULDSBURY, "Zama and Zirwa".
 3. Quoted in From the Outposts, 1914.
 4. Ibid:
 5. Ibid:

In some doggerel lines "African Authors" Gouldsbury emphasized the difficulties of composition - both physical and spiritual - which beset a Frontier writer:

Pity the men who are fated to scribe
Under the glare of the tropical sun,
Striving for cash, or some fugitive bribe,
Weary ere day has begun.

...

There, there are brains to strike sparks with one's own -
Here are but monkey-folk, shallow and sly!
Wits that one has one must sharpen alone
Under a coppery sky.

Shadow and sunshine, and plateau and plain,
Vacant horizons and silence supreme,
Mile upon mile of a heathen domain
Framing the scribbler's dream.

Never a newspaper hot from the press,
Fresh from the hub where the nations are twirled,
Never a message to help one to guess
What is going on in the world.

...

Picture your writers, perspiring, "broke",
Shirtsleeved, and sullen, and slack as the deuce!
Truly ambition goes upward like smoke,
Scatters..and - what is the use? (1)

This is the authentic voice - however crudely uttered of the educated exile. Nevertheless it was by the completely opposite point of view, through the inclusion of his "The Pace of the Ox" in Crouch's Treasury of South African Poetry and Verse that Gouldsbury came to be known to South African readers.

The intelligent man, the man ambitious for knowledge, finding himself solitary in the vastness of Africa, was forced again and again to find compensation for his loneliness. He found it in the rationalization that life on the veld brought one nearer to God; that cities were sinks of corruption:

What do we know of the city's scorn, the hum of a
world amaze,
Hot-foot haste, and the fevered dawn, and forgotten
yesterdays?

in the belief that the good life could best be led where
The world may come, and the world may go, and the
world may whistle by,
But the pace of the ox is steady and slow, and
life is a lullaby. (2)

This is a constant theme in South African verse from Pringle onwards; an immensely popular theme which reached its apotheosis

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1. GOULDSBURY, "African Authors", From the Outposts.
 2. Ibid: "The Pace of the Ox", Rhodesian Rhymes.

in the veld-worship of Percival Gibbon.⁽¹⁾ That Gouldsbury could express the exile's longing for civilization as well as obey Gibbon's injunction (later to become the butt of Roy Campbell's youthful wit) to "Throw the window wider, sonny" is symptomatic of the Englishman's ambivalent attitude towards the frontier. After years of toil and sweat he felt he had a right to belong and yet, somehow, he did not belong.

The boy mentioned earlier in this chapter had a better chance of acquiring this sense of "belonging" to Africa than had either Gripps or Gouldsbury. Born in 1865 in Grahamstown - the settler shrine - Kingsley Fairbridge could claim in his autobiography:

My parents were born in South Africa, and so were my grandparents. My father's people were partly of London, and partly of Orkney descent; my mother's people were Scots and English...My father was a land surveyor to the Cape government, and not long after I was born my mother went with him on a long wagon tour, taking me with her. We were away travelling over rough roads, from farm to farm, for a year or more.

(2)

The story of Fairbridge's life (he died at the age of thirty-nine) is a remarkable one, even in a society where opportunities were not lacking for those who would grasp them. Kingsley's father went off pioneering in Mashonaland; for four months there were no letters, then a great pile arrived:

They were written on all kinds of paper - brown and white, and some on the backs of condensed milk labels. Some of them were in envelopes bearing the beautiful eightpenny stamp of the Chartered Company, and some were in cloth wrappers, sewn with coloured thread...Dad's letters to me were illustrated with little pictures and contained all manner of interesting things: a scrap of tough leather from an elephant's ear, hairs from a buffalo's tail, little flakes of Mashonaland gold; and he told me fine tales of the veld.

(3)

When the boy was eleven and had reached the first form in St. Andrew's College:

Dad wrote and told us to come to Rhodesia, and I was very glad. People at Grahamstown thought it was a wild and barbarous country, unfit for any civilized being. A crowd of people came to the station to see us off. The train steamed out and I was relieved to see the last of them.

(4)

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1. GIBBON, African Items, Lond. (1903) contains "Komani" and "Jim"; slight but appealing pieces. However it was "The Veldt" which South African children learned by rote and by which Gibbon is still known.
 2. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of Kingsley Fairbridge, p.1.
 3. Ibid: p.5.
 4. Ibid: p.7.

In the rest of his vivid autobiography pioneering Mashonaland is depicted through the eyes of this most unusual boy. He endured hardships, hunger, weariness and cold; he knew fear, loneliness, discouragement; he walked miles up and down hills, over rocks and through thick scrub helping his father surveying. One day, while they were working, his father said:

'Sorry', he said, 'there is Mr. Rhodes'...

(this was after the Jameson Raid)

But that day at the Sabi Ophir Mr. Rhodes seemed strong and quiet, as he looked out over the land - 'great spaces washed with sun' - that he had won for the Empire.

(1)

Kingsley Fairbridge never forgot that brief encounter. Fourteen years later - after an almost heroic struggle to pass the entrance examination - he went to Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship and, while still an undergraduate, founded the Child Emigration Society. The first of his Fairbridge Farm schools - of which he had dreamed while still a boy in Rhodesia - was founded at Pinjarra, Western Australia, in 1912. This scheme absorbed his energies so that there was practically no time left in his life for other interests.⁽²⁾ Nevertheless in the single volume Veld Verse, and other lines, Fairbridge left something without which, though it is slight, South African literature would be the poorer.

These verses are unequal in quality, the work of a very young man; on the whole they crystallize the experiences which he described, much later, in prose. It is all here - the pioneer road which cost so many lives, the ploughing of the virgin soil, the long-forgotten work of the mason on the first stone bridge at Rusapi, the mysterious silence of the African midnight, the camp-fire and the local legends.

On his long marches across country, sitting round fires in the evenings, the boy came to know such people as "The Snoker of Imbainje":

Dzua the Sun is dead,
Mwoto the Flame burns low,
The shadows come and go,
And the rats fight overhead
And shriek in the soot-hung thatch...

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1. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of..., p.18.
 2. In Pinjarra..., Ruby Fairbridge describes how her husband longed for time to write and how he scribbled verse whenever possible.

The Hairs are on the latch...
Ha! I am not alone...
Outside the Dead are free -
They squeak, the Dead; and the Dead wait for me;
They whisper through the cracks, their sly hands
scratch
The daga; and they moan! (1)

As an African has remarked, Fairbridge, in verses such as these and in "The Song-Maker" was

writing about things he knows intimately, not
trying to reach out at the unknown. (2)

"The Song-Maker" is worth quoting in full for its sensitive appreciation of its subject as well as for the simplicity and concrete quality of its diction and imagery:

Alone in the hot sun,
On the hot sand in the sun,
Alone at the edge of the kraal,
In the dust of the dance-ground
Near the raised tobacco patch, -
The women have gone to the fields,
The children have gone to play,
And the blind Maker of Songs
Sits here, alone, all day.

The dogs sniff'd him and went,
The kraal-rats peer and go,
So very still he sits
Day long, and moon to moon,
His hands slack on the sand; -
And he was just the same,
This maker of tribal songs,
Before the White Man came.

His was the song that woke
The war that brought their power;
The impi went with song -
Came back with song by night,
So many years ago,
With plunder every one;
Leaving among the dead,
Gansero, his only son.

And here, all day, he sits,
On the hot sand in the sun;
The children wonder if he sleeps,
And the flies think him dead,
The dogs smell him and go; -
But to him is bare the lore
Of the Threshing and the Dancing Songs,
And the Chant that leads to War. (3)

It was not only the African's past (so frequently romanticized by European writers) which attracted Fairbridge.

1. FAIRBRIDGE, "The Smoker of Imbainje", Veld Verse, and other lines, (1909 ed.) p.29.
2. MPHAHLELE, The Non-European Character in South African English Fiction, p.21.
3. FAIRBRIDGE, "The Song-Maker", Veld Verse, and other lines, p.34.

He knew the Songmaker and the Witch-doctor, but he was well acquainted too with "The Native Labour Bureau, Umtali" and the different tribes who congregated there - the Mabandawi, the Matshangaana, the Masema. Here Fairbridge slips into an idiom which would ring false in a modern South African writer on the same theme (not even a Red-blanket Pondo is nowadays as simple as these returning mine-boys) but it was probably refreshingly authentic then:

Inkoos!
Inkoos, we have come back.
By train we came, and very swift the route.
I-jonnisiberg is very full of wealth;
Wilhelm and Winkel drew five pounds apiece,
And every month they drew it. In those mines
They drill deep holes; dumblain, (1) where it is hot.
Good were the captains, and the food was good;
Next year we come again, if thou wilt send.
Now let us seek Matshanga, and the South.
Inkoos! (2)

Alas for Cripps and his fervent prayers of thanksgiving that there were no mines in Mashonaland.

Had Fairbridge stayed in Rhodesia he might perhaps have developed to great advantage the type of ballad (he wrote only a handful), which was influenced, in both subject and technique by the African verse he had heard recited. He gives an account of such a performance:

And the tall youth, Inyankakudjga, presently entered; and when he had obtained permission, he settled down with his hands towards the fire and recited a piece of verse to us.

The poem told how, that morning, he and six other men were returning from Fura to Matoko; how they launched a dug-out on the Mazoe; how the demon who dwells in the river had caught the dug-out in his arms and sunk it; how Inyankakudjga had been washed against an overhanging tree; how the other six men had drowned.

It was the best example of extemporaneous verse I have ever heard. The man never hesitated. He never gave false weight to a gesture, but paused and spoke, halted and continued, as if he had been learning the piece for weeks. And yet the whole occurrence had only taken place that morning! (3)

The opportunities for a white man to hear such poetic dramatisations were soon to become less and less frequent.

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1. "dumblain" - corruption of "down below" in the mine.
Author's note.
 2. FAIRBRIDGE, "The Native Labour Bureau, Umtali", Veld Lines..., p.64.
 3. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of....., p.113.

Besides, there were few white men who understood them, or who would have grasped their artistic value and significance.

Fairbridge claimed to have based his "Slaying Song of Kusawa Afa" upon the account which he heard given by a native eyewitness of the killing of Manuel Antonio Garveia. Garveia was a Coenese half-breed adventurer who was arrested by the British South Africa Company's police at Umtassa's kraal and who met the fate described in the poem. A few lines must suffice to show the possibilities of this narrative form:

I sat by the fig-tree,
Inkooos, in the sunlight,
And talked of the crops with my father, Makumbo.
And up to the fig-tree came slowly a stranger
And sat at some distance, and clapped, and gave greeting,
And said "I would speak with Makumbo Rashumba".
A tall man and thin, with a face full of cunning
And covered with pock-marks. His youth was still on him,
A dandy was he, with his knife ivory-handled -
His teeth filed to points - with his comb and his
wash-stock,
And over his loins was cloth white and sweeping,
Not goat-skin, like us who are sons of Matshanga. (1)

Vivid, colloquial, with a loose rhythm easily adapted to dramatic effects, it is a thousand pities that English writers as a whole learnt nothing from the Bantu poets and raconteurs. (2)

Kingsley Fairbridge emerges from his autobiography as a rare combination of toughness and sensitivity, of thinker and deer. He had an open, receptive mind; he listened enthralled to the tales of Johannes Stephanus Maritz (a nephew of the Voortrekker hero) who ventured as early as 1888 into what later became the Umtali district and who had seen Lord Chelmsford's column in Natal before it was annihilated at Isandhlwana:

Maritz's stories of the veld interested me tremendously...Buffalo - lions - elephants - he knew all the things of the veld. He had killed them and often been nearly killed by them. He did not speak about the veld animals, but he spoke of them - as a man speaks of loved and familiar things. (3)

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1. FAIRBRIDGE, "Slaying Song of Kusawa Afa", Fifty years of Rhodesian Verse, ed. Snelling, p.55.
 2. Cripps was conscious of the loss to English South African poetry. He talks of the thrill he experienced on hearing snatches of a Matabele song; he looks forward to a time when Africans will write English poetry and he had "a clear vision of the artistry - simple, sensuous, passionate - latent in the Africans around us.. the true romance of Zimbabwe is the light that it sheds on indigenous Africans as being potential artists..." Introduction Fifty Years of Rhodesian Verse.
 3. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of....., p.51.

Nor was Fairbridge's experience of African animals by any means second hand. He too hunted and killed and was in danger of being killed. There is nothing in his animal verses which quite compares with his prose account of his experiences with Ingwi and his appreciation of the entirety of his physical environment:

A leopard took to following me at night; sometimes I took this as an evil omen, and at others as a lesson to teach me to be brave. I would hear his quiet footsteps sometimes on the path behind me, sometimes in the long grass beside me. His footfalls were as light as feathers, but he could not hide the stealthy 'grind' of the loose sand, nor the parting of the brown grass before his muzzle, nor (but this was at great intervals) the sudden 'crick' of a dried leaf that he had overlooked. These almost soundless sounds were never lost upon me. I have no unusual physical attributes but one, and that is the faculty of being able to distinguish between the sounds of the veld. The veld is very quiet at night, the silence strikes people of noisier lands as terrific. By day, of course, it is never quiet for a moment: one can always hear birds and lizards and insects moving; and even at noon, when animals are asleep and there is no breeze, one can hear the unceasing rustle of growing or withering grass, the warping of grass-seeds and dead wood in the hot sun, the splintering of tiny atoms of rock, owing to unequal expansion, and often the loud 'popping' of umsasa and other leguminous seed-pods. At night the veld is quieter, but I have often lain awake listening to the white ants working near by, to little insects, attracted by the light, that squeeze and push their way towards the camp-fire, to night-birds eating the ripe fruit in some distant fig-tree. I have often heard, too, the various sounds made by game when they scent or see the fire, the sudden halt, the whistle of Rhina the reedbuck, the snort of Inyamkwarati the sable; other sounds, too, and more significant, like the single grunt of Shumba the lion, or the triple 'huh-huh-huh' of Ingwi the leopard. The dullest ears can hear the fierce grunts of Shumba, and Ingwi, and Tika - for some reason or other they mean you to hear them; but other animals rely greatly on their quietness. Yet I have got many a meal by hearing sounds at which my boys, though they were no noisy boots and had been bred in the veld, had not even guessed. (1)

There is no "veld-worship" here; the spaces of Africa are neither empty nor silent to Fairbridge; he is at home in them as Olive Schreiner was in the Karroo. Fairbridge developed what might almost be called a personal relationship with the leopard who haunted him. When he took a rifle with

1. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of....., p.145.

him at night, Ingwi would not come; at other times he would pick up a stone and turning to face his pursuer, call out softly:

'Ingwi, Ingwi', I used to say, 'come along now
while I am ready for you, Ingwi!' (1)

Kingsley's family, not unnaturally, laughed at his tale of the faithful Ingwi until the presence of a leopard in the neighbourhood was detected. In the passage which describes Ingwi, trapped in the hen-house, Fairbridge is moved, as Cumming had so often been, by the grace and power of the beast:

I waited until Ingwi was at his finest,
stretched half across the run, his head straining
against the wire, his teeth buried in a roof-beam,
a low furious snarl choking in his throat. Then
I fired. And the body of Ingwi slid to the ground,
harmless as a dewdrop, soft as a kitten playing in
the sun. (2)

The lyric "Yellow Eyes" seems to have been written about the same experience:

Blended by fading moonlight with the grass -
The long brown grass that bends beneath the dew -
Supple, subtle, and silent: eyes of brass
That rove in solemn fierceness o'er the view;
Seeking his living by the shadow'd walks
Of sleeping man: Ingwi the Leopard stalks. (3)

The animals in Fairbridge's verses are realistic, he knows their Mashona names, he understands their habits, he admires and even loves them, but he had neither time nor opportunity to become a careful craftsman. The lyrics are marred by clichés: "utter silence", "outer darkness", "eringing in fear", "softer than silk". An effective metaphor "eyes of brass" often loses its punch in the line that follows with its featureless "poetic diction". On the other hand Fairbridge was sensitive to the texture of words, while there is a fresh lyricism in much of his verse which he might, (had he continued versifying) have learnt to modulate and control. At times he captured unconsciously an apt union of sense and rhythm:

Seeking his living by the shadowed walks of
Sleeping man: Ingwi the Leopard stalks.

The caesura in the second line falls exactly right.

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1. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of...
 2. FAIRBRIDGE, The Story of... p.148.
 3. FAIRBRIDGE, "Yellow Eyes", Veld Verse... p.9.

In "The Hunting of Shumba" Fairbridge achieves a similar effect. It is a pity that the languorous atmosphere, the veiled power of the lion is not sustained:

Loose-limb'd, he slouches shambling in the cool;
Head down, hide rippling over lazy night;
Thoughtful and terrible he leaves the pool -
Shumba the Lion, passing to the Night. (1)

Shumba is not the remote, impersonal animal of Pringle's ridiculous "Lion Hunt". With Ingwi, Old Tika and "Bongwi" (the latter perhaps the best of these animal poems) he has been introduced, by Fairbridge, into English verse in Africa. Shumba and his companions had been around for some time, but it is in this handful of boyish verses that they may be said to have made an entrance.

Fairbridge published these lyrics in 1909, eight years later another volume of pioneering verse appeared, the work of an adventurous young man in British East Africa. (2) The author, Brian Brooke, had died from wounds received at Mametz, when he was commanding the right wing of the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders. Four years younger than Fairbridge, Brian Brooke had been born at Lickleyhead Castle, Aberdeenshire, into a family of Irish, Scotch descent. Weak eyesight prevented him entering the Services so, when still a boy, he determined to become a colonist. (3) At the age of eighteen Brian Brooke emigrated to Africa where he eventually

went through a ceremony which constituted him a blood-brother of the Masai, and gave him certain rights and privileges among the tribesmen. (4)

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1. FAIRBRIDGE, "The Hunting of Shumba", Veld Verse....., p.5.
 2. BROOKE, Poems by Brian Brooke, 1917.
 3. Brooke seems to have prepared himself with unusual thoroughness. Before he was sixteen he begged to be taken away from Clifton College in order to attend a school offering classes especially planned to prepare students for colonial life. Eventually he went to Gordon's College in Aberdeen and later to the University: "This entailing a daily twelve-mile trudge, often through snow and blizzard..he set himself the task of creating a body big and strong enough to support the rough life of a colonist. With this end in view, for the next two years he refused to sleep indoors...from a slender stripling of no special physique he developed into an enormously strong youth of six feet two and a half inches, able to bear almost any burden or to undergo any kind of exercise...His great joy in the holidays was to roam the country disguised as a vagrant pauper."
WILLCOCKS, Foreword, Poems....., p.14.
 4. WILLCOCKS, Foreword, Poems....., p.15.

The Masai name for Brian Brooke was "Korongo" - the Big Man, - a name which appeared on the title page of his verses. There is something guileless and "all of a piece" about "Korongo"; a simplicity of aim and an uncomplicated philosophy of life which is reflected in his verse. He became absorbed in hunting, in studying tribal life and African languages but he remained conscious of the "white man's burden". The following story shows how firmly "Korongo" believed in the necessity of maintaining prestige:

One evening, when he was visiting a Masai camp, the head warrior made the following remark: -

"You white men shoot lions and leopards with your long gun, but we meet them on foot with our spears. This you cannot do."

"Give me two moons," said the other, "and I will show you what a white man can do."

...a leopard having been marked down in a cave, the white man, dressed as a Masai, with a long spear, entered the cave alone. As the leopard charged, he met it with his spear and killed it. Drawing his knife, he skinned the beast, and carrying the pelt to the Masai camp, flung it down, telling the tribesmen never again to say that a white man cannot do what a black man can.

(1)

This attitude partially accounts for the number of sentimental ballads which "Korongo" wrote about that stock colonial type, the Remittance Man. (2) "The Dying Pioneer" is nearly always "old school tie", inevitably in his delirium he remembers his childhood:

Now, I've never prayed since the days I said
My prayers by my mother's side;
And how should I know? for it's long ago;
I was only eight when she died.

(3)

He freely confesses to many unspecified crimes but the reader is tactfully given to understand that they were venial for the pioneer (as befits the white man in Africa) has adhered to the code of a gentleman:

I have lived in crime,
But not once to a woman's shame;
For they always knew that old Roy de Veux
Could be trusted to play the game.

(4)

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1. WILLCOCKS, Foreword, Poems...., p.16.
 2. Newbolt's "He fell among Thieves" is the prototype of many similar ballads.
 3. WILLCOCKS, Foreword, Poems...., p.41.
 4. BROOKE, op.cit. p.41.

Eventually the pioneer dies in the odour of colonial sanctity for he has acted "like a man".

Nearly all Brian Brooke's verse is heavily didactic. When he was not writing morality tales like "The Whine of the Boozer", he was advising his readers how to treat the Black man. He mocks those who talk of "the joys of Black-Brotherhood" and insists:

The man who will lie to a nigger
Is a low-down worm and skunk;
For a hundred chips would ye soil your lips,
Or is it a sign of stunk!

While we rule by our sense of honour,
While we rule by our strength of will,
In a thousand years, ye need have no fears,
They'll find that we're ruling still. (1)

"Korongo" wrote doggerel. It is only thematically that this forgotten collection is of any interest. It shows how entrenched the imperialist view was and how, even as late as 1917, the same themes crop up repeatedly whenever a man anywhere along the expanding frontier turned his thoughts into popular rhymes. Brian Brooke's favourite subject was the hunter:

I will tell ye of the hunter, if ye listen for a while,
For their lives are worth the telling now and then;
There is much behind the curtain, which would make you
raise a smile,

In the lives of all these hard safari men.
For his life is full of changes - there are no two weeks
the same,

And he's not so free as hunters were of yore;
But his days are surely numbered, he must trek with
all the game,

And ye'll never see the hunter any more.
Out in the tropical forest, and out on the great dry
plain,

Always under the scorching sun and oft in the
drenching rain,
Where he has led his safaris, there he will lead again,
Till the hunter's gone for ever, and the hunted all
are slain. (2)

It is the nostalgic tone that is new; the frontier is passing and it will take its heroes with it. "Korongo" had been captured by the frontiersman's life, by the myth of the true

1. BROOKE, "Labour", op.cit. p.69.

2. BROOKE, "The Hunter", op.cit. p.48.

hunter, one of the elite who scorn the more recent social phenomena - the wealthy ersatz hunter:

The big game shooter comes from home and the hunter takes
him out
With his countless loads of patent food and drink;
And the shootist in the Norfolk, he has nought to think about,
Which is just as well, as p'raps he couldn't think;
Then when ev'rything is ready, and at last they start away,
The shootist weighted down with belts and knives,
They have such a kit collected that a tenderfoot would say
They were going out to camp for all their lives.
Pork butcher, millionaire by rights - Sir Patrick de John
de Jones,
Well armed with musical boxes, and loaded with gramophones,
Butterfly nets for beetles and bugs, and tins for the
precious stones,
While under his stacks of rifles the black man sweats
and groans.

The "shootist" grumbles constantly, will not put up with the slightest inconvenience and has all his game shot for him by "Korongo":

...
But all is well that ends well, and De Jones is home
once more
With his trophies hung about on ev'ry wall;
From the lion on the carpet to the tusk behind the door
He can tell you diff'rent stories of them all.

...
His secret is safe however:

For the honour of a hunter is a password of its own. (1)

In "A Hunter's Requiem" (which reads very much as though it is based on an actual incident) "Korongo" describes how a hunter, having wounded an elephant, feels bound to follow his blood spoor. His African companions realize:

That fear is without his knowledge, his courage is almost sin,
The hunter is killed, trampled underfoot by the maddened elephant:
They can hear the shots he fired come echoing round and round
They can hear the shriek of anger, they can feel the
quaking ground,
The echoing sorts of thunder, as the big feet grind and
pound,
Then silence complete and awful - the silence that's worse
than sound!
Now slowly the niggers seek him, and silently down they bend
Over that shapeless mangled heap, that which had been my friend.
With never a moment's warning and not a farewell to send,
But as he had loved his lifetime, so had he loved his end. (2)

1. Ibid:

2. BROOKE, "The Hunter's Requiem", *op.cit.* p.67.

It is the final assertion that is revealing. Not even the brutality of such a death detracts from the value of the hunter's life - in fact it even contributes something towards it:

Ah! had he but died in the prime of life,
From triumphant wounds or a hunter's knife. (1)

"Korongo"'s verse reflects the conflict that was gathering momentum in Africa; the clash between the old values of a pioneering society and the advent of industrialization. He was conscious of the benefits of material progress but he did not feel they were worth the sacrifice of the hunter:

Oh, I realize that we civilize,
And the work that we do is fine,
When we lay the trails for the gleaming rails
Of a pioneering line.
But soon they'll push, till there's no more bush,
And never a bushman's shrine,
And when that day's come where will be the home
For a soul that is made like mine? (2)

The same sentiment is expressed in "Under the Mists of the Kenia Snow", which is one of the most interesting of these rough ballads. The narrative concerns the life span of a magnificent bull who eventually loses his wild kingdom to his son; conscious of defeat the old bull retreats to the mountains and dies "Under the mists of the Kenia snow":

Hundreds of years he has lain alone,
And has watched the land that he used to own;
Guarding it all from his lofty throne
Under the mists of the Kenia snow.

When the game has passed from the realm he held,
When the waterless plains are fenced and walled,
When the forests are ploughed, and the trees are felled,
When the coffee sprouts where the cedars grow,
...
There the Buffalo Bull will still remain
Safe in the mists of the Kenia snow.
... (3)

"Korongo's" bull becomes a symbol of the wild and majestic Africa which was retreating before the feet of the pioneers. The early frontier versifiers had every opportunity of getting to know this Africa, they made tentative, exploratory attempts to write about her but it is not until Roy Campbell that we find a poet exploiting the symbolic value of the animals the hunters had feared and loved. Fairbridge described "Bongwi":

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1. BROOKE, "Under the mists of the Kenia Snow", op.cit. p.106.
 2. BROOKE, "Magadi", op.cit. p.77
 3. BROOKE, "Under the mists of the Kenia Snow", op.cit. p.106.

A hunted soul put under ban,
A hunted beast that has to roam
The voiceless image of a man
With neither speech nor home - (1)

but in Campbell, Bongwi's philosophy is the medium through which the poet satirizes the anthropomorphic ideas man holds about God:

This is the wisdom of the Ape
Who yelps beneath the Moon -
'Tis God who made me in His shape
He is a Great Baboon. (2)

Examples could be multiplied from Campbell's poetry in which the snake, the giraffe, the albatross and the bull (to give a few examples) are frequently used to symbolize some human quality which the poet wants to stress. Nor is Campbell the only South African poet attracted by the wild and by its potential for poetic imagery. Plomer wrote:

That was the Africa we knew,
Where, wandering alone,
We saw, heraldic in the heat,
A scorpion on a stone. (3)

The Rhodesian versifiers then made a real contribution, however slight in bulk and poor in quality, towards the development of certain characteristic features in South African verse. They worked two main veins, both potentially very rich in ore; the animals and their environment and the African with his mysterious tribal past. Cripps seems to have been most intensely aware of the value of the latter, but his derivative style and diction, his overwhelming sense of mission, prevented him from expressing the slumbering artistic heritage which Zimbabwe symbolizes. Such things still remain, in South African English verse, silent and secret:

...
Traveller, the moon over Zimbabwe
Proffers no echo from the Parthenon
To soothe your subtlest sensibility:
Disgruntled, your safari takes the dust
And leaves us standing where the ancient road
Runs to Sofala, reads like a river of sand
The ruin of cities paced along its banks,
A tributary road to a queen's heart.

Tonight, the moon,
A queen in transit, showers upon Zimbabwe
Light of her brightness, silver of her ash. (4)

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1. FAIRBRIDGE, "Bongwe", Veld Verse..., p.7.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Theology of Bongwi, the Baboon", The Collected Poems of....., p.17.
 3. PLOMER, "The Scorpion", Collected Poems, p.18.
 4. JACKSON, "Great Zimbabwe", A Book of South African Verse, p.203.

CHAPTER 7.

FRANCIS CAREY SLATER.

"...the forerunner and pioneer of us all."

Roy Campbell.

The Amatola range, densely wooded on its lower slopes, concealing higher up limpid springs of water, domineers the landscape along that part of the old Eastern Cape Frontier where once the Kaffir chief Maccomo entertained himself and his warriors on sherry looted from the baggage train of the 7th Dragoon Guards.

In the sheep country below these blue hills is the village of Alice, home of the missionary college of Lovedale and of the ill-starred Fort Hare. To many South Africans these names have assumed wider associations than might be apparent to a stranger; symbolizing for some a more profound humanity than the average Frontiersman would have understood, representing for others a practical attempt to educate the Xhosa people "along their own lines."

It was in this district, with its patchwork population of white farmers, teachers, administrators and missionaries interspersed among a still predominantly pastoral Bantu people, that Francis Carey Slater was born. His publications - appearing over half a century - show clearly that the generating factor in his verse was his childhood on the farm, Unjilo, three miles from Alice. (1)

Slater has left his own account of these years in Settlers' Heritage - a singularly dull, insipid autobiography in which the man never comes to life. Not that Slater's career was, in the popular sense, dramatic (he earned his living in banks from 1899 until he retired) but it was not lacking in variety nor in certain worthwhile experiences which, if not unusual elsewhere, would soon become unique in South Africa.

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1. SLATER, b.1876, d.1958. From his first volume of verse in 1905, until his death, Slater's published works included ten books of verse, two volumes of collected poems, a novel, two volumes of short stories and an autobiography - an output which is, in itself, some thing of a novelty in the history of South African English writing.

Descended on both sides from 1820 emigrants to the Frontier, the boy felt a natural pride in the Englishman's pioneering achievements. Severe periodic droughts and cattle diseases were still a constant source of anxiety to the local farming community. Few of them were wealthy so that Francis helped his mother in the house and worked in the fields with the labourers. Like Kingsley Fairbridge, Slater had little formal schooling. One of his sisters gave him lessons until he was fourteen when he went to Lovedale. However,

in July 1893 when I was within one month of my seventeenth birthday and had been at school for only two years and three months, I began to earn my own living, or the best part of it. (1)

The well known missionary, Dr. Stewart - one of whose daughters Slater afterwards married - encouraged the boy in his literary interests and strongly recommended that he should be sent to Oxford. This was long before the wool boom; Francis accepted the fact that his father could not afford to support him any longer. However the young man was far from being an illiterate plough-boy.

Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Scott, Burns and Longfellow - they all made their way to the farmhouse in the old paper-backed series "Dicks' Shilling Poets." It is easy to imagine the excitement with which the eight year old opened the parcel which his father had brought on horseback - all the way from Grahamstown - and as easy to guess that Scott would be his first favourite. In the evenings his parents read Shakespeare aloud to each other, while a cousin, holidaying with the family, introduced them to The Story of a South African Farm.

With a pomposity understandable in an elderly man who had campaigned for so long against the Philistines, Slater claimed that, before he was ten, he had read "Paradise Lost", by the time he was twelve he had polished off all the available Waverley Novels and by his early teens he had

read books as varied in shape, size and print as in content. I even read Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, lent me, probably as a practical joke, by a doctor... (2)

It was about this time that the boy, paging through an anthology,

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1. SLATER, Settlers' Heritage, p.97.
 2. Ibid. p. 69.

came across the "Ode to a Nightingale" and "To a Skylark". They made such an impression upon him that, on his next visit to the Lovedale bookshop, he ordered the works of Shelley, Keats and Coleridge.

This reading, particularly of the Romantic poets is all too evident in his own verse, for Slater did not have the genius which mints what it borrows into new coin. But, though he read in the evenings, he worked during the day; his pores absorbing the fine dry African dust as he lead the team of ploughing oxen across the hillecked fields. Later he was promoted from "voorloper" to driver:

This was an easy job, consisting mainly in addressing individual oxen by name - sometimes with uncomplimentary addenda - and urging them on with occasional cracks of the whip or flicks on their broad backs. When I had grown sufficiently strong, I took over the ploughman's job...Other work I liked was reaping wheat or forage (oat-hay). Several Native men and myself would reap a broad strip of wheat with our shining sickles, and two or three Native women would follow in our wake gathering up our sweet-scented spoils and binding them into sheaves. (1)

These men called him "Baas Flancie" - the nearest they could get to pronouncing his name. The epithet was logical enough (a distinction of class rather than of race). It was through such shared activity and interests on the land that Slater acquired his close, practical knowledge of the African peasant:

Working along with them, as I did from earliest boyhood, forged a bond of comradeship between us: my knowledge of their language formed an additional link. (2)

The bond between white boy and African was not broken when Slater went to school: for at Lovedale in those days there was no segregation:

A long, narrow table ran down the middle of the room. At this sat a number of boys and men both Dark and White. Behind this table, on both sides of the room, many short forms with desks attached thereto were arranged. I sat at one of these, between a Native man (who became a good friend of mine) and a European boy, who was also a friend.. Many of the Native men I met in class, in the Debating Society and on the playing fields, had by their natural good manners and modesty won my esteem.

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1. SLATER, *op.cit.* p.56.
 2. SLATER, Settlers' Heritage, p.56.

Some of them were imbued with a sense of high seriousness, which was wholly admirable: they were bent on learning all they could whilst at school in order to become teachers, preachers and up-lifters of their people. Some of them have succeeded nobly in their aims; many have followed, and more are following. And so the good work of enlightenment goes on, and so will it continue as inevitably as day follows night. 'Light more light', is the cry: the light of learning and progress for the Dark man; the light of wisdom and toleration for those White men who, glorying only in their white skins and the deeds of their ancestors, are wilfully blind to the forward marches of the human spirit. (1)

The understanding, the recognition of a common humanity, bred of these early years in field and classroom is the most genuine and individual element in Slater's work. His first volume of verse Footpaths thro' the Veld,⁽²⁾ is a hotchpotch of his reading watered down by an overtly moralizing, didactic tone. Its only reality lies in the passages which reflect the sincerity and freshness of that easy contact between farmers' sons of a different colour. Here, in this youthful work, are the themes, the very lyrics which will appear much later in a revised form as Dark Folk and other poems.⁽³⁾

Slater's numerous annotations in his copy of Veld Verse... clearly indicate what happened to those youthful lyrics. "Recast in Dark Folk" is the most frequent comment, nor is this evidence necessary, for Slater's publications, read in chronological order, show clearly that the same themes haunted him throughout his life, leading him to revise continually, condensing, cutting and eventually introducing a less flaccid diction, a more appropriate imagery.

At first it was a simple matter of pruning the more obviously tautological as when the early lines

The sun's flail thrashes the maize fields,
The heat-chaff flickers and stings;
Songless and still in the branches
The birds droop listless wings. (4)

are later reduced to the tauter, more effective

The sun's flail thrashes the maize-fields,
Heat-chaff flickers and stings;
Songless in the branches
Birds droop listless wings:

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1. SLATER, "Settlers' Heritage, p.91.
 2. SLATER, Footpaths thro' the Veld, 1905.
 3. SLATER, Dark Folk and other poems, 1935.
 4. SLATER, "In a Maize Field", Footpaths thro' the Veld...p.33.

"In a Maize Field" (the original of "Hoeing Chant" in the later series) suffered as well from a false sentimentality quite out of keeping with the subject. Instead of the stanza in which the African woman complains of her hard lot and longs for the "Country of the Blest" described by the missionary, Slater substituted the simple:

Then, lala, lala, my little son,
You'll soon be a man of might,
And marry a strapping damsel
To build the fire at night,
Brew beer, bear sons, hoe mealies -
But if she's a lazy shrew,
Just give her some cuts with your kerrie
And then she'll do - doo - doo! (1)

As Slater learnt the value of economy and realism, so he came to see that spattering his verses with Xhosa words and sentences (necessitating marginal comments) did not make them South African poems. In nearly all his revised lyrics he retained the foreign word only where it was untranslatable or where its music added to the atmosphere of the lines without distracting from the meaning. For instance in "Xosa Herdboy's Chant" (a revised version of "Zani 'Nkomo!") the distinctive call "Come, cattle - whee-ou-who!" is rightly retained, but gudu (stick with knob) has been rejected in favour of the more or less familiar "kerrie". (2)

Slater collected the best of his lyrics dealing with African peasant life, publishing them, compressed and revised, in Dark Folk & other poems. (3) It is an indication of the originality of their subject matter that he feared that the lyrics might be mistaken for translations or adaptations of Xhosa songs. Slater stressed that this was not so; that he had never heard any Xhosa poetry (the genius of the people, in his opinion, expressing itself instead in oratory) and that his verses were rough attempts to dramatize

certain emotions, experiences and aspirations of the more primitive and uneducated section of the Xosas - a simple and kindly pastoral people, who love their homes, lands and cattle. (4)

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1. SLATER, "Hoeing Chant", Dark Folk...., p.26. (lala - sleep)
Author's note.
 2. SLATER, "Xosa Herdboy's Chant", Dark Folk...., p.13.
 3. The change in Slater's style is perhaps nowhere else so marked as in the difference between "In a Compound" (which appeared in his first volume) and the same lyric which he re-cast as "The Captive" in Dark Folk....
 4. op.cit: Preface, p.vii.

In the same passage Slater recalled once more (it seems that he seldom tired of doing so) the unforgettable days when he had hunted birds on the veld with the herdboys, played in the streams, or sat around their evening fires sharing their unvubo (boiled mealies mixed with calabash milk).

Apart from the influence which he exerted in South Africa as an anthologist - his indefatigable efforts to persuade his countrymen to read verse - Slater's only real achievement is in these pastoral songs. The themes, the understanding and sympathy were his own, but their final form owed a debt to the stringent, the vitalizing effect of a younger man's verse.

In 1926 Slater had dedicated to Roy Campbell the lines beginning:

Soar again, young eagle, soar again -
Leave carrion to vultures! soar above
The blazing precipices of the sun,
The huddled glaciers of the arctic moon;
Soar, soar and scatter with ascending wing
The swirling hailstones of the fierce, white stars. (1)

This is a very different thing from much of his early verse: there is a surer control of the line, a less commonplace imagery, an altogether more colourful, stronger impact. The Flaming Terrapin had been published. (2)

It is not easy to see where the greater debt lay, nor is there much value in attempting to apportion it with too great a nicety, for such things can seldom be measured. Campbell generously proclaimed his gratitude to the older man, for his direct help and encouragement as well as for the inspiration of his verse. (3) Slater's frequent emendations show that he had begun to rely less and less upon the Romantics from whom his work had chiefly derived. Not that he ever lost his reverence for them - he never would accept "modern" poetry - but that he came to realize (helped by Campbell's example) that the themes of his verse needed a fresher, bolder imagery which might be derived from the African scene. This creative process had begun in Slater before it was accelerated by his reading of Campbell's poems. Certainly the younger man's preoccupation with images drawn from the sun is foreshadowed in Slater's verse.

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1. SLATER, "Soar again, young Eagle", The Collected Poems of...p.261.
 2. CAMPBELL, The Flaming Terrapin, 1924.
 3. CAMPBELL, Preface, The Collected Poems of Francis Carey Slater, 1957.

The sun as a symbol of power is a constant theme in Slater's writing, from the early "sun's flail" image and the repetitive

Sun-rays roll on the swaying meadow-grasses,
Sun-beams bathe in the pebble-sucking rill,
Sun-spears wound the shadows in the woodlands,
Sun-waves ripple on valley and hill: (1)

to the "mesmeric sun", the "high-priest sun" of his last poems. (2)

There are few things more characteristic of South African poetry in English than the persistence of the sun image. The sun asserts its powers over land, beast and man; it is always to be reckoned with - the destroyer as well as the bringer of life, pitiless and powerful, lustful and cruel - a deity to be honoured and propitiated.

In Slater's lyrics the sun is sometimes a warrior:

Now the swaying blood-smeared sun,
Like a battle-drunkoan Hun. (3)

sometimes a retreating general:

The sun goes down with golden banners flying
...
He carries on his ceaseless war with night. (4)

In The Karroo we are conscious of

The basilisk eye of the sun-god,
in "Homeward" it is "the red bull-sun" while in The Trek occurs the equally Campbellian image:

The red fusillade of setting suns
Raked the drab koppies like a million guns.

The younger and the older man learnt from each other to the enrichment of South African poetry.

As well as experimenting with an imagery derived more and more from the reality of the life he knew, Slater tried to draw attention to the grandeur, spaciousness and power characteristic of the continent of Africa:

Motionless waves, as I watch you my thoughts are borne
to those billows -
Wayward and wandering surges - washing the shores of
the world:
Seas that serenely whisper, or bellow in boisterous
anger,
Wild white coursers that thunder glittering hoofs on
the beach:

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1. SLATER, "Hardboy's Song", final version in The Collected Poems... p.9.
 2. SLATER, "Smuts and Shelley" The Collected Poems...., p.299.
 3. SLATER, "The Karroo....", p.42. The Hun seems to have swayed rather far from his home ground. Later republished as "The Captive", The Collected Poems... p.287.
 4. SLATER, "The Settlers' Churchyard", The Collected Poems of.... p.227.

There is a Shelleyan quality about the visual element in "Vulca", the descriptions are not precise; the effect is achieved not so much by individual beauties as by the mounting rhythm of the lines, by the sense of brightness (dazzle, blaze, flame) and of earthy vitality which interpenetrates land and water and girl.

Just as Slater had known since childhood the destructive power of the sun so he had experienced the fear of Drought - a fear common to all South Africa. The symbols were ready at hand; Slater used them to portray the theme of man's fear of man. The hate of the sun, a hatred sometimes wreaked upon the land; the hatred of race for race, a hatred born of fear in a society of conflict - this was the theme of the volume which he published in 1929 under the pen name of Jan von Avond. (1)

Slater called Drought a South African Parable in the form of a poetic symphony, having for its main themes: "Drought - the hate of the sun" and "Hate, which is a drought of the spirit", with minor themes interwoven. Writing about the poem later he added that it had been an appeal for more vision and commonsense in politics, as well as for more urgent attention to the problem of soil erosion which had assumed the proportion of a national calamity. The evils which impeded South African progress would only be solved, Slater claimed, "by eliminating racial hate in South Africa". (2)

General Smuts wrote to the author:

I was immensely impressed years ago by your Drought. It seemed to me a wonderful psychological study, in addition to its high quality as poetry. You have deep insight into the forces which are moving below the surface in this country. But just because you see below the surface people do not care, as they are more attracted to what appears above the surface, and especially what forms obvious propaganda. I think there is some secret satisfaction in knowing that you are moving at a deeper level than others. That is your reward at the same time that it appears as a punishment for not keeping to the herd. This country is fortunate that it has quite a number of men and women who live at that deeper spiritual level (3) and who are in touch with finer things.

Drought... was (apart from Campbell's work) the most

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1. Because he feared reprisals from those who disliked his views. Drought: a South African parable, 1929.
 2. SLATER, Preface (in which he acknowledged the authorship of Drought...) Dark Folk...
 3. SMUTS, to Slater, Pretoria, 29.12.38. Cory Library, M.S.7289.

ambitious in theme and structure which had yet appeared in the country. Campbell was so struck by its comparative originality in the literary desert that he wrote to the author:

My first impression of Drought was that it was the work of a young man, simply because it is frank, outspoken and high-spirited. It makes no difference to my aesthetic response to the poem to know that it is the work of an older man. It only enhances my moral respect for the author, as it is a rare thing for any man to preserve his integrity till middle-age in a country like South Africa where so much depends on astuteness and duplicity. (1)

This "integrity" of which Campbell spoke arose from Slater's preservation of his faith in man, his hope in the possibility of understanding and co-operation among the different races in his homeland. On a frontier where fear is constantly exploited, Slater had clung stubbornly to his early ideals:

Come, let us sing of Drought,
Drought - the hate of the sun;
Come, let us sing of Hate,
Which is a drought of the spirit;
For these blind serfs of death
Lay waste this Land of Hope,
Strangling its springs of action,
Blighting its wistful buds,
Heralding sterile torpor
And desolation. (2)

It is the old theme of Conflict, the major, all pervading issue which runs throughout South African verse, from Pringle's lament over "the harsh fetters of Colour and Caste" to Roy Kloof's cry,

Division incarnate! An unhappy role!
My country has given me flint for a soul. (3)

Slater divided his poem into four parts: the pitiless devastation wrought by drought on the land; its dire effect on the lives of the people; the similarly corrosive quality of hatred and, finally, the advent of rain which breaks the physical drought and brings with it the question of whether love will come to end the drought of hate.

The first lyric illustrates the progress which Slater was making towards a more pertinent imagery:

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1. Quoted by Slater in Settlers' Heritage, p.256. (n.d.)
 2. SLATER, Prelude, Drought... p.7.
 3. CIOUTS, "Roy Kloof", A Book of South African Verse, p.196.

The sky is a blue, coiled serpent,
That turns to the earth one blazing eye.
Stricken by that eyeball's torrid glare
The grass curls up and withers -
Curls, as a songolelo curls
At the touch of a careless foot; (1)

This is fresh, germane to the subject, evocative, but Slater could not sustain such striking descriptions. Constantly he lapses into the puerile clichés which deface his earlier verse, so that the effective conceit of the "sun's basilisk eye" is followed by the puerile:

Golden brooches of sunset,
And necklaces strung with stars; (2)

one of his most vapid and frequently recurring favourites.

Slater had declared in the "Prelude" to the poem that the subject was not suited to

...foppish embroideries
And adornments of rhyme,
With cunningly-fashioned rhythms
And colourful epithets; (3)

but his attempt to suggest the austere, terrible monotony of his theme by what he called a "simple recitative", is all too often defeated by an over-conscious artifice. At times his efforts merely result in a list of incongruous objects which fail to coalesce with his subject, as when the sun's heat is described in terms of:

Strill cornets screech
Brazen saxophones blare,
Bray, blaze and blare
Discordant jazz-tunes,
Soul-racking and hideous, -
And interminable fugue
Of blase, dazzle and glare;
And intolerable Te Deum
Of soulless and senseless Drought - (4)

The diction in this passage is a symptom of Slater's limitations. Every poet has his favourite words, but he must find the right occasion to use them. Slater, having realized the appropriateness of blaze as descriptive of the sun's glare, works it to death. The idea is a good one but the audacious image fails to come off; it is hampered by too uninteresting a choice of words (the repetitions are not felt as a necessity) as well as by the inappropriate Te Deum. (5)

1. SLATER, Drought..., p.11.

2. op.cit. p.12.

3. op.cit. p. 7.

4. op.cit. p.13.

5. Cf. Cripp's fondness for liturgical terms. He uses them more appropriately. See "Benediction...", cf.ante p.147.

The reader of Drought is frequently aware only of the number and distracting quality of the images. An example occurs in the eleventh lyric where the rapid transition from tactile, to auditory to the visual image fails to cohere:

Grey rocks, brown stones?
Battered by the hard lips of Drought
The shrill, green trumpets of the grass
Lie stifled in the dust;
The golden dream of the dandelion
Melts and vanishes,
Even as the flame of a blown candle
Is suddenly snatched
Into a clime invisible to man; (1)

That South African critics have shown themselves to be aware of Slater's limitations as a writer is, in itself, an indication of the advance which had been made - partly through Slater's own efforts to direct attention to the Muse. If his poetry was not distinguished it was certainly very much better than anything else (always excepting the work of the self-proclaimed hero of the Wayzgoose) that had been written in this country. Roy Campbell recognized Slater's achievement:

The furore that greeted the publication of "Voorslag" by William Plomer, Laurens van der Post and myself was a healthy furore - a sign of South Africa's intellectual awakening. Such hostility is infinitely more encouraging than, and vastly preferable to, the long age of indifference and neglect which had to be weathered by Dr. Slater when he first acclimatized English poetry to these shores, as the forerunner and pioneer of us all. (2)

That he did succeed at times, even in Drought, in acclimatizing English poetry to Africa is apparent in such lines as:

Desolation comes
To the country of the mind,
When droughts of Hate,
Torpor or disgust
Have stifled the fountains of thought,
And shrivelled the buds of fancy.
Desolation comes
And the peaks of imagination
Are flattened out,
Like giants of mist
Before the sling of the wind. (3)

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1. SLATER, Drought..., p.22.
 2. CAMPBELL, Preface, The Collected Poems of..., p.vii
 3. SLATER, Drought..., p.27.

The "sling of the wind", this phrase (as well as many others in his poetry "the livid lasso of the lightning", "Curvetting rainbows" and

.....poised
Upon horns of granite
Sky-tossing horns
Of buffalo-mountains?) (1)

is a reminder of the teasing interdependence of Slater and the poet of "The Dark Champion": one of the three poems by the youthful Campbell which Slater published in his first anthology of South African Verse. (2)

Unfortunately Slater's understanding of his country, his heartfelt consciousness of her problems, was greater than his poetic sensibility. He lapsed too easily into the meaningless sing-song of:

Let us sing sadly of Hate: -
Crescendo-
The hate of the Dutch for the British;
Diminuendo-
The hate of the British for the Dutch;
Crescendo-
The hate of both for the Dark People;
Diminuendo-
The hate of the Dark People for the White. (3)

This is not poetry; it is scarcely verse. Again, as has happened so frequently in the history of South African writing, the propagandist ousted the poet.

Even Part IV of Drought (which contains some pleasing lines describing the coming of the rain) is still too markedly derivative to be recognized as an individual voice. Occasionally there is an obvious echo; in one case, rather surprisingly, from Hopkins where

Now in dim woods, teacups
Her tapers lights, (4)

recalls

Down in dim woods the diamond delves! (5)

On the whole the verse is distressingly sentimental with a sickening preponderance of "baby-flowers", "dew-drops" and radiant dreams of one kind or another.

Aware of the unevenness of his work, Slater omitted many

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1. SLATER, Drought... p.28.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Dark Champion", The Centenary Book of South African Verse, ed. Slater. (1925)
 3. SLATER, Drought... p.46.
 4. op.cit. p.62.
 5. HOPKINS, "The Starlight Night", Gerard Manley Hopkins, Penguin Poets.

verses from his two volumes of collected poems; but his reputation would have profited had he pruned still further. (1)

1938, the centenary of the Boer exodus, was celebrated in the Union by bearded farmers in an anniversary cavalcade of wagons and horsemen. Slater published The Trek. His patriotism, though frequently crassly, even jejune expressed, was not a narrow racialism. Slater was proud of his descent from pioneering English settlers, anxious that his countrymen should realize the debt that they owed these men, but he was proud too of the exploits of the Voortrekkers.

As early as 1900 a South African critic had suggested that the history of the Afrikaner Trek called for an epic poet, and that there was no reason why he should not be English speaking. That Slater hoped to achieve a national epic is evident from his opening lines, the heroic poet's traditional proclamation:

Not locomotive-engines, snorting dragons
Belching black smoke, I sing, but tented-wagons:
....
Nor sing I petrol's toys of dizzy pace
But the slow-trudging ox and sabling steed.
...
Not mechanics, masons, engineers
I sing, but of bronzed farmer-pioneers: (2)

Slater saw himself as the first epic poet of the country; he never could understand why public recognition was so meagre. Again and again Smuts had to comfort him:

You must, in excuse for South Africans,
remember that we are still a very young and immature
people, and your thoughtful mood and high quality
do not always appeal to the juvenility in them.
But much that you have written will stand the test
of time and appeal to a later more mature generation.
You will remember that Milton sold his "Paradise
Lost" rights for £8. (I mention this because you (3)
mention him.

The importance which Slater attached to these and similar crumbs of comfort from others, whose opinions he valued, is evident from the number of letters in this vein which he included in an appendix to his autobiography.

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1. ENSOR, in his introduction to Selected Poems of Francis Carey Slater, 1947, mentioned Dark Folk..., The Trek, and Drought... as containing the "Bulk of the work by which he would care to be remembered".
 2. SMUTS, The Trek, p.3.
 3. SMUTS, to Slater, Pretoria, 27.12.44. Cory Library, MS.7295.

In a naive, rather pathetic letter to Professor Dingemans, Slater explained that he had finished The Trek:

except that it still requires a good deal of revision and I have yet to add an Epilogue (about ten pages) which is a very important matter. In the meantime, I am anxious that you should read the poem for yourself...Should you like to make any criticisms, I shall be glad if you will note them down in pencil, on a separate sheet. But I should much appreciate a more formal letter from you indicating your opinion of it generally, what you think of its prospects in South Africa and whether you think it stands any chance of being taken up in our schools and colleges.

I am anxious to secure a first class publisher for The Trek - one who will make it known - not only in Britain and the Dominions, but in the United States and Holland as well. I would like my book to be a counterblast to that very unpleasant novel, Turning Wheels. The character and achievements of the Trekkers should be known throughout the world and perhaps some people who can't be bothered with History may read my poem. (1)

The underlinings are Slater's own. The letter is naive on two points: the assumption that he has achieved what he had set out to do and the assumption that the story of The Trek was as important to people outside South Africa as it was to Afrikaners. The inclusion of Holland is understandable, but it is less easy to see why Slater should have imagined that the Americans, for instance, rich in a pioneering history and literature of their own, should rush to buy his book.

Slater was ambitious. His narrative attempted to cover all the major historical events, from Gerrit Maritz's departure from Graaf-Reinet in 1836, to the battles of Weenen and Blood River at which the trekkers broke the power of the tribal impis in Natal.

The didactic nature of The Trek vitiates it from the start, so that there is a far greater gap between aim and accomplishment than there is in Drought. The interspersed lyrics and the narrative are disfigured with similar catalogues of artificially imposed metaphors:

...
Come let us drink to the tented-wagons -
Cradles that rocked the Afrikaner race,
Keys that unlocked the gates of space;
Schooners that humbled the desert's angry billows,
Aeroplanes that tumbled the Dragon Mountains' pillows;
Tortoises that won the tremendous race,
Robots of time and runes of place. (2)

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1. SLATER, to Professor Dingemans, Wynberg, 10th March, 1938.
Cozy Library, MS 6731.
 2. SLATER, The Trek, p.5.

That Slater was not entirely unaware that this might invoke ridicule is implied in a note he appended to the word "Aeroplanes":

This is scarcely an exaggeration considering the incredible things that the Voortrekkers actually accomplished with ox-wagons. (1)

The unsolicited defence simply side-steps the point. The effect is ludicrous. It is difficult to understand how the poet of some of the Dark Folk lyrics could have perpetrated it.

By paying attention to accurate detail Slater hoped to achieve a realistic narrative. He was exact:

...
This hero was
Louis Trigardt, a leader prompt in need,
Son of a Boer, whose father was a Swede;
A patient, kindly, well-knit wiry man
Of fifty-three, whose stirring life began
Near the Karroo's gem-city, Graaf-Reinet.
Later, among the hills of Somerset
The Trigardts settled. (2)

The effect is prosaic - and not even good prose at that; it has the ring of the local guide-book: "prompt in need", "stirring life" and "Karoo's gem-city". The poverty of such language scarcely merits comment. This, as well as other portraits of Frontier heroes, will not bear comparison with a poem on a somewhat similar subject from another continent. In 1928 Stephen Vincent Benét, turning to the American frontier for inspiration, had written John Brown's Body with its sketch of:

Lincoln, six feet one in his stocking feet,
The lank man, knotty and tough as a hickory
rail,
Whose hands were always too big for white-kid
gloves,
Whose wit was a coonakin sack of dry, tall
tales,
Whose weathered face was homely as a plowed
field. (3)

Benét's narrative became very popular. The Trek did not. The fault did not lie entirely with the immaturity of South Africans - as Smuts had tactfully suggested.

Where Slater's poem does come alive it is with a noisy rhetoric, a false Campbellian vitality: the smashing sun was hailed with whistle and shout; which does not harmonize with

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1. SLATER, loc.cit.
 2. SLATER, The Trek, p.39.
 3. BENET, John Brown's Body, New York, 1927.

the lyrical writer at his simple best:

No marble marks the memory
Of old, heroic traiders, who
Fell beside the way to die.
Now swallowed by the grim Karroo -
Ringed and roofed with blue and blue -
Where they belong they lie. (1)

A lyric which weighs the debt down heavily on the side of the older man is "Springboks" which occurs in Part I of The Trek. These buck who:

In the dawn - light blue...scatter the dew
From their flanks as they gambol on the
grey Karroo,

have quite unmistakably escaped from Campbell's ark. (2) Quite apart from its thinly disguised (and probably unconscious) borrowing, the lyric suffers from one of Slater's old troubles. In it he compares the springboks to birds, dolphins, footballers and brown breakers - the leap of association required is too much of a strain. (3)

Other opinions notwithstanding, Slater had no talent for narrative, either in prose or verse. (4) He had made this clear in his first volume of short stories The Sunburnt South where he indulged in the worst type of cliché; while the extent of his predilection for the evils rather than the virtues of the Romantic writers is evident in such "purple patches" as the following:

The sun sank down over the distant hills,
trailing golden galleons of clouds in his wake;
amorous airs of evening murmured caressingly to
the listening grass which replied in tremulous,
ready whispers; from the distance came the voice
of the brook, wooing with silvery speech the coyly
nodding trees; and, at intervals, I heard the low
of full-fed kine as they trudged contentedly
kraal-wards. After meditating upon the tranquil
beauty of this scene, and envying those whose
lines had fallen in such pleasant places, I coaxed
my jaded steed into motion and made for the farmstead. (5)

This is, as they say, "A bit much", but is interesting evidence

1. SLATER, op.cit. p.27.

2. SLATER, The Trek, p.26. Cf.

"And the springbok bounced, and fluttered, and flew,
Hooping their spines on the gaunt karroo,
Gay zebras pranced and snorted aloud -..."
Campbell, The Flaming Terrapin.

3. See MILLER & SERGEANT, A Critical Survey..., p.100, for a contradictory judgment on this lyric. On the whole these critics have placed too high a valuation upon Slater's work and his potential "vital influence".

4. BRINK, "In his very first work Slater reveals a particular aptitude for narrative verse...This becomes an important tendency in Slater's verse and is evident in The Trek."
Three South African English Poets; A Critical Study, (Thesis)

5. SLATER, "Lena of Lion Kloof", Sunburnt South, 1908.

of the long way Slater had to travel, overcoming on his journey not only apathy on the part of the public, but (and this was far more damaging to him as a writer) the pernicious use which he had made of so much of his reading. (1)

Slater's improbable plots emphasize that he had no flair, even for a simple tale. Lena of Lion Kloof, for instance, revolves around a murdered lover, a mad woman and a horde of savages. The dialogue is forced and unreal, the situation melodramatic:

The sight that now met her gaze made her numb with horror. The room was filled with half-naked savages, two of them were holding Lena whilst several others were beating out poor young Klaas's brains.

Later, in the same scene, there is a moment memorable for its unintentional comedy. The Kaffir chief addresses Lena:

"What would a fine, tall maiden like you do with such a puny husband," (here he kicked the prostrate body of Klaas) "lo, in me shall you find a more fitting mate." (2)

This recalls Mrs. Ward's heroine crying out to Marmaduke though, in fact, the officer's wife seldom descended to such bathos. Her sense of realism was much stronger. (3)

Slater was obviously unwilling to relinquish his belief that he could write verse narrative, even epic. He continued to try throughout his life, composing, among other things, a number of ballads dealing with incidents in the national history. Some of these ballads, "Woltemade" for instance, appeared first in 1910. The ranting original:

Out in the roar of that raging water,
Lash'd by the tempest's unsparing scourge,
A ship flies...Crash! It is torn - it is spitted -
By rock-fangs hidden in seething surge! (4)

is little worse than the much revised ballad included in the Collected Edition.

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1. An examination of Slater's books (which he bequeathed to the Grahamstown Public Library) shows that - in addition to a comprehensive collection of English poetry and drama - he had acquired an impressive array of poems and verses written in southern Africa. There is evidence that he studied the progress of the Muse in Africa with absorption. Not even the most insignificant of the pamphlets has an uncut page.
 2. SLATER, "Lena of Lion Kloof", The Sunburnt South.
 3. The best of Slater's stories (collected in The Secret Veld, 1931) are those depicting stock characters such as the mission African in "The Dictionary". They do not rank high among South African short stories in English.
 4. SLATER, "Woltemade", From Mimosa Land, (1910) p.18.

None of Slater's efforts in this genre have any true vitality. The best of them is "King's Ride" with its insistent rhythm:

But still in dreams can I hear the beat
Of his ghost-white stallion's galloping feet. (1)

One of the very worst is "The Crime". This is the jejune story of a young Boer girl with the improbable name of Brenda. She falls in love with an English officer who is murdered by her discarded Afrikaner lover. Cliche marches after cliche:

...And I who slew those twain
Still walk the earth in weariness and woe -
Whilst they love on thro' all eternity... (2)

Even the later, less immature "Veld Patriarch" (which Smuts thought a true picture of a typical South African Boer)⁽³⁾ is too Browningesque to have any distinction of its own. The reader is continually distracted by ghosts; nor can he be certain of the identity of the ghosts. He only knows that, in spite of the writer's talk of "yoke-skeys smashed and trekgoed out of gear" he expects to find a gorgeous Renaissance figure standing in the shadow of a Karroo thorn bush or, perhaps, to hear the Bishop of St. Praxed reminding him that "The good old days have faded like a dream".

Slater contributed nothing of permanent value to the development of the narrative poem in South African literature. Even his themes (particularly those of his ballads) had nearly all been tackled before. Only in the scope and plan of his longer works was he a pioneer in this country. His hope for national unity - based on his vision of the history of the country as the heritage of its major races: - English, Africans and Bantu - gave his themes a breadth of vision which might have been energizing had he possessed more than a very minor talent. The Trek is, perhaps, something of a curiosity in our literary history for it is a sincere tribute to the Afrikaner people in the language of the "verdoende Engels".

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1. SLATER, "King's Ride", The Collected Poems... p.232.
 2. SLATER, "The Crime", From Mimosa Land, p.23. (This was not included in his Collected Poems.)
 3. In 1948, General Smuts, in his reply to Slater's annual letter, wrote, of the "Veld Patriarch": "...one of the types still happily not uncommon in this land of strong types. I look upon that conversation of Oom Piet as one of the finest and most moving things you have done. The sheer realism and avoidance of verbiage make it a South African classic... It is of the veld, of the soil, like our aloes and other peculiar plants..." Cory Library, MS 7299.

But it is not entirely on the merits of his own work that Slater is important in our literary history. Delius has testified to his generosity in helping financially embarrassed writers, to the interest which he always took in English verse written in his homeland and in the Rhodesias:

I first met Francis Carey Slater ten years ago when I was working on the Saturday Post, a forerunner of the Evening Post. He walked into my office one morning and announced that he had come off a ship to see me about a poem I had written.

I stared at him in considerable astonishment for I had never before found anybody in South Africa who would walk even a hundred yards to talk to another man about his verse. Yet here before me stood a man of 72 who had broken into a comfortable coastal trip to trail through the drearier areas of Port Elizabeth and do just this.

This, I was to realize later, was one of his most endearing traits - his tireless encouragement of any other English-speaking South African he found writing passable verse. Out of this quality rose his two anthologies which did so much for South African English verse. (1)

This is, in many ways, a noble epitaph. Paradoxically the value of Slater's own verse might be assessed at a higher rate had he done less to popularize it. He published too much, and some of his verse is so bad that it casts a shadow upon better lines. Had he been more ruthless his reputation would have gained. His best work is in his lyrics which range from "The Dead Eagle" (a poem which understandably attracted Campbell and which, in spite of faults, has an individual beauty of image and rhythm) to the songs of the Dark Folk...

In such a poem as "Lament for a Dead Cow", Slater fused all that was best in his literary experience with that sympathetic apprehension of his dark countrymen nurtured in the plains and valleys below the Anatolia hills:

Beautiful was Wetu as a blue shadow
That nests on the grey rocks
About a sunbaked hilltop:
Her coat was black and shiny
Like an isipingo-berry;
Her horns were as sharp as the horns of the new moon
That tosses aloft the evening star;

1. DELIUS, "A Banker and Poet", Evening Post (1958)

The precise images, emerging appropriately out of an African landscape, vegetation and myth, out of the life of the peasantry,

No more will she face yapping curs
With lowered horns and bewildered eyes;

gather force and suggestion until they symbolize the cattle - the mainstay of traditional Bantu society and culture:

The fountain that filled our calabashes
Has been drained by a thirsty sun;
The black cloud that brought us white rain
Has vanished - the sky is empty;
Our kraal is desolate;
Our calabashes are dry:
And we weep.

(1)

It is difficult not to attach to this lyric a suggestiveness which (at any rate in its original form) it probably was not intended to carry. Its value is in its poetic realization of a pastoral life which is dying (a life very similar, though less idealized, to that which Cripps was mourning in Mashonaland.) It is significant that the two men - Cripps and Slater - admired each other's work.

In a sense Slater is unusual in our history. The son of a frontiersman, he had sat at the same school desk with the sons of those whose fathers had wielded the stabbing assegai. In his cry for "light, more light," his belief in the "forward marches of the human spirit" he reveals his descent from Pringle, but his humanitarianism was not imported, he had learnt it at the very heart of the old Cape Frontier.

Towards the end of his life Slater's optimism for South Africa's future was tinged with nagging doubts. He wrote of Smuts:

Did he never, never despair of his own people? (2)

Whatever his misgiving he did not forget his debt to one section of his countrymen. Antony Delius once remarked to the elderly poet that he had been very fortunate in having shared an Eastern Cape classroom with Black classmates.

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1. SLATER, "Lament for a Dead Cow", Dark Folk... p.5.
 2. SLATER, "Smuts and Shelley", The Collected Poems... p.299. When this lyric was first published in the S.A.P.E.N. Year Book (1955) the Minister withdrew a grant from the periodical. The poem was judged objectionable on the grounds of "political tendency". An interesting example of the power of politics in South African life.

He got the reply:

I was lucky - luckier than you or your children
will be.

(1)

Those early years were the source from which Slater drew the Dark Folk lyrics; his most genuine and personal contribution to the widening field of indigenous English verse. In them, by dint of much of labour, he had progressed with infinite pains towards the creation of a few fresh and original images evocative of African themes. Slater's achievement marks (in one sense) the end of the pioneering period in the acclimatization of English verse which had begun with Pringle.

1. Quoted by Delius, "A Banker and Poet", Evening Post.

CHAPTER 8.

THE ANCIENT HUNTER.

I am that ancient hunter of the plains
That raked the shaggy fitches of the Bison:
Pass, world; I am the dreamer that remains,
The Man, clear-cut against the last horizon!

The Flaming Terrapin, Roy Campbell.

Ever since the appearance of Voorslag in 1926 the names of Campbell and Plomer have been bandied about in the short lived periodicals, the corpses of which confront the traveller through the semi-desert of South African literary history. (1)

This association of names arises out of more than the accident of their collaboration on an ill-fated venture. These two young men (whose subsequent development emphasized their contrasting personalities and talents) brought to an end the long drought of talent. A new era had begun.

In spite of his self-imposed exile (culminating in that tragic moment in 1957 when a burst tyre sent his car careening into a tree in Portugal) Roy Campbell's name will always be linked with South Africa. Controversy rages around this controversial man. There are those who claim that in deserting Africa he deserted poetry; that his influence (apart from the impression which he made on Uys Krige, Antony Delius and Guy Butler) has been negligible because he did not remain as a creative force. (2) Others, notably the Afrikaans poet D.J. Opperman, wrote of him as being:

in verskeie opsigte die sentrale figuur in die
Suid-Afrikaanse poësie...sowel die Afrikaanse as
die Engelse. (3)

It is early yet, either to resolve this difference of opinion or to judge his individual place in the hierarchy of poets writing

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1. VOORSLAG, "Whiplash". A literary review, the first two numbers of which Campbell edited in collaboration with William Plomer and Laurens van der Post.
 2. ABRAHAMS, "Roy Campbell: Conquistador - Refugee," Theoria, vol. 8. 1956. Abrahams disagreed with Opperman as to the extent of Campbell's influence on South African writers. "Africa would have changed his art. Africa demands poetic expression...by providing an indigenous source of inspiration he would have made an immeasurable contribution to the founding of an indigenous tradition."
 3. OPPERMAN, "Roy Campbell en die Suid-Afrikaanse Poesie", Standpunte, No 31, March, 1954, pp.4 - 15.

See also ANTONISSEN, Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van die Aanvang tot Hede, for specific examples of Campbell's influence upon Afrikaans poets. "In hierdie heroïes - aristokratiese opvatting van die digterskap duik - maar natuurlik in geëvolveerde vorm - die idee wêreld op wat van Wyk Louw, onder die indruk van Carlyle, Goethe, Nietzsche en Campbell, al sowat tien jaar wroeër in tydskrif-verse uitgedruk het." p.211.

in English. Lovers of Campbell's poetry as well, one suspects, as those repelled by his bombastic posturings, look forward to a thorough critical assessment of the poet. To the literary critic and historian it is a subject so far unrivalled in South African English literature.

Campbell spoke of his muse as "African". This chapter attempts to examine the relationship between the poet and the society into which he was born. Further it essays (principally through an exploration of his first long poem) to indicate the qualities which made Campbell's early poetry significant and easily distinguishable from the verse of all his predecessors in southern Africa. From the publication of The Flaming Terrapin in 1924 a fresh, vigorous stream flowed into the stagnating vlei of South African verse.

The circumstances of Roy Campbell's early life: - his family, birthplace, upbringing and education, his first visit to England, his happy marriage, the return to Durban which resulted in his brushing the dirt of "Banana-land" off his shoes more or less forever, - all these external events are familiar to readers of his two autobiographies. Nor is it any secret that it is difficult to sift the facts from the romance for he frankly confessed:

...my memory and imagination work as one; by force of recounting them [his stories] they assume more elegant shapes, and I am not the one to wish to bore you with a list of facts. (1)

It is perhaps, not quite fair to the memory of the poet, to quote this (or any other) passage from Broken Record; without recalling that Campbell claimed to have written his first autobiography in a few days, not so much out of bravado, as to keep the wolf from the domestic hearth. Alan Paton, reminiscing to a Grahamstown audience some time after Campbell's death, emphasized that the poet, in later life, was ashamed of this book because of its implicit Nazi and Fascist views. Paton added that Dr. George Campbell, Roy's brother, claims that half the exploits in the book relate, not to the poet, but to him - a remark which (whether it is true or not) has

1. CAMPBELL, Broken Record. p.11.

about it the characteristic Campbellian tone. (1)

Whatever its proportion of truth to fantasy, Broken Record is an invaluable reflection of the young man who (as the lyrics of Adamastor revealed) continually thought of himself as springing from the desert, the "rotted wastes"; his roots, like those of the Palm trees, deep in his native soil, his destiny:

Out of the dust and the drought of the plain,
To sing with the silver hosannas of rain. (2)

Coupled with his sensitive appreciation of Africa, was the powerful impact of his father's personality. Campbell's admiration for his father extends backwards in time so that he romanticizes on the exploits of the entire paternal clan:

For we have never had a shop-keeper, lawyer,
politician, or parson in our family, only soldiers,
scholars, athletes, poets, doctors and farmers. (3)

This human, at times even endearing reverence for his ancestors, is just as apparent in Light on a Dark Horse where the exploits of various forefathers are vividly if, one suspects, not always veraciously, dramatized.

Campbell's father was a man of wide interests, much ability and compelling force of character. The relationship between him and his son has more than a passing interest; it was a major force in the moulding of the poet for Campbell, like Byron, is a writer whose poetry it is scarcely possible to discuss without reference to the man.

My father was a brilliant scholar,
Campbell wrote:

He was brought up to the early pioneer life in which European culture was conserved and handed on to us... Brought up in the wilds, he never lost his love of our wild country, and whenever he could spare a minute from his work, he was always hunting and fishing...he was respected and loved by the Zulus far above any of the missionising people...My father educated us primarily so that we should be able to enjoy our lives; success was only a sideline. Unlike a bourgeois father, he raised no objection to my being a poet, but flung every possible advantage at me, sharing and cherishing the ambition as much as myself...We had the run

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1. PATON, in a lecture and poetry reading, Grahamstown, Sept. 1958)
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Palm", Collected Poems... (1955) p.49.
 3. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, p.12.

of vast tracts of wild country, both on the Natal estates and in Rhodesia, with horses, guns and as many books as we wanted to buy, except novels. My monthly account at the bookshop was something tremendous, but he always paid it without a word. (1)

These and similar passages indicate not only the direct influence which the Durban doctor exercised upon his son's reading activities, but, more subtly, the presence of those values dear to a pioneering age which were to become - in spite of "the winds of change" - dear to the poet as well.

It is possible that such a dynamic parent (idealized by Colonial and Zulu, the hero of numerous tales) (2) may have created a sense of insecurity, even perhaps of insufficiency, in the young Campbell, leading both to an urge to rival the achievements of "Sam-Joj" and to perhaps excessive regard for authority and tradition. An analysis of Campbell's personality would be out of place here; though it might help to explain why he tended to see the strength, never the weaknesses, of all forms of authoritarianism. It might, for instance, illuminate the vexed question of his Fascist leanings. (3) There is that revealing comment in Broken Record, telling us more than its author intended about his emotional attitude towards his father:

In 1906 he wrote The Blister, the first political satire in Natal, the predecessor of my Wayzgoose, - besides some other witty verses. It caused a great sensation, but not so much, I should think as did the Wayzgoose later. Living my early life under the shadow of a great personality, which devoted its entire energy without being conscious of it, or making others so, to the welfare of others, it took me a long time to understand how rare and great a quality is that sort of generosity, which in him amounted to genius, especially when it is coupled, not

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1. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, pp. 13-16. There is a similar passage in Light on a Dark Horse, beginning: "It was through my father's sharing and cherishing my literary ambitions that I was able to get a start as a writer..." p.50.
 2. Dr. Samuel George Campbell was the hero of an incident in the Zulu rebellion when "he spent the whole night, at the risk of his life, doctoring and bandaging their wounded; a thing which they never forgot." See Broken Record, p.14, for an account of this incident.
 3. Campbell's views on the Spanish Civil War estranged him from Uys Krige for ten years. Campbell's boast that he had killed more Fascists than all other contemporary poets put together is, by now, well known. He does not seem to have had much grasp of politics and it seems irrelevant (as Krige has said) to take his views on them seriously.

with softness, but with wit, strength and energy;
and which aroused envy in me rather than the
generous admiration it deserved. (1)

It would be easy (as well as foolish) to over-emphasize
the effect of parental influence upon Campbell; but it is
scarcely possible to put too much stress upon the importance
to the poet of those twenty odd years in Africa.

Ironically the first English speaking South African whose
poetry was unmistakably of this continent, felt himself forced
to adopt the pose of the rejected "matador of truth". In
spite of the home and the new loyalties which he found in Europe,
Campbell could never get Africa out of his blood; he certainly
never got her out of his poetry. His early work literally
"explodes" with the vividness, vitality and strength of his
youthful memories. Africa made Campbell what he was - not
only in essentials:

Dis nie sy regop-die-maa-af, hoes-ganompelde
sanhef wat my verbaas het nie, maar sy aksent. Dis
self's erger as my eie in Engels, so ruig-Suid-Afrikaans
dat jy dit net 'n Kryanza-tand-saag sou kan sny... (2)

but in essentials. Describing his first meeting with Campbell
in Provence, Uys Krige sums up his impression of the poet as
being one of unmistakable "South Africanness". Krige talks too
of the marked influence of Natal, Zululani and the more austere
hinterland on Campbell's writing; referring to it as being not
merely thematic but one of

fundamental power, elemental energy, fierce
almost primitive surge and strength. (3)

Campbell's departure from Africa was the direct outcome of
his unfortunate experiences over Voorslag.⁽⁴⁾ The poet's
later love for Provence and Spain may have been an attempt to
rediscover the Natal of his boyhood; the result of a search
for "the clear pagan sunlight" for which (as he confessed) he
pined.

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1. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, p.18. The pamphlet Our Legislators,
was published by Campbell's father, in Durban in 1907. There
is much in the author's general tone and attitude which is
reminiscent of the son. The poet's grandfather, William
Campbell, is also said to have had a gift for writing doggerel.
 2. KRIGE, "Eerste Ontmoeting met Roy Campbell", Weekblad, March, 1958.
 3. KRIGE, "Roy Campbell", Trek, Vol. XV. No.10. Oct. 1951.
 4. See ROUGH, "The End of the "Voorslag" " Trek, vol.XV.1951.
WALKER, "Footnote to Voorslag", Trek, vol.VII. 1945.
Also Campbell's and Plover's account of the venture in
their respective autobiographies.

It was this boyhood home where Campbell roamed at will along the surf-pounded shore, and over the grassy inland plateaux, as well as the open country further north where he holidayed with his cousins, that found expression in his first published poem. He was fully conscious of this fact:

This, Rhodesia, and the great breezy uplands of Natal, were my experience of Africa; the equestrian Africa that I love, and it was all spent in the company of the fine old farmer population... and my Terrapin was an expression of this African life, as I had led it: among old traditions and a sterling people...the Great Berg towering overhead...That was my Africa... (1)

He knew why he stressed "my Africa". It was not only that he felt it belonged to him with the proprietary sense we all have about places we have loved as children, but that his Africa was not every man's experience of this continent. New forces were fermenting among the African people; Adamastor was stirring uneasily in his sleep. Campbell knew it and he betrayed his complete lack of sympathy, his absence of understanding of the future, when he voiced his dismay that the land might be:

doomed to become the Africa of my Wayzgoose, with the stamp of Trade (that Saxon institution) on everything. (2)

Faced with so dire a fate the young reactionary declared:

I prefer to go down with it. But the future of our country is in stock, and in the conservation of our pre-Victorian culture, and runs no risk of giving way to the shop-keepers...

This was nonsense of course. It is not easy to establish how strongly he believed it himself. It is the old values of the Frontiersman asserting themselves: the values he had learnt from his father, from his life in the still markedly colonial atmosphere of Natal, the practically frontier society of Rhodesia. Tradition, authority, the backward glance; these were the things (for all the crackers he let off in Voorslag) which he revered. The wild, free land, the physical pleasures and necessity of the hunt, the importance and prestige of the man of action, the hunter - the relative unimportance of the mob - all this found expression in The Flaming Terrapin. (3)

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1. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, pp.99 - 100.
 2. Ibid: pp. 99 - 100.
 3. CAMPBELL, The Flaming Terrapin, Cape, London, 1924.

Campbell has described the romantic circumstances in which he wrote his first long poem. Marrying very young, with practically no means of supporting a family, the couple retired to a remote village in Carnarvonshire where they rented an old stable for thirty-six shillings a year. (1)

It leaked every way, had only a mud floor, and the wind whistled through the walls, but we had the time of our lives there, living on the continual intoxication of poetry for two years, until I had finished The Flaming Terrapin and our daughter Tess was born. (2)

The poem had, as it were, two particular god-parents: Africa and the books which Campbell had devoured.

His reading was wide and catholic for a young man if, as one suspects, not always very profound. It included Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Whitman, the Elizabethans, Dante, Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, Paradise Lost, Donne, Mickle's Camoens, Cervantes and Rabelais. An interest in Colonial verse had led him to Pringle, Kendall (whom he praised) Adam Lindsay Gordon and W.R. Service. His year at Oxford had added considerably to his already varied literary fare. While there he first encountered the avant garde of the contemporary literary world - the Sitwells, "the new poetry of Eliot, and the new prose of Lewis". (3)

Stimulated by his experiences and by his reading, given the peace and freedom of his idyllic existence in Wales, Campbell's vigorous creative talent was granted an opportunity many young men might envy. The result was that on the 14th Nov. 1923 T.E. Lawrence wrote to Jonathan Cape, the publisher:

Dear Cape,

I think this is a coming thing, though you won't think it, the man being a poet and his work verse. Augustus John showed it me, and I think it very good. Man is 21, and a believer in Keats and Shelley and Moby Dick, with other influences visible: - but the thing is very good. He wants a publisher, so John told me, and I think it might pay you (especially if you covet the Heinemann succession) to write to him. Keep Aug. John also in mind. A John drawing would help the book, and J. is keen on the man: has painted him rather well...

(4)

1. Although still officially disapproving of his early marriage, Campbell's father began sending the couple £10. a month anonymously.
2. CAMPBELL, Light on a Dark Horse, p.253.
3. Campbell claimed that never before or since did he read so much as during his year at Oxford.
4. The Letters of T.E. Lawrence, ed. Garnett, p.440.

The "thing" referred to by Lawrence was Campbell's The Flaming Terrapin. Although he had never met the author and had only glanced through the poem in typescript in a taxi, Lawrence enlisted the help of Edward Garnett to persuade Cape to publish. In January, 1924 he wrote to Garnett, who had apparently liked the poem:

It struck me in the face: and is, as you say, sensational enough to sell. Full of echoes though... (1)

Cape published the narrative that year. He had asked Lawrence to write the announcement, but had received the reply:

No, I can't write about that yet. It's such an extravagance, so exuberant, vital, lavish, that criticism isn't easy; and I don't respect my own judgment enough to put it into words. Normally, rhetoric so loud and bombastic would have sickened me, but I have a dim sight of something big under this storm of words and images...but what a profusion, what invention, what a waste of colour! Magnificent, I call it! (2)

Campbell's poem was so startlingly different from most of the verse venerated at the time that it shocked the critics into

1. LAWRENCE. loc.cit.

2. Quoted by Cape in T.E. Lawrence by his friends, ed. A.W. Lawrence. A list of books in Lawrence's possession at the close of his life included most of the poetry which Campbell had published up to that time. In a letter to C.J. Greenwood in 1934, Lawrence recorded his reactions to what was probably Broken Record:

Dear Greenwood,

I began the Campbell first - last week, because I have been in the North for three weeks and am only just back. And having begun it, I finished it in three sittings. The first interval I said "There are fools and damned fools... but even that doesn't include Campbell." The second interval I changed mood and said "There's more in this than folly. It's good in parts." And now that it is all over I slip back towards my first mind. D.H.L. throw away his reason - but it harmed him. It is all very well feeling hard and quick and hot - but feeling cannot be put on paper convincingly except to the already converted (and who wants to talk to his disciples) without brains and logic and argument to back it up. Roy Campbell makes an ass of himself all through. A pity - because clearly he isn't a real ass - only synthetic.

It's the fashion now, I suppose, this naivety. Liam O'Flaherty writes himself down as a simpleton pure; and so did Gertrude Stein in an awful autobiography. Did you ever read it? She admitted to having owned a Ford car for non the without understanding it - seemed rather proud of this - darned fool. A Ford! ! !

T.E. Lawrence by his friends, p.799.

This seems to me a fair judgment of the Campbell of Broken Record.

acclaiming it as the work of a young genius - which it was.

The Fleming Ferrapin rapidly went into three editions; Campbell found himself lionized over-night. It was all the stranger then that he should have elaborated, as early as this, the legend of himself, battling like a rock "aloof and friendless" as Tristan de Cunha:

An island of the sea whose only trade
Is in the voyages of its wandering birds.

Campbell's romantic ideal of the poet as a superior being, driven out by the mob because they cannot understand him, owed a great deal to Nietzsche. Although Nietzsche prophesied that the future belongs to the scientist and the artist would one day become a splendid relic, he also saw the poet as the supreme purveyor of the Idea. Art had, he thought, taught man for centuries

to look upon life in every shape with interest and pleasure and to carry our feeling so far that at last we exclaim, 'Whatever it may be, life is good'. (1)

Mary of Nietzsche's more provoking sayings - that "Slavery is of the essence of Culture" for instance - re-appear in Breton Record. Similarly there is much in The Fleming Ferrapin which recalls Zarathustra:

I, however, am a blessing and a Yea-sayer, if thou be but around me, thou pure, thou luminous heaven! Thou abys of light! - into all abysses do I then carry the Yea-saying of my blessing.

A blessing have I become and a Yea-sayer: and therefore strove I long and was a wrestler, that I might one day get my hands free for blessing.

Nietzsche continues, picturing his prophet in a manner reminiscent of Campbell's Noah:

This, however, is my blessing: to stand above everything as it's own heaven; its round roof, its azure bell and eternal security: and blessed is he who thus bleaseth! (2)

It is difficult, if not impossible, in a single extract, to show the extent of the influence which the German philosopher's writing appears to have had on the young South African. Two years later Campbell wrote in Voorslag:

It remained for Nietzsche to voice the whole subconscious spirit of the age in Zarathustra the greatest poem, next to Paradise of the last century. (3)

1. NIETZSCHE, Herman, All-too-human, vol.1, Quoted in IEA, The Tragic Philosophy, p.115.
2. NIETZSCHE, Thus Spake Zarathustra, quoted in IEA, The Tragic Philosophy, p.221.
3. "Ranuda Arden" and "Tyrook Arden", Voorslag, vol.1, Aug. 1926, No.3, p.37.

The Fleming Terrapin is Campbell's first attempt to express a philosophy which regards the hunter, the horseman who is also the poet, the man of action, as the ideal individual. It was a triumphant affirmation of life; a challenge to the "piping Nancy-boys" of the era.

Campbell seized upon the story of Genesis as a skeletal framework for his narrative. The choice was suitable, for the voyage of the Ark allowed him to paint the stormy seascapes and magnificent panoramas which he loved; while the figure of Noah provided him with a type of the strong man, the pioneer, hunter and frontier hero.

While his contemporaries fretted over the desires, the frustrations of modern man,

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block,

this young poet revelled in the delight of man's physical being, in his natural relationship with the physical world. The opening lines

Interlaid Earth stirs redly from beneath
Her blue sea-blanket and her quilt of sky. (1)

proclaim this conscious intimacy. The typically Campbellian words (blunder, kindle, volleying, roaring, flashing, rending, clundering, burst) together with the physical image,

Her vast baron's harness;
created at the outset an atmosphere of fecundity, force and grandeur.

Everything in Nature is magnified, to the almost immeasurable scale with which the poet was familiar. He is aware, not only of the land itself, of mother earth, but of life in the air and in the ocean where the great whales,

...spout their pride as the red day begins.

Campbell's version of the story of creation is a simple one. From this vigorous, pulsating world all forms of life appear; the earth generates action and action is creative:

Now up from the intense creative Earth
Sprung her strange sons...
Action and flesh cohere in one clean fusion
Of force with form:

This characteristic statement is followed by lines describing

1. CAMPBELL, "The Fleming Terrapin", The Collected Poems, p.59. The revisions of the first edition are negligible. An interesting one occurs in Part 6, p.91 of this edition, where Campbell omitted four lines. See The Fleming Terrapin, Cape, 1924, p.88.

the inspiring, invigorating effect which natural phenomena have upon the poet, particularly ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ moments of depression:

...the frailest reed
Holds shackled thunder in its heart's seclusion,
And every stone that limes my lonely way,
Sad tongueless nightingale without a wing,
Seems on the point of rising up to sing
And donning scarlet for its dusty grey! (1)

A restrained, tender mood is rare in Campbell - though not as exceptional as some critics would have us believe. (2) The passage obviously owes something to Wordsworth but the invited comparison turns out, on closer inspection, to be a superficial one. Campbell regards nature, at any rate in this poem, primarily as a source of energy; as a "Life-force"; it is not, in the Wordsworthian sense, a fountain of consolation and spiritual strength. There is little serenity in Campbell's early poetry. When it does convey a sense of quiet contentment it is more likely to be the peace which a man experiences after satisfying physical activity, as in the tender lyric, "Mass at Dawn":

I dropped my sail and dried my dripping sails
Where the white gull is dequered by cool pines
In those great branches, always out of sight,
The nightingales are singing day and night. (3)

In The Plowing Terrapin it is the strength to be gained from nature which Campbell continually emphasizes:

Then to my veins I feel new sap return.
Physical and mental activity are interdependent so that light strikes the slow somnambulist mind
And sweeps her forth to ride the rushing wind,
And stamping on the hill-tops high in air,
To shake the golden bonfire of her hair. (4)

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1. CAMPBELL, op.cit. p.60.
 2. See "The Poetry of Statement", The Times Lit.Sup. March 24, 1950. p.184.
 3. CAMPBELL, "Mass at Dawn", Abanaster, Collected Poems, p.47. Occasionally, even in The Plowing Terrapin, Campbell shows that he can command a more delicate line, a quieter mood: Before the coral reared its sculptured fern
Or the pale shellfish, swaying in the waves
With pointed steeples, had begun to turn
The rocks to shadowy cities... p.61.
 4. CAMPBELL, "The Plowing Terrapin", Collected Poems, p.60.

The pre-eminent importance of physical activity remained a dominant theme throughout Campbell's life; it is evident in all his writing, both in prose and poetry. To him, thought without action was useless, theory had less value than the practical. This led naturally to the elaboration of his major theme: the strength of the spirit is achieved through physical action, through suffering, through danger bravely faced and surmounted. (1)

There was nothing novel in this idea, nor did the poet always pursue it with much logic or intellectual vigour. It was something he felt rather than thought. He does not seem to have perceived the limitations of his philosophy.

Campbell personifies this sudden strength that catches up men's souls as a mighty Terrapin. At first this is puzzling but gradually, as the Terrapin's outlines emerge - clean, hard, massive, powerful, - we come to accept its symbolic appropriateness in the context. The Terrapin is ancient, he is pre-leapsarian, he is stronger than God. It is a tribute to the power of the verse that the Terrapin never descends to the level of a fresh water tortoise; rather he assumes a personality of his own, like a figure in a myth or an epic, much as the whale does in Melville's novel.

The Terrapin's primary characteristics are power and speed, the kind of strength that springs from,

...the black
Roots of the inmost earth.

He is:

....a great machine,
Thoughtless and fearless, governing the clean
System of active things: the winds and currents
Are his primeval thoughts: the raging torrents
Are moods of his, and men who do great deeds
Are but the germs his awful fancy breeds. (2)

Unfortunately this is not a very consistent genesis. For instance the Terrapin is "thoughtless", yet the winds and currents "are his primeval thoughts". It is not as clear as it might be. This confusion is evident throughout the poem in which the emotions and rhetoric very nearly succeed in drowning both thought and

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1. Campbell's preoccupation with this theme is even more pronounced in his first volume of lyrics, Adamastor:
Out of his pain, perhaps, some god-like thing,
Is born.....
Collected Poems, p.22.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems, p.60.

slender narrative. Though said with undue pique (the critic had set out to prove that leaving Africa had been Campbell's downfall) there is some truth in the judgment that:

In The Flaming Terrapin he had practically nothing to say - only his youth to effervesce about... His Muse, frisking to African drums, burst out of her Alice-blue-gown and lo - she was black but comely...

(1)

It was an achievement, however, at the time, for a poet to be able to effervesce about anything; while both the vigour and the manner of his saying things had a tonic effect upon his countrymen (at least the few who read poetry). Whatever Campbell's poem was, it was not effete. This ideal alone has not yet ceased to influence South African writers. (2)

Having endowed the Terrapin with those masculine characteristics which he admired, Campbell brought him, face to face, with that particularly African image which was to dominate his poetry: once the fury of the flood was over, the Terrapin,

...reared up to greet the Sun.

Campbell may possibly have been struck by Slater's frequent use of this image. On the other hand it is a perfectly natural image for any writer (particularly a South Africa writer) to use. The point is that from now on nobody else used it so persistently or so elaborately. The sun became almost an obsession with Campbell, particularly in his Mithraic poems which lie outside the scope of this discussion. In one of his innumerable prose passages devoted to the subject, he wrote:

The artist should take his instructions from the sun, and not from the clock, which is merely the bank-clerk's and counter-jumper's substitute for the sun.

(3)

The sun having such strong associations for the poet it was natural that he should find an affinity between the Terrapin and the primary source of the world's heat and light. Released from

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1. DAVIS, "The Spoilt Boy in Roy Campbell", Trek, vol. XV. March, 1951, pp. 12 - 14.
 2. Almost immediately after the publication of The Flaming Terrapin Campbell began his campaign against the "long-haired" poets. He wrote in Voorlag: "The very word 'poet' has come to have a ludicrous meaning in England - and deservedly". Poetry still suffers, especially in a society like ours, from the popular conviction that poets "drip". The masculinity of Campbell's verse appeals to many young South Africans.
 3. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, p.203. See also pp. 207-8.

the long agony of his birth, the Terrapin dings the forces of evil; his journey over the earth results in the "sullen hills" bursting into song while,

His beauty makes a summer through the land,
And where he crawls upon the solid ground,
Gigantic flowers, exploding from the sand,
Spread fans of blinding colour all around.

The activity of the Terrapin is continually creative; at last a climax is reached "Dust thinks" and

Stands up to be a man and feel the strife
Of brute-thoughts in the jungle of his mind. (1)

It is indicative of the extent to which Campbell was the product of a frontier, that the first man to hear the summons of the Terrapin is "Bellerophon, the primal cowboy", he who tamed the winged horse Pegasus, who angered the Gods by his presumption in trying to fly up to the sun. Bellerophon is Campbell's first imaginative incarnation of his belief that:

All the great ages of human history are
allied to horsemanship. (2)

In Broken Record he writes about the importance of "the sun, the female form and the horse", claiming that, next to a man or a woman, the horse possesses the greatest beauty and intelligence in the world.

Of course Campbell (an inveterate leg-puller) may not have intended this remark to be taken very seriously. It was, perhaps, just another way of saying that horses are magnificently beautiful animals and that he admired them. But he insists too often upon the connection between cowboys and poetry for this particular squib of his to be entirely ignored. His admiration for the horseman is as intense as is his contempt of the "soft" European literary man, the "poemie" critic, whom he never tires of castigating:

Amongst the average English literary men, it is usual for them to go soft at thirty...the dregs of the self-destructive pedestrian civilisation will have to come to its horsemen, shepherds and fishermen for its culture, poetry, law and order, for the rodies of God have always spoken out of dorps like Medina and Nazareth; and at the present day how superior the poetry of the Irish, the Boer, the South American,

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1. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems, p.62.
 2. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, pp.150-1.

the Provencal and the Catalonian, is to the dilettante, broken-down, pedantic and unhappy stuff of modern England.

(1)

This was written after he had left Africa for good. That it presented a totally opposite point of view from his own vituperative attack upon the "mental Waste" of Colonial culture, inhabited by such monsters as the Fair Pyorrhoea, does not seem to have occurred to him. Part of the bitterness of his aggressive sortie on the English literary world in The Georgiad may be put down to a natural disgust at the effeminacy and hypocrisy he encountered in Paris and London, but part of it may well have been the reactions of a raw Dominion youth, exposed to a more cultivated society.

(2)

However the acrimony was to come later. At the time Campbell was safe in his Welsh stable. Bellerophon is the first of his cowboy-poets; a prototype of himself in the jingling "spurs of rhyme". In the narrative the effect of the broncho-buster's voice is so electrifying that it rouses Samson to a cruel but purifying activity, expressed in a series of images, most of which spring naturally from the African frontier.

The hyaena, the vulture, the mamba - familiar denizens of Africa - they all appear within three lines, but they are far from being attempts at "local colour". As "dandy of the prairies" rode away, his voice aroused Samson who

...slew the grumbling bear,
Hauled forth the flustered lion from its lair
And swung him yelping skyward by the tail:
Tigers he mauled, with tooth and ripping nail
Rending their straps of fire, and from his track
Slithering like quicksilver, pouring their black
And liquid coils before his pounding feet,
He drove the livid mambas of deceit.

(3)

The mambas particularly are presented in a metaphor of beauty and power such as is found nowhere else in South African verse before the advent of Campbell.

In this section of The Flaming Terrapin the poet is faithful to his Biblical model. The strong men who rise up

.....thrilled with the huge delight
Of their own energy

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1. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, p.161.
 2. CAMPBELL, The Georgiad, (1933)
 3. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p.63.

recall the lines in Genesis,

These were the days when the giants lived
on earth...these were the heroes whose fame has
come down to us from long ago?

Among these men is the gigantic figure of Noah (the personification
of Campbell's poetical Superman);

Stiffened for fierce exertion,
he is poised, ready to hurl:

Red thunderbolts to purify the world.

Just as poetry may be read on varying levels of enjoyment
and understanding so there are different degrees in which a
poem may appeal to a reader. There are few poets who can
capture (as can Shakespeare, or Yeats or Hopkins) our emotions
and our intellects equally, so that their poetry has an impact
upon the whole man. In this supreme gift Campbell is nearly
always, though not entirely, deficient, particularly in this
early poem whose best qualities are predominantly those which
appeal to the senses. The magnificent colour, the sheer
tempestuous energy of the verse, increases in intensity in
Part Two. With an Elizabethan richness and ease (promising
much for the poetry he might write in the future) Campbell
described Noah and his sons building the Ark:

When Noah thundered with his monstrous axe
In the primeval forest, and his boys,
Shaping the Timbers, curved their gristled backs,
The ranges rocked and rumbled with the noise.
And as the trees came crashing down lengthwise,
And sprayed their flustered birds into the skies,
That plumed confetti, scaring far and frail,
With such a feathered glory strewed the gale,
That to the firmament they reared a new
But brighter galaxy: (1)

As a whole the narrative suffers from too much uncontrolled
"sound and fury". That the poet was capable of modulating
his thunder he shows here, where there is a carefully wrought
contrast between:

The ranges rocked and rumbled with the noise,
and the delicacy of the "plumed confetti" which,
With such a feathered glory strewed the gale.

The same control is evident a little further on in this passage
in the evocative lines,

...the fierce buffaloes who scorn control
Rushed up the thunder of their hoofs and stole
Like shadows from the plain. (2)

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1. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", The Collected Poems..., p.64.
 2. CAMPBELL, loc.cit.

Suggestions of soaring flight and savage power, of fragile lightness and ponderous weight, richness of sound, texture and colour - all these qualities abound in the poem. As the narrative progresses the sun sinks, chaos descends, the ark is launched to embark on its swift and terrible voyage. The dramatic interest shifts from the Terrapin to Noah, the mighty hero strong in body and will. He it is who stands at the wheel all night as the waves rush past; he who throws his stone anchor into the brazen shell of the Terrapin,

Bidding his joyous pilot haul him free
From the dead earth to dare the living sea! (1)

It is this eagerness to dare, to pit ones life on strength and skill as do the hunter and the matador, to cross (as the Boer did) into unknown Frontiers, that forms such an essential element in Campbell's ideal man. It is not the love of inflicting pain - as some have suggested - but the courage and audacity involved which attract the poet to that moment,

When life is triggered by a hair
And stands upon the peak of death,
Elate, with scarlet cape outspread,
Before a bull with lowered head. (2)

Modern urban society tends to confine this primitive gusto. If society does not provide "kicks", men (particularly young men) will discover them somewhere. The Second World War afforded examples of this when people from narrow, cramped backgrounds sometimes felt that they were alive for the first time. Campbell's African frontier had given him every opportunity to indulge his zest for "thrills". It was perhaps his tragedy that he never seems quite to have grasped the fact that there are more valuable forms of courage than that displayed by the matador and the hunter.

Noah is given the chance to prove his heroic metal during the voyage of the Ark; a voyage which provided Campbell with a wonderful opportunity to display his considerable descriptive powers. Here he experiments successfully with verbs of powerful movement - a technique which became perhaps the most distinctive technical characteristic of his writing:

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1. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p.67.
 2. CAMPBELL, "Somnet", Collected Poems..., p.54.
"Estocade" and "To a pet cobra" have been cited as exemplifying Campbell's "delight in physical violence and inflicting pain". See HARVEY, "Poetry of Roy Campbell", Standpunte, vol.V. pp.53-5.

.....then as a mustang colt,
Feeling the snaffle, lurches for a bolt -
With such a lurch, with such a frantic rear,
The Ark lunged forward on her mad career.

Campbell may later have over-worked his use of imagery and diction drawn from the equestrian arts, but it is one of the chief delights in this poem. Sometimes the image is at its best concealed in a single work -

Rowelled by that sharp prow to hissing hate,
The waves washed round her in a dreary spate. (1)

but he did not always achieve the precision of that distinctive "rowelled".

It would be tedious to catalogue the innumerable quotations which prove (if proof were needed) that The Flaming Terrapin was the child of Campbell's reading and of his Africa. Quite apart from the moulding effect which life in southern Africa had exercised upon the poet's ideas and beliefs there are, in the poem, the conscious, obvious references to this continent as well as vivid memories of his first voyage to England in the S.S. Inkonka:

No more the cruising shark with whispers thin
Through their crisp fleeces sheared his sickle fin
Beside the keel...

These recollections blend (in differing degrees of unity) with deliberate classical allusions:

...like torn Hectors at the chariot wheel,
with probably unconscious echoes of the Ancient Mariner's "devil-rattle dice", Arnold's famous pearl-diver, with reminders of such Elizabethan works as Tamburlaine, and of Baudelaire in the Albatross:

... like a white
Signal of triumph.

Such literary influences will occur to most readers but it is W.H. Gardner who has been the first to draw attention to the fact that, as a young lad, Campbell read the Canadian balladist, R.W. Service. (2)

Service is an Englishman who emigrated to Canada in 1897. He travelled extensively along the Pacific coast and in the far North, picking up an intimate knowledge of the Yukon and of

1. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p.67.

2. See GARDNER, "The Poetry of Roy Campbell", The Month, Jan.1958. pp.5 - 17.

pioneering society in the Klondyke during the gold-rush. To his North American adventures Service added his years as a war correspondent and ambulance driver during the 1914-18 war. His six volumes of verse (mostly ballads of Frontier society) were popular when Campbell was in his teens; Rhymes of a Rolling Stone alone running into thirteen editions between 1913 and 1918.

A single reading of Service, (most of whose work lacks any complexity) is enough to reveal the effect his narratives may have had upon the young South African.

The hero of the Service rhymes is the tough pioneer, in love with the earth, the untamed lands. His frontiersman harbours a romantic, sentimental attitude towards friendship and women; he admires the adventurer, the soldier of fortune and the hunter - all of whom will be absolved from most crimes because of their courage and their love of freedom. A few lines, taken almost at random from his songs and ballads, will indicate their relationship to The Flaming Terrapin.

As Campbell does, Service proclaims man's kinship with the natural world:

There's sunshine in the heart of me,
My blood sings in the breeze;
The mountains are a part of me,
I'm fellow to the trees. (1)

He makes frequent references to weapons and warfare, to animals, to vast uncluttered spaces and to the sun. Service has the same fondness for expressing man's instinctive, primal emotions:

Hell-hot their hate, and venom-fanged their sneers.

He is frequently hyperbolic:

In one red laugh of horror reeled the land,
while the frequent sexual images of The Flaming Terrapin are paralleled in lines such as,

...the vast pool of heaven star-spawned.

Even more Campbellian are the cowboy metaphors,

...he clutched the reins of a shooting star

or the description of love leaping,

...from the starry battlements of Death.

Service was fond of such compounds as "blood-crazed" while

1. SERVICE, "A Rolling Stone", Rhymes of a Rolling Stone, p.13.

the numbers of epithets common to his verse and to Campbell's poem include: coral ("coral-kissed" in Service) gold, leprous, jewelled, red, feathery, white-winged ("white-winged bronche" in Campbell) glittering, bloody, barbaric, vast, wind-flailed and the compound "dim-sierras". Some of the verbs in Service: goad, rowelled, burst, kindle and vault, are even more characteristic of Campbell's diction.⁽¹⁾

These (and a good many other) similarities in diction imagery and theme, suggest that the rhymes of Service may have had an appeal to the Durban youth quite out of proportion to their worth. But, if he borrowed, Campbell heightened and transformed his borrowings through the alembic of his poetic talent. That such elements retained, (in spite of their transformation) their essential naivete, is only to show that Campbell remained responsive all his life to the balladist's appeal:

Gather round me, boy and grey-beard, frontiersmen
of every kind. (2)

There was nothing specifically "African" in the legend of the Frontiersman; as an examination of any number of English writers during the period of colonial expansion will show. What is interesting in Campbell is the extent to which he remains faithful to its tenants long after the Frontier itself had begun to recede.

As far as the genesis of South African poetry in English is concerned the most significant passage in The Flaming Terrapin is Campbell's invocation to his native muse:

1. Cf. SERVICE, op.cit:

"And rowelled by the eager stars the skies vault vastly black",
p.108.

"Peerless and pure, and pinnacled with snow;

Glimpsing the golden dawn o'er coral bars;".. p.82.

"The Song of the Camp-Fire" is particularly Campbellian:

Heed me, feed me, I am hungry, I am red-tongued with desire,
With my lunge of lurid lances, with my whips that flail
the night,

They will burgeon into beauty, they will foliate in gold.

Let me star the dim sierras, stab with light the inland seas;

I will flaunt my deathless banners down the far, unhouseled
lands,

In the vast and vaulted pine-gloom where the pillared
forests frown,

By the sullen, brutish rivers running where God only knows,

On the starlit coral beaches when the combers thunder down,

And my beacons burnt exultant as an everlasting sign

Of unending domination, of the mastery of Man:... p.157.

2. SERVICE, "The Song of the Camp-Fire", Rhymes of a Rolling Stone,
p.159.

Far be the bookish Muses! Let them find
Poets more spruce, and with pale fingers wind
The bays in garlands for their northern kind.
My task demands a virgin muse to string
A lyre of savage thunder as I sing. (1)

The most vital element here is not the contempt expressed for the pale-fingered poets, but the clear recognition that poetry is based on knowledge and experience. For the first time in Southern Africa a poet had declared his belief that English verse on this continent must be committed in some way to Africa. The problem of its alien nature had been posed before in various ways, with varying degrees of hesitation, from Pringle to Slater. It was Campbell who first sang out his *Crede* in the:

Muse of the Berg, muse of the sounding rocks
Where old Zambesi shakes his hoary locks,
And as they tremble to his awful nod,
Thunder proclaims the presence of a god! (2)

This clear annunciation epitomizes The Flaming Terrapin importance in our literary history. If Campbell's influence upon South African poets proves to have been minor in other ways it has been fruitful in this: those who came after him began to realize that it was no longer necessary to be spiritually rooted in England. The dilemma was sometimes still there, but it was no longer the real issue which it had been. Campbell had shown that literary tradition could be united to a new spiritual allegiance. By 1952 it was possible, (so well had the lesson gone home) for a South African to publish a first book of poems entitled - Stranger to Europe. (3)

A year after the appearance of Campbell's narrative Slater wrote:

The main indictment brought against South African poetry by English critics is that it is too derivative in form. Apparently they look to new countries for new forms - for a new way of writing. Is this quite fair? New forms, it seems to me, are a product of ripe culture, and a new country is the last place in which to seek them. If the poets of new countries introduce new subject matter, and handle old forms in an individual and characteristic manner, is this not all that can reasonably be expected of them? (4)

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1. CAMPBELL, *op.cit.* p.77.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p. 77.
 3. BUTLER, Stranger to Europe, (1952)
 4. SLATER, Centenary Book of South African Verse (1925) p.xii.

This was sensible. Campbell had certainly not divorced himself from the main poetic tradition of England (he was, in fact, the most traditional of all the English poets of his day) nor would it have been possible, as Eliot has pointed out, for a poet to cut himself off completely from his predecessors. What Campbell had done was to speak in The Flaming Terrapin in an individual voice: a voice which owed much of its personality to its South African accent.

The whole orientation of the poem is of the southern rather than the northern hemisphere. The Ark comes to rest upon the shore of Africa, the animals ramping so magnificently from its hold are African animals: the air quivers with brilliant light as the poet had known it in Natal; new subjects are introduced, fresh descriptions appropriate to the poet's experience. The most successful images are those born of this intimacy, from the eager rain which

....from the glad red turf...
Springs dancing to the silver flutes of rain
to the symbolic Southern Cross,
Its four sad candles dripping from their wicks.

The marriage of literary tradition with the Frontier world is particularly apparent in the diction of the invocation:

Muse of the Berg, muse of the sounding rocks
Where old Zambesi shakes his hoary locks,
And as they tremble to his awful nod,
Thunder proclaims the presence of a god!
You have heard with me, when daylight drops,
Those gaunt muezzins of the mountain-tops,
The grey baboons, salute the rising moon
And watched with me the long horizons swoon
In twilight, when the lorn hyaena's strain
Reared to the clouds its lonely tower of pain.
Now while across the night with dismal hum
The hurricanes, your meistersingers, come,
Choose me some lonely hill-top in the range
To be my Helicon, and let me change
This too-frequented Hippocrene for one
That thunders flashing to my native sun
Or in the night hushes his waves to hear
How, armed and crested with a sable plume,
Like a dark cloud, clashing a ghostly spear,
The shade of Tchaka strides across the gloom. (1)

The Berg, the old Zambesi, the grey baboons, the lorn hyaena, even the ominous shade of Tchaka appear to be quite unself-conscious in the presence of the meistersingers, quite at home in the poet's newly proclaimed Helicon. The conflict (so

1. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p-78.

apparent in Pringle who lacked the genius to solve it) has been squarely faced and the poet has placed his bet on Africa.

The Flaming Terrapin suffers from many obvious faults: lack of restraint, confused imagery, over-emphasis degenerating into the melodramatic, even to the unconsciously comical - but they are the exuberant faults of youth, of artistic inexperience, the faults of a potentially great poet.⁽¹⁾ In both its failures and its successes it is a poem of the Frontier.

The flamboyant vitality of the verse (the lyrical exhilaration of Part V, for instance, celebrating the morning of the world) springs in part, at least, from the poet's simple philosophy. While he read poetry in Wales, Campbell dreamed of heroic action in the sunlit wilds for which he longed. It is easy to tire (even so early in his work) of this everlasting emphasis in Campbell's poetry, on action - on noise, fireworks and "bounce". Once the Terrapin's tremendous labour is over he disintegrates, but the value of his activity is not lost; his vigour is infused into the natural world. Man senses this surge of vitality: this "life-force" which is so dominating that even,

....the dark soul, forgetful of his sin,
Walks singing through the terrors of the gale.

The heroes of Campbell's boyhood - the big-game fishermen, the fine shots, horsemen, mountain climbers and rugby forwards (by and large the kind of men to whom South Africans still pay the most intense homage) are sanctified in a personification of the ideal hunter, whose strength and courage generate fruitfulness and beauty:

Where each young Hercules, tired of the chase,
Has lain, the earth becomes a mass of flowers:
His pleated muscles and his burning face
Are sweeter to the earth than April showers,
And where he slept the flaming corn aspires,
To harp the wind along on golden wires. (2)

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1. At times Campbell topples from bombast into the ludicrous. See the account of the Ark's voyage round the Horn:
Stoops to his dismal cookery all night,
And with his giant ladle skins the froth,
Boiling up icebergs in the stormy broth...,
or the description of the dead sailors as:
"Papooses of the storm". op.cit.p.70.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p.91.

No room here (as there is no room for them on any frontier) for the "pale scannambulists" or the "sad haunters of the mists".

At the end of the poem the heroic Noah exemplifies the poet's most cherished values. Noah stands, surveying the world, alone on the topmost peak of Ararat:

....until the whole
Creation on the pivot of his soul
Seemed to be wheeling

so that he becomes

The axle of the wheel, the pole
Round which the galaxies and systems roll.

In him is expressed:

...Matter's forlorn desire,
Through souls of men, in mighty deeds to leap. (1)

In the poem Campbell shows his Nietzschean contempt for the masses, his revulsion against the people

...who have no purpose save to multiply. (2)

His version of the Deluge was an arrogant apologia for the survival of the fittest: a defence of what he believed to be a more vital culture in face of the tyranny of bowler hats, the degeneracy (as he saw it) of western, industrial society. His attack on Europe culminates at the end of the third part of the poem in his parody of the Communist Manifesto:

Youth of the world!....
We lie in graves and dungeons and our chains
Are naught but our own sluggish nerves and veins! (3)

So much that had been at work in European society, (particularly since the end of the first World War) scientific progress, economic and political pressures, social theories - the myriad factors affecting, not only man himself, but man's attitude to man - was not part of Campbell's heritage in the way that it would have been had he lived the first twenty years of his life in Europe. The the South African everything was, in a way, far less complex than it appeared to many other contemporary poets. (4) It was only necessary for man to be strong, like Noah, to

...stamp upon the mountain-tops,
So fearless at the brink of the abyss...

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1. CAMPBELL, op.cit. p.92.
 2. CAMPBELL, "A Song for the People", Collected Poems..., p.28.
 3. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p.77.
 4. To C. Day Lewis for instance - and Stephen Spender (both of them younger than Campbell).

then he would dominate the universe. With magnificent optimism Campbell declared his belief in the Frontiersman:

I am that ancient hunter of the plains
That raked the shaggy flitches of the Bison:
Pass, world: I am the dreamer that remains,
The Man, clear-cut against the last horizon! (1)

To emphasize that The Flaming Terrapin is the product, in part, of Campbell's life in Natal and Rhodesia is of course not to pass any critical judgment upon it, but to stress that the first exciting, interesting poem written in English in Africa was written by a man whose home was in this continent. Further it is to suggest that the cult of the individual broncho-buster was very probably the poetical apotheosis of the trekker, the hunter the "tough-guy". Campbell talked of "equestrian poetry" as being the finest, he claimed that poetry had come to dwell in the Southern Hemisphere largely because it was really a pastoral art. For this reason he praised Boer Poetry (though without giving details of the poets he so much admired) (2) Pringle he condemned on the grounds (and it is the grounds that are interesting) that he was not a colonial, but he praised the Australian Kendall as being the only good writer of "British Colonial poetry".

Kendall had brains, he was a minor Poe. He had an enormous and original vocabulary, and he had influenced me very much indeed. Like me he was brought up in a whaling town, and his Kerguelen is the father of my Tristan da Cunha. He seized first of all in verse that mystery of the lonely island walking on the sea. (3)

Tristan da Cunha was still wrapped in its blanket of mist when Campbell, with his wife and their baby daughter, returned to South Africa in 1924. The events which followed are well known; they embittered the poet for many years and the bitterness was still there in 1951 when he published Light on a Dark Horse:

As soon as the Terrapin was accepted, we went back to South Africa and I have recounted, in the Wayzgoose, what befell us there. We returned to England steerage, having been more or less boycotted out of the country after the publication of our magazine, Voorslag, which criticised the colour-bar. Even my brother George, who had disagreed with most of the opinions expressed in it, but had generously helped us with money when I resigned from the editorship, lost more than half his medical practice merely because he was my brother.... (4)

1. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collection Poems..., p.93.
2. See Broken Record, pp.50-51 and 125-7). He returned to this subject in Light on a Dark Horse.
3. CAMPBELL, Broken Record, p.125.
4. CAMPBELL, Light on a Dark Horse, p. 255.

Many of the views on the "colour-bar" which Campbell expressed in Voorslag (for instance, his remarks on the state of South African society):

We are as a race without thinkers, without
leaders, without even a physical aristocracy
working on the land. (1)

seem directly opposed to the myth of Noah, the superman, in complete contrast to the frontier philosophy of Broken Record. The reason for this double-talk, this chameleon nature in Campbell is beyond the scope of this work, but his early writing suggests that the Campbell of Voorslag was very much under the influence of his colleagues, William Plomer and Laurens van der Post. In his Collected Poems... Campbell tantalizingly placed that poor and repulsive poem "A Song for the People" next to "The Serf". The disciplined thought of the latter is reflected in the surer imagery, the tauter, more controlled rhythm:

...But as the turf divides
I see in the slow progress of his strides
Over the toppled clods and falling flowers,
The timeless, surly patience of the serf
That moves the nearest to the naked earth
And ploughs down palaces, and thrones, and towers. (2)

"The Serf" appeared in Adamastor, the volume of lyrical and satirical poetry in which Campbell (in whom the themes, the images and diction of The Flaming Terrapin had been maturing) showed that he had catapulted South African English poetry into a category it had never known before. (3)

The debt to Europe was still there (critics will probably never tire of pointing out its extent in "The Zulu Girl") but here, in these lyrics, is poetry and here too is Africa. The grandeur and space is there (in "The Albatross", in "Tristan da Cunha"), but it is no longer a "nameless something". Earth, air and ocean are all (as they had been in the narrative) incarnate with life:

Striped with the fiery colours of the sky,
Tigered with war-paint, ramping as they rolled,
The green waves charged the sunrise letting fly
Their porpoises like boomerangs of gold.

Exploding from white cotton-pods of cloud
I saw the tufted gulls before me blow,
The black cape-hens beneath me, and the proud
White gannet in his catapult of snow.

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1. CAMPBELL, In a review of "The Golden Bough", Voorslag, vol.1. No.2. (1926) p.63.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Serf", Collected Poems... p.30.
 3. To the 1950 edition of Adamastor Campbell added a Preface: "Every poem in this book was written after I had finished and published The Flaming Terrapin - with the exception of.. the Theology of Bongwi!" He wrote of the lessening influence of Rimbaud, which he claimed "was everywhere present in The Flaming Terrapin" and acknowledged a new debt to Baudelaire, Corbiere, Valery and Mistral.

The cliff-ringed islands where the penguins nest
Sheltered their drowsy legions from the foam
When evening brought the comorants to rest,
Gondolas of the tempest, steering home: (1)

The belief that good is achieved through action and suffering - a faith announced in The Flaming Terrapin where the weary crew of the Ark are "purged by their agonies" until they become fit men to mend the havoc of the Flood:

To breed great races and in pride to reign
Throned in the flowering cities of the plain. (2)

is given a more individual, less turgid expression in such lyrics as "Horses on the Camargue". The poet's personal destiny, implicit in so many of his poems, is characteristically dramatized in "To a Pet Cobra" and "The Palm". (3)

In two volumes of poetry Campbell had achieved what practically every English versifier in Africa since 1820 had been attempting. The geography of the continent was in his poetry, so were the birds, the snakes, the animals; man himself was a stranger to cities, his accoutrements are all those of the chase or of war, even his love is a "broncho-busting game", his "fierce" soul enables him, through action, to generate:

Speed for the race, and courage for the fight.

The poet's achievement appeared effortless while the power of the young Campbell's verse was most evident in the verbs; charged with his individual imagery. One of the chief beauties of The Flaming Terrapin (and it has many beauties for all its pyrotechnics) is its verbal strength. The close of the lyrical section in Part Five where the African animals, that "torrent of splendour" roll out of the Ark, is a fine example - but there are others: This, for instance:

Night is a Captain hustling up his stars,
Loud is the stamping of their boots of gold
Along the frosty horns and deep-cut scars
Of old bull-mountains sulking in the cold... (4)

or the description of the gathering storm:

Now low along the skyline, furred and shagged
As bears, dense clouds in slow contortions dragged
Ponderous bodies, and with clumsy stoop
Came shambling skyward in a sombre troop:

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1. CAMPBELL, "The Albatross", op.cit. p.34.
 2. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Poetical works..., p.74.
 3. All three lyrics were published in Adamasstor.
 4. CAMPBELL, "The Flaming Terrapin", Collected Poems..., p.92.

Like quarries shattered out of cliffs, their chaps,
Crammed with resounding cordite, from deep gaps
Exploded thunder, and with jagged spark
Flashed fangs of deathly pallor on the dark.
Drilled by the level sleet, and lashed with spray,
Confounded in the gloom the sailors lay...

(1)

After the pallid ink oozing from "Colonial" pens, it was no wonder that indigenous writers were invigorated by Campbell's first publication. Years later an Afrikaans poet expressed his reaction:

En dan gebeur dit, onverwags in 1924: The Flaming Terrapin van 'n twee-en-twintigjarige Roy Campbell bars ons lugruim binne, en almal staan oorstelp deur die vaart en krag van hierdie vuurpyl, die prag van oopskeurende vlam en die geel en groen en blou steerereen van heelde... Na die saai, slap en neulerige vers kom hy met 'n poesie vol drif en hartstog; 'n vers energiek gelaai en wat as reaksie weer amper ter ver gaan.

(2)

Opperman seems to have overestimated the extent of Roy Campbell's direct influence upon South African writers, but he very probably has not overemphasized the startled delight with which, in 1924, they acclaimed The Flaming Terrapin.

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1. CAMPBELL, op.cit. p.71.
 2. OPPERMAN, "Roy Campbell en die Suid-Afrikaanse Poesie", Standpunte, No.31, pp. 4-15. Opperman stresses the influence of Campbell's life upon the poem, talks of him as the spiritual father of the "Digtors van Dertig" (with the exception of Elisabeth Eybers) and speaks of his having developed what might almost be called a South-African idiom.

CHAPTER 9.

WILLIAM PLOMER.

That was the Africa we knew,
Where, wandering alone,
We saw, heraldic in the heat,
A scorpion on a stone.

The Scorpion. William Plomer.

William Plomer, born in Pietersburg in the Transvaal, records that his first significant memory is of a brilliant spring morning at Louis Trichardt. He was only twenty-one when the Voorslag venture aborted; his disappointment, his contempt for white South Africans, his rejection of their society is best expressed in his own words:

In 1926 I began, together with my friend Mr. Roy Campbell, the first literary movement in South Africa. The reader may find it strange that we should have thought it worth while to pay any respect to culture in that colony (our native land) over which a small white population is spread like a blight. Naturally our action came more out of sympathy with the oppressed native races than out of enthusiasm for the somewhat monotonous scenery of the veld, that blasted heath, and for its uncivilized white owners.

In June we started a monthly review, Voorslag, and in spite of continual interference we were able to produce two tolerable numbers in which the interests of business men, party politicians, paint fanciers, half-dyed blue-stockings, and half-witted catchpenny ink-sprayers were reduced to a minimum; and in which life, art, and letters were judged by international and aesthetic rather than by parochial or patriotic standards. Before the appearance of the third number, however, we were asked to put ourselves in submission to a "business editor."

We consequently resigned, abandoning Voorslag to this commercial dignitary, a genial and respectable trades-person, to whom I conceded the right of publishing the conclusion of "Portraits in the Nude" (most of which had come out in the first two numbers,) in order to preserve for our readers of the paper the integrity of the story. For this concession I was rewarded by seeing my work printed in a form differing from that in which I wrote it. Colonial squeamishness had demanded in the last scene not only a fig-leaf but an illegal operation. The deliberate and inexcusable mutilation of a MS. is typical of the colonial attitude to culture, an attitude which might be

compared, not unjustly, with that of a dog to a lamp-post. However, that artists cannot live in South Africa is a fact that has been fully demonstrated by the lives of Thomas Pringle, Olive Schreiner, and others. (1)

Plomer wrote this from Tokyo in 1927 where he had gone, in the company of Laurens van der Post, to lick his wounds and to see more of the world. The snarling tone is understandable. Plomer's talents and enthusiasm had burgeoned early. I speak of Africa included seven short stories, two "plays for puppets" and three "Short Novels", of which "Portraits in the Nude" had attempted (according to Campbell) to:

....thrash a craven race
And hold a mirror to its dirty face. (2)

In the same year Plomer published a volume of verse, unassumingly entitled Notes for Poems; while his novel, Turbott Wolfe had burst upon the sleepy South African literary world with the effect of an exploding grenade. (3)

Eighteen years later Plomer "a sadder and a wiser man" wrote from England with admirable detachment and critical acumen, explaining what he had aimed at in the novel and offering an assessment of his achievement:

My impulse was to present, in a fictional form, partly satirical, partly lyrical, partly fantastic, some of my own impressions of life in Africa and to externalize the turmoil of feelings they had aroused in me. I had no intention of drawing a self-portrait or of giving a naturalistic account of African life. Somebody called the book 'expressionist', and like many first books it exaggerated the literary faults and excesses of its period. To speak of it as a novel is perhaps a misnomer: it was a violent ejaculation, a protest, a nightmare, a phantasmagoria - which the dictionary defines as 'a shifting scene of real or imagined figures'. Judged as a novel it is very deficient. By realistic standards, the story or plot is exiguous and somewhat absurd, and it was not even well constructed. The main characters are neither well drawn nor convincing, the development is episodic, and the whole proceeding is crude and immature, and disfigured by an unpleasant superficial

1. PLOMER continued:

"Portraits in the Nude" is here printed for the first time as it was written. The book as a whole may be more fully understood if read in conjunction with Mr. Campbell's forthcoming poems, which were mostly written at the same time, in the same place, and, to a great extent, in community of thought. I speak of Africa, pp. v - vii.

2. CAMPBELL, "The Waygoose" (1928) Collected Poems..., p.254.

3. "Turbott Wolfe bears the date 1925, but in fact, owing to a printers' strike...it did not appear until the following spring." Double Lives, p.186.

smartness or vulgar cleverness. Nevertheless, the book is not wholly without merit. If it was crude, it had vitality; some of the minor characters are noted with skill and true feelings and there are scenes, passages and phrases which are at least not banal. In my opinion its justification was that of an original sketch-book, an outburst of poetic frenzy on the part of a solitary and emotional youth who had not reduced his thoughts to order but had reacted convulsively to his surroundings; and also (in the words of, surprisingly a South African critic writing fifteen years after its appearance) as a picture of a world dominated by race fear and race hatred, and 'a revelation of savagery in a vaunted civilization'.

(1)

This sensitive, balanced self criticism would naturally not have been possible for Plomer when he embarked with his family upon the adventure of running a trading store in Zululand. A youth reacting "convulsively to his surroundings"; "a picture of a world 'dominated by race fear and race hatred... a revelation of savagery in a vaunted civilization": these are the major themes (however lacking in finesse their presentation) in Turbott Wolfe.

Plomer attacked frontiersman and settler with a ruthlessness matched only by some of his own characters. All the narrowness, stupidity, brutality of which human beings are capable is presented as characteristic of the white man in southern Africa. He knows no pity, no charity, no feeling for his fellow-men: he is corrupted at the very centre of his being by the society in which he lives.

Almost in spite of itself Turbott Wolfe exercises a fascination over the reader, who is seldom bored - though he may be amused or even shocked. The imperfectly suggested characters (often little more than caricatures) succeed remarkably well in conveying Plomer's repulsion at the racialism which appeared as natural to the Frontiersman as his skin. There was nothing very subtle about Plomer's attack. He sketched types familiar to South African society: Mrs. Fotheringhay, dogged by "servant trouble":

"O, we do have such bother with the servants. They are such curious creatures. You wouldn't believe it, but we have to do everything ourselves."

(2)

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1. PLOMER, Double Lives, p.187.
 2. PLOMER, Turbott Wolfe, p.44.

and Flesher who:

used to live on such maize-meal as might be left over by his servants, helping himself out of their pot, though he never had a good word to say for them. (1)

In fact, Flesher and Bloodfield were (as their names suggest) positively unclean. They polluted the very air:

Give me a good old criminal lunatic any day, rather than ask me to breathe the same air as Flesher and Bloodfield. (2)

Plomer's whites are sadistic, maniacal, depraved; destroyed by the hypocrisy and race hatred which vitiates their humanity. He was indiscriminate in his condemnation - neither the pioneering "Rooinek" nor the Voortrekker escaped the hissing lash of his "Voorslag". The portraits were superficial, without psychological depth; but not without clarity of line or force of impact. Here is his description of the founders of Aucampstroom:

Venturing like Scythians over rocky illimitable wastes, in those days unmeasured, they had come in mighty tented waggons that creaked and groaned, crude magnificent arks, on stupendous wheels, forced up and down the roadless uneven hills by straining teams of titanic oxen.

There were large gross men with flag-like beards, peasant-minds, and patriarchal names and manners; begetters of children. There were large gross women with wooden limbs and loud voices, bearers of children, their harsh heads hidden in prodigious flapping sun-bonnets of sheer black, as wickedly significant as the fell wings of unknown birds of ill-omen, in a landscape of clear dusty blue, and in an atmosphere as subtle as time and as vast as eternity. (3)

The injustice of Plomer's portraits was a measure of the injustice and hypocrisy that had caused him to react "convulsively to his surroundings". Many of the incidents he narrated read like dramatized versions of the criminal reports in South African newspapers. Such things were surely not the norm in Natal (either thirty years ago or to-day) but Plomer had seen that they did occur. He knew that they poisoned society. Takhaar, the fantastic, fanatical Boer farmer, the central figure in Portraits in the Nude, epitomizes all that his creator abhorred in the white South African:

The two brothers bound his wrists with the rein. He made no resistance. Frans produced a knife and ripped off Shilling's clothes. When he had done this,

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1. PLOMER, Turbott Wolfe, p.30.
 2. Ibid: p.32.
 3. Ibid: p.34.

he jabbed the point of the knife, here and there, into the Kaffir's flesh. The two brothers bound Shilling to the wheel of the waggon. While they were whipping his face and stomach with their sjaamboks, Takhaar, who had seen, from one of the windows of the house, what was going on, came out with his holy bell. He saw, in the scene before him, a symbolic sacrifice. He did not interfere with his sons. He stood, at some distance from them, his eyes half closed, and rang, slowly and solemnly, his bell. (1)

Plomer realized that the horror of the situation was not the natural Frontier conflict; the tension between colonizer and savage, but the sanctification of totally self-seeking morally indefensible attitudes of mind.

Indignant anger was not the only emotion Africa aroused in Plomer. Ezekiel Mphahlele has remarked on the "romantic nostalgia" evident in Plomer's descriptions of the country. (2) He had learnt to love much that was Africa during his childhood; particularly he liked the people whom he describes with affectionate remembrance in his autobiography. He did not pretend to understand the black man - all that he stressed was that the African is indeed a man and that those (missionaries in particular) who insist upon treating him as a wayward child, have not penetrated to the heart of the matter.

The missionary characters in Furbott Wolfe range from the anachronistic Fotheringhay (who occupies himself in Aucampstroom studying heraldry) to the visionary Friston, who turns out to be a Communist. The root cause of their failure is explained by a character called Frank, who (in an analysis of various types of missionaries) makes a statement which is repeated in various forms several times in the novel:

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1. PLOMER, "Portraits in the Nude", I Speak of Africa, p.72. Plomer was not so crass as to imagine that the tensions in South African society were solely the creation of the Afrikaner. Eighteen years later; though he deplored their "short-sighted views and unjust treatment of the indigenous inhabitants of the country" he wrote also: "Their imagination, tolerance, good humour, beauty and generosity. As a race the South African Dutch may well produce men of distinction, and not solely in the sphere of politics and war." Double Lives, p.160.
 2. MPHAHLELE, The Non-European Character in South African English Fiction, p.41.

...do not allow yourself to believe that, because South Africa is painted red upon the map and has at present a white population of a million and a half, it is in consequence a white man's country. It is nothing of the sort. It can never be anything but a black, or at least a coloured man's country.

(1)

Plomer proclaimed his opposition to the Frontier Mind by his recognition of this fact: that the majority of people who live in Africa are black and must sooner or later (whether the white settler likes it or not) assume a position in this continent consonant with their human dignity.

The Africans in Turbott Wolfe are mysterious, enigmatic, shadows thrown on a screen; but what life they have is the life of people. They hate, love and fear as do other men. They have the dignity of the old man who supported himself by making "a peculiar kind of cache-sexe made of the leaves of the wild banana." These he sold to the store-keeper MacGavin at wholesale prices:

When he came to the store it was always at some odd time, when there was nobody else about, either on a very hot afternoon or just after the store had been locked up, or at dawn, or when the moon was rising. If he saw MacGavin, the business was soon settled. If he encountered Mrs. MacGavin, he would wave his bundle of unmentionables right under her nose, saluting her with his free hand and uttering all sorts of high-flown and wholly ironical compliments before crying the virtues of his wares. Nothing annoyed her more, as he very well knew. She always told him rudely to wait for her husband. If it was Frant he chanced to find, he would say with real politeness, 'Sa' ubona, umtwana ka Kwini Victoli!' Greetings, child of Queen Victoria! This became shortened later to 'Child of the Queen' and at last simply to 'Child'.

.....

'How can you allow that dirty old swine to call you "child"!' exclaimed MacGavin.

'Why he's old enough to be my grandfather!'

Frant retorted.

Frant's point of view seemed so fantastic to MacGavin that he laughed a short, harsh laugh.

'My advice is, don't stand any cheek from any nigger,' he said.

(2)

This is the Frontier Mind at its crudest. Plomer was so sensitive to it that in his verse he exaggerated the white man's hypocrisy, venting his indignation in attacks upon such hitherto revered figures as "The Explorer" and "The Pioneers":

1. PLOMER, Turbott Wolfe, p.119.

2. PLOMER, The Child of Queen Victoria..., p.36.

The street, the store, the station, especially the bar,
 Show what the fathers of this tin-town Main Street are:
 Moustaches waxed, these mammoths lean on counters,
 Old rotting whales ashore and thick with flies,
 Their blubber proof to bullets and to kicks,
 Fill up their guts and blow out spouts of lies,
 Tales of rebellions, cannons and encounters,
 Before their brains dried up in nineteen-six. (1)

The strength and courage of the heroic pioneer has been transformed by Plomer into the somewhat crude image of the rotting whale, suggesting cumbersome bulk, size without mobility: breeding nothing but decay. The author's debt to the Campbell of "A Veld Eclogue: The Pioneers" is obvious enough:

For though the times were hard they could not bilk
 Their brains of nonsense or their guts of milk;
 And loud upon the hills with merry clang
 The grand old saga of 'Ferreira' rang, (2)

but the satire is far less trenchant. Plomer never achieved the memorable jabs:

One touch of tar-brush makes the whole world kin, (3)

or the sharp, antithetical structure of parts of The Wayzgoose:

Our sturdy pioneers as farmers dwell,
 And, 'twixt the hours of strenuous sleep, relax
 To shear the fleeces or to fleece the blacks: (4)

Living in a society whose whites perpetually boasted of their role as guardians of "European civilization", Plomer became particularly sensitive to whatever was synthetic and vulgar in Western life:

These are the Victoria Falls, whose noisy gushing
 Attracts a noisy and a gushing crowd,
 Who rush from every country in the world to gape
 At this cascade that is the usual shape. (5)

The brainless globe trotters desecrate the beauty and the silences of Africa with their idle curiosity, their meaningless chatter:

The Kaffirs? Black as black, they live in such
 quaint kraals -
 They're dusty, too! The great thing is to see
 the Falls,
 The rainbows and the Rain Forest, where we all
 wore mackintoshes,
 Admired the ferns, and were so glad we'd all
 brought our goloshes! (6)

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1. PLOMER, "The Pioneers", Collected Poems, p.19. Many of the "African Poems" in this addition have been revised, sometimes though by no means always, to their advantage. Here "Main Street" has been substituted for "hamlet", while the sixth line is condensed from:
 Fill up their lungs with beer and blow out spouts of lies.
 2. CAMPBELL, "A Veld Eclogue: The Pioneers", Collected Poems, p.22.
 3. Ibid:
 4. CAMPBELL, "The Wayzgoose" (1928) Collected Poems, p.243.
 5. PLOMER, "The Victoria Falls", Collected Poems, p.26.
 6. Ibid:

Much of this (especially in the original version) is very clumsy with nothing of the rapier cut and dash of a Pope, lacking the force of Campbell's writing in a similar vein, but Plomer's deliberate use of colloquialisms:

A female tourist raves, "We're keen as keen
On Africa! It's dusty - but, my dear, the sun!" (1)

effectively pin-points the type he was attacking. Campbell was often simply rude; Plomer understood better the power of understatement and irony. His verses (though uneven, carrying many poor lines) could probably not have been written from the same point of view while South Africa was still entirely a frontier society. Africa was entering a new phase in her history and Plomer recognized this. The last frontiers were disappearing in the face of increasing urbanization. Poets would resort more and more to satire and to lyrical verse dealing very largely with the conflicts, the tensions produced in a multi-racial country in the grip of an industrial and social revolution.

Plomer's African verses were nearly all preoccupied with socio-racial problems:

"The Golden City"

With long ape-arms
And a shrill bird-voice
The typist in her bath
Is able to rejoice.

But in the street they lead
A bastard man to gaol,
His heart with anger black,
His skin with terror pale. (2)

The comparative reticence of this, the attempt at controlled irony, is new to South African verse. One of the reasons for this new tone was, of course, the revolution occurring in English poetry. Plomer was susceptible (far more than Campbell was) to the contemporary literary movements in England.⁽³⁾ This

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1. PLOMER, "The Victoria Falls", Collected Poems.
 2. PLOMER, "The Golden City", Notes for Poems, (1927)
The revised version seems to me, in this case, to have lost its punch: "Singing in the Bath".
With thick white arms
And a sip-syrup voice
The typist in her bath
Is able to rejoice,
Unlike the coloured man
Being led away to gaol,
His heart with insult bruised,
His skin with terror pale. Collected Poems.
 3. Campbell was not unaffected by the poetry of the Georgians (he wrote an appreciative review of The Waste Land in Vooralag and admired Edith Sitwell all his life), but they exercised little or no direct influence upon his poetry.

susceptibility was later supported and strengthened by the writers he met; just as his views on the injustice of racial discrimination were confirmed by his experiences after he had left Africa. Much of this Plomer has accounted for in the limpid, compelling prose of his second autobiography At Home. (1)
The yeast had been introduced earlier; for instance when he had ordered a copy of Edith Sitwell's poems:

It must have been about 1920 that I had sent to England from Johannesburg for The Wooden Pegasus, and when the book arrived, in its bright magenta cover, it confirmed that she had obeyed the summons of the ninety-eighth Psalm, a summons which only a poet is able to obey:

O sing unto the Lord a new song: for he hath done Marvellous things. (2)

As a school-boy at Rugby he had bought 'rhyme sheets' to decorate his walls, while:

The successive volumes of Georgian Poetry, breaking in upon the post-Victorian twilight, had been quickening to many readers of my generation. I had lately visited the Poetry Book shop for the first time, with its temple-like atmosphere and its polychromatic lining of 'slim volumes'; but it seemed already to belong to the past. Guerrilla warfare had already broken out in the earliest printed poems of W.H. Auden. (3)

Plomer's typist in her bath had closer affiliations with The Waste Land than with The Flaming Terrapin. Such lines as:

Gannets plumb the wave like bombs

and

Live earth sprang up, an ally of the worn,

disappear almost completely from Plomer's writing. He outgrew the influence of Campbell upon his diction and imagery such as Campbell reverted to what he called "the old Colonial school of thought" in many of his judgments upon South African racial policies. (4)

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1. See SPENDER, World Within World for a description of Plomer and an account of some of their literary friends. Both poets dined often with Leonard and Virginia Woolf at their house in Tavistock Square.
 2. PLOMER, At Home, p.65.
 3. Ibid: p.61.
 4. Like many people's, Campbell's views on the subject were somewhat confused. He was sincere enough when he claimed, "I have no colour prejudice", when he declared that "the average native" should not and could not be prevented from becoming the white man's equal, but he never seems to have seen an African in this light. His Zulu hunting companions for instance, all played Sancho to his almost unconscious feeling of superiority. There was much truth in Campbell's comment: "many of our authors...never write about a black man without making him a hero or a martyr.." He solved the problem by evading it. See Broken Record, pp. 56 - 8.

Two lyrics of this early collection are descriptive pieces: "A Basuto Coming-of-Age" and "The Death of a Zulu". There is in them no hint of the philanthropist, of the "Liberal" with the capital L, nor of the sometimes self-conscious paternalism of Campbell. Plomer describes objectively what he has seen, suggesting, at the same time, what he imagines the Basuto feels:

The winter sun, that almost sounds of light,
Now sets immense and silent, fiery-white,
And on the plains the first vast waves of night
Flood in far down below this fabulous height.
Out of retreat, with dancing and with dirges,
Men bring the boy in whom the man emerges.
The new man sees anew the twisted aloes,
His father's house, his cattle in the shallows,
And up the hill a crowd of girls advancing
To carry him to drinking and to dancing -
His heart leaps up as he descends the steep,
For, where the boy slept, now the man shall sleep. (1)

It is a relief to find, among other things, that the poet no longer feels a need to rely upon distinctively African words or names in order to convey emotions and scenes foreign to English poetry. Plomer does not preach. He accepts the universality of human emotions; "the noble savage" is not on his mailing list and "The Death of a Zulu" is felt as an individual human sorrow. (2)

Another, but more sustained composition which promised much from Plomer in the future was "Ula Masondo's Dream." Originally this formed part of one of the stories in I speak of Africa: the tale of a young African, Ula Masondo, who left home to seek his fortune in the City of Gold. He gets a job at the mines and is corrupted by his own people who have degenerated through their contact with white "civilization". Eventually a changed Ula Masondo returns to his kraal; he refused to recognize his aged mother who has been awaiting his return. The old woman hangs herself in an empty hut. Plomer's last ironical comment is put into the mouth of the white storekeeper who once sold Ula Masondo a blanket:

"Hanged herself! Mind you, it's only the second time I've ever heard of a native committing suicide."

1. PLOMER, "A Basuto Coming-Of-Age, Notes for Poems."

2. "The Death of a Zulu" is included in A Book of South African Verse, p.56.

"The poignancy of Plomer's picture is not dissipated and the centre can stand on its merits, within the confines of that pain-filled death-house:...Yet we cannot doubt that we are looking at an African Scene."

MPHALLIE, "Commonwealth Literature", New Statesman, vol.IX.1960.

By Jove, there's an example for you, of a boy
going away quite all right, and coming back with all
this Christian dandy business that I can't stand
at any price. Give me the raw nigger any day, is
what I have always maintained.

(1)

The poem is introduced into the narrative when the young
miner, trapped underground by a rock-fall, imagines in a half-
conscious stupor that he hears the voice of his brother telling
him that a cow is lost and that they must go up into the
Mountain of the Bushmen to look for it:

It was in a kraus titanic
Of that berg volcanic
That a dark cave was hidden
Where no foot could have trodden.

The atmosphere is mysterious, belonging to Africa before the
coming of the white man:

There the leopard and snake
And tawny partridge
Prey and are preyed on,
Unstartled by cartridge,
Where never a gun
Echoing shocks
The listening rocks:

The clear, precise images evoke a world in which it was in the
nature of things to kill and be killed:

And in shallow pools
The shadow of a hawk
(Tense above the tree-tops)
Quivers like a fish
Among the shadows
Of basking fishes.

Plover's evocation of African animals has nothing of
Campbell's explosive energy, brilliance of colour or swiftness
of movement; instead he suggests a peculiar delicacy and charm,
an impenetrable mystery:

When those parapets shimmer
In the morning in summer
The antelope turns
From the heat of the height
To a stream in the ferns,
Bounding unhurried
From sun to shadow.
There the lory wings scarlet
His way at noon; twilight
Flutters with bats;
And at dawn the cliff
Is crowned with eagles.

1. PLOMER, "Ula Masondo", I speak of Africa, p.150.

There the wild cats
Crouch and tremble,
And await the screams
Of the haunted jackal.
Has no foot trodden
Where the dark cave is hidden
In leaves and branches?

The short lines with their skilfully varied pauses echo the suggestion of the shifting rays of light, the quick, stealthy movements of birds and animals. There is more variety here than in some of Campbell's poetry: the carefree grace of the antelope; the sudden bold flight of the brilliant lory; the majestic eagles; the fearful wild cats - these things belong to the heart of Africa. Will they disappear as the Bushman disappeared, as Ula Masondo himself fears he may disappear:

Has no foot trodden
Where the dark cave is hidden?

Plomer emphasizes the white man's clumsy intrusion; his failure to bring anything but his savage worst to the continent:

Far down, far down,
Where are the savage
Cities of the future?

At times the poem is jerky and dislocated to no particular purpose. Plomer was unable to sustain his thoughts and emotions in an integrated pattern:

Where is steel? Here is stone.
What are tombs? Here's a bone.
What is science? Declare,
Does it beat still, your Heart?
What is life? Here is art.

What are you? Here is splendour.
O traffic and travel and trade,
Here rolls the thuzler,
Ula Masondo,
Of hoofs and of hearts and of honour!

Here the attempt to suggest Ula Masondo's bewilderment, (caught in the rock-face between a barbaric past not without its splendours and a future in which he can find no place) fails through a lack of a sufficiently powerful thematic or emotional organization; words and images remain scattered without effect. (Plomer omitted this passage from the revised version of the dream in his Collected Poems).

Ula Masondo's fate is uncertain as the fate which hangs over all Africa is uncertain:

What are you doing,
Ula Masondo?
Do you follow the Bushmen?
Do you travel to the valley
This side of the city. (1)

The original poem is a sensitive, impressionistic evocation of the theme, but it is without that artistic unity which might have made it an impressive dramatic lyric.

Plomer has written of the necessity of attaining an organic unity in poetry:

I am not a prolific poet, but since I began to write I have never found prose the only possible medium. To be longed for are the clarity, order, and moderation of prose; but they are not enough. Poetry seeks to attain a clarity of a different kind; it makes an order of its own, and does not make it out of moderation, but out of intensity, complexity, and seemingly indefinable sensations. They seem indefinable because they require unforeseen arrangements of words. (2)

The high standards which Plomer has set himself are, in part, the reason for his comparatively limited artistic output. His writing has changed and matured very considerably since his African days (his prose, in particular, exemplifying to a marked degree the virtues which he praises) but "Ula Masondo's Dream" showed that his poetry had not, at any rate at that date, attained "an order of its own".

In 1932 Plomer published another series "African Landscapes with Figures". These lyrics reveal a greater strength and unity, a growing control over his imagery, a fondness for a fresh, scrubbed diction which neither attracted too much attention to itself (as Campbell's sometimes did) nor encumbered his lines with meaningless words.

His work was still very uneven. In "Namaqualand After Rain" he evoked a picture drawn from his past experiences as an apprentice sheep farmer:

Far in the gaunt karroo
That winter dearth denudes,
Ironstone caves give back the burr
Of lambs in multitudes.

There is a tenderness here, as well as an enviable freshness:

Grass waves again where drought
Bleached every upland kraal;
A peach-tree shoots along the wind
Pink volleys through a broken wall.

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1. PLOMER, "Ula Masondo's Dream", The Fivefold Screen. Notes for Poems, originally published in "Ula Masondo", I speak of Africa, (1927)
 2. PLOMER, At Home, p.197.

The Campbellian "volleys" and:

Small roots explode in strings of stars,
are attractive in themselves, but they consort strangely
with the rest of the poem, while the last stanza might
(oddly enough) have been written by Pringle:

Soon to be hung with colonies
All swaying with the leaves
Of pendent wicker love-nests
The pretty loxia weaves. (1)

It is in the two poems in this volume entitled "Johannesburg"
that Plomer (returning to his light satiric vein) emphasizes once
more the fact that the 20th century was beating at the gates of
the frontier and that nobody at all, least of all a poet, could
afford to turn a deaf ear:

Where not so long ago the breezes stirred
The tresses of the summer grasses, now
A fat contralto gargles for applause
And bows in sequins when the curtain falls.

The concert goers are momentarily distracted by a sudden tremor:

Perhaps it was a fall of rock. Two kaffirs trapped
Up to the waist in dirty water. All the care
That went to keep them fit has gone for nothing!
Concrete bathrooms and carbolic soap,
A balanced diet and free hospitals
Made them efficient, but they both die mad. (2)

This theme: the tragic irony in a society whose material
security rests upon cheap native labour for the mines was
(after Plomer) to become a dominating one in South African
English verse. (3)

Plomer left Africa as a young man but he was (so far as
South Africa was concerned) a disillusioned man:

If anybody imagines that ever
All this will come to an end,
That the jackal will howl on the ruined terraces
Of this city where science is applied for profit
And where the roar of electricity by night and day
Is louder than the beating of all the hearts of the
inhabitants,
Louder than the seldom raised voice of common sense;
If anybody should think that a mile below the ground
The moling and maggoting will cease, or console himself
For his own failure to share the life of the city
With romantic imaginings about the future;

1. PLOMER, "Namaqualand After Rain", The Fivefold Screen.

2. PLOMER, "Johannesburg II", The Fivefold Screen, (1932)

3. cf. CURREY, "Man's Roots":

The walls jabber,
They whisper, chatter, argue,
Then jabber.
This is eight thousand feet down,
Two thousand below sea-level;
It's the pressure that makes them jabber -
As it does men sometimes,
Shriek, and then jabber, jabber.
A Book of South African Verse, p.77.

If he should look forward to ruin, and declare
That some day the walls will crumble, toad and adder
Tenanting the rotting galleries below -
He is wasting his time, is conceited,
Thinking himself able to see through human folly,
He is a fool himself for supposing
That future ruin makes up for a ruinous present,
He is a fool himself for not knowing
That there is a fine gold to be won by humility. (1)

In spite of the brevity of his stay, the slightness of his poetical output, Plomer made a real contribution towards the evolution of an English poetry which would be in contact with the total reality of South African society. At times he achieved a surprisingly powerful impact, as in the concentrated images of "The Ruined Farm":

A peaceful, archangelic sun
Sank low, grew larger to the sight,
And drew across each huge ravine
The huger curtains of the night;

Silence within the roofless house
Unhid her hair and shook it free,
The footpad jackal passed her there,
And bats flew round the cactus-tree;

Each quiet afternoon was bitter,
Was overcharged with warning,
And Silence waited where the snake lay coiled
And mocked at each mild, bright morning. (2)

In the fairly well known lyric, "The Scorpion", Plomer suggested that he could see no particular hope for a better society in southern Africa; neither (tragically for South African English literature) did he feel constrained to stay and help to build one. Instead he sailed away to Japan. In 1959 he wrote:

When I did revisit South Africa - in 1956 -
I understood how extreme had been my detachment.
Several revolutions had taken place. (3)

His mature observations on the South African scene, though basically exactly the same, were less strident, more balanced and (in prose) somewhat less pessimistic than the cries of his outraged youth. Plomer has been impressed by the emergence of an African intelligentsia who promise:

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1. PLOMER, "Johannesburg II", The Fivefold Screen. Revised in Collected Poems as "A Fall of Rock" in which the last lines read:
There is a fine gold to be won
By not always knowing best.
 2. PLOMER, "The Ruined Farm", The Fivefold Screen, (unchanged in Collected Poems).
 3. PLOMER, "Several Revolutions", "The Twentieth Century", Vol. 165. No. 986. (1959) pp. 385-396.

a new kind of wealth and a new culture in this great blundering South Africa, where the sun is so bright that it seems to make facts too dazzling to be seen, this adorable and misguided, this vigorous and grotesque country, rushing headlong into a future that won't be much like its past. (1)

Plomer may have been right about his detachment but in the four published poems written "After Thirty Years", he has reiterated even more forcibly (with far greater incisiveness, economy of diction, and emotionally charged imagery) his first beliefs about the white man in South Africa. Nor are his views expressed in the tones of a stranger: he is (in spite of himself) spiritually involved; the memories of his youth are still a source of understanding, although he is now more aware of the necessity of attaining, if possible, a more comprehensive view:

The strangeness plucked the stranger like a string.
They say this constant sun outstares the mind,
Here in this region of the fang, the sting,
And dulls the eye to what is most defined:
"A wild bird's eye on the qui vive
Perhaps makes vagueness clear and staleness new;
If undeceived one might not then deceive;
Let me," he thought, "attain the bird's eye view!" (2)

"Ula Masondo" has returned in "Tugela River":

I know his family. They tell me he was found
Dying of inanition in the sun
On a road verge, while new cars
Hissed past like rockets
Loaded with white men hurrying like mad,
While he lay on the dark red earth
With all his youth subdued. (3)

"The Wild Doves at Louis Trichardt" reveals that (much as mad Ireland hurt Yeats into poetry) so the overwhelming, the all embracing tensions and conflicts of South Africa have stimulated Plomer once more. The lyric is one of his best, evoking as it does both the sights, sounds and human emotions of a summer day in the Transvaal, while suggesting, with a terrifying sense of desperation, the horror of the artificially protracted frontier:

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1. PLOMER, "Several Revolutions", op.cit. p.396.
 2. PLOMER, "A Transvaal Morning", Collected Poems, p.30.
 3. PLOMER, "Tugela River", Collected Poems, p.33.

Morning is busy with long files
Of ants and men, all bearing loads.
The sun's gong beats, and sweat runs down.
A mason-hornet shapes his hanging house.
In a wide flood of flowers
Two crested cranes are bowing to their food.
From the north today there is ominous news.

Midday, the mad cicada-time.
Sizzling from every open valve
Of the overheated earth
The stridulators din it in -
Intensive and continuing praise
Of the white-hot zenith, shrilling on
Toward a note too high to bear.

Oven of afternoon, silence of heat.
In shadow, or in shaded rooms,
This face is hidden in folded arms,
That face is now a sightless mask,
Tree-shadow just includes those legs.
The people have all lain down, and sleep
In attitudes of the sick, the shot, the dead.

And now in the grove the wild doves begin,
Whose neat silk heads are never still,
Bubbling their coolest colloquies.
The formulae they liquidly pronounce
In secret tents of leaves imply
(Clearer than man-made music could)
Men being absent, Africa is good.

(1)

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1. PLOMER, "The Wild Doves at Louis Trichardt",
Collected Poems, p.39.

CHAPTER 10.

THE END OF THE FRONTIER?

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But, the spirit of place is a great reality.

The Spirit of Place. D.H. Lawrence.

In September, 1926, Laurens van der Post and William Plomer left Durban in a Japanese merchant ship bound for Kobé; some months later Roy Campbell departed steerage for England, waving the manuscript of The Wayzgoose defiantly at his lost world. The brief, storm-tossed co-operation of these three young men on the bi-lingual Voorslag promised an awakening of literary talent in South Africa.⁽¹⁾ Their departure from our shores was not a good omen.

The appearance of The Flaming Terrapin, followed in 1927 by Plomer's Notes for Poems, showed that the strictly pioneering period in South African verse was at an end. Time, as well as the growth of a community who no longer spoke constantly (as the British did in India) of "going home", had helped the poetasters to acclimatize the English language and literary tradition. Some writers, of course, had not been aware of the existence of a problem, while the more ability a man had the less he was impeded either by divided loyalties or (as Kipling proved) by the absence of an indigenous literary tradition. Conquering difficulties does not, however, demonstrate that they never existed.

Nostalgia for England had been the most consistent hallmark of the rootless, derivative verse between Pringle and Campbell. Numerous volumes of "graceful" lyrics (mostly

1. Among the articles in Afrikaans contributed to Voorslag by Van der Post was one, "Kuns ontwikkeling in Afrikaans", in which he spoke of the relationship between the Afrikaans poet and what he called "the soul of the nation". Vol.1. 1926.

privately printed) have not even been mentioned in this survey, where I have attempted to select those writers who showed at least some glimmer of realization (as Plomer's Potheringhay could not) that such matters as heraldry ceased to have any relevance in the society of Anampstroom.

In this struggle to achieve some measure of independence, some spiritual maturity, as well as a medium less encumbered by distracting or false associations, our literary history has been closely paralleled in the English settlements in North America, as well as in other parts of the Commonwealth. James Russell Lowell's complaint might just as well have been lodged against the English versifier in Africa for nearly a century after the publication of African Sketches. In 1848 Lowell had lashed out in A Fable for Critics:

Though you brag of your New World, you don't half
believe in it;
And as much of the Old as is possible weave in it;
You steal Englishmen's books and think Englishmen's
thought
With their salt on her tail your wild eagle is caught,
Your literature suits its each whisper and motion
To what will be thought of it over the ocean. (1)

Olive Schreiner was the first to leap this hurdle for us in prose; in verse it is not really until Campbell that we find a poet at ease in the halls of Adamastor. Slater tried hard but (except for one or two lyrics) his efforts remained too self-conscious; his themes were often too overtly "national"; his diction and imagery too lacking in distinction. Campbell, on the other hand, had English poetry in his head and the "clear pagan sunlight" molten in his veins. He did not strive after a "South African" verse (as some of his countrymen are now searching for a "South African" face) he wrote poetry, and his poems drew life from his Muse of the Berg.

From the outset the settler versifiers had seized upon subjects which were largely alien to their literary heritage. Strange themes were the first props they could find to help their clumsy efforts to build a South African literature. These subjects are familiar to us now; persisting in our poetry for the obvious reason that the thematic shifts were the product of changed environment.

1. LOWELL, "A Fable for Critics", The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson, p.21.

Whereas the main body of English poetry is particularly rich in detailed evocations of natural beauty; rimesters in Africa seemed (for some time) almost hypnotized by the notions of space, distance and grandeur which they attributed (without distinction of locality) to the whole of the southern continent. The reasons for this "veld-worship" are complex: its elaboration owed much to the Romantic tradition in general, something to "Afar in the Desert" in particular, something also to geographical fact (there is a difference between the Great Karroo and a Kentish hop-field). The versifiers were aware of the mysterious, undomesticated scene, but they could not describe it. This was partly because they did not know it; they did not even suspect that Africa was not as empty as they imagined. Campbell could be amused at their dilemma because it did not exist for him. We should be grateful that he buried the dreary corpse of the "open-veld" school:

I mean that there is something grander, yes,
About the veld, than I can well express,
Something more vast - perhaps I don't mean that -
Something more round, and square, and steep, and flat -
No, well perhaps it's not quite that I mean
But something, rather, half-way in between,
Something more 'nameless' - That's the very word!
Something that can't be felt, or seen, or heard,
Or even thought - a kind of mental mist
That doesn't either matter or exist
But without which it would go very hard
With many a local novelist and bard - (1)

The veld had remained a "nameless something" until writers like Fairbridge (preparing the way for a Campbell) had expressed their awareness of its identity.

Linked with the impressions made by an uncivilized landscape, was the geographical factor of climate. Here again there has, in the past, been a tendency towards generalization. The fear of drought, the importance of rain, the destructive power of the sun impinged themselves upon the consciousness of versifiers, so that they returned repeatedly to the same theme until, "Out of the dust and the drought of the plain" they emerged in our poetry in an imagery devised to give a wider significance to familiar experiences.

The eye-catching beasts, birds and reptiles (the entire National Park of strange, exciting flora and fauna) forms one

1. CAMPBELL, "A Veld Eclogue: The Pioneers", Collected Poems, p.22.

of the chief legacies which our poetry has inherited from the old, physical frontier. Out of the exigencies of pioneering life had grown the cult of the hunter, the frontier hero. (The same thing happened in the work of the Australian balladists, while in America Cooper wrote the legend into the Leatherstocking saga.) In Africa, as the hunter disappeared with the game, he came to symbolize in much of our poetry the freedom and splendour of an idealized past.

Our early writers made, on the whole, very feeble attempts to come to terms with the land itself. From the beginning they focussed their attention upon man in Africa. There was a special difficulty here for the English settler who, arriving much later than the Dutch colonist, was at first a stranger in his adopted land. It was almost impossible for the first generation immigrant to depict the Trek boer or the Xhosa tribesman as other than a member of a group with which he had little or no communication. In verse this resulted in numbers of stereotyped "poems" on the settler, the pioneer, the hunter, the missionary, the miner, the soldier and the Boer. Scarcely anywhere - either in lyric or narrative - do we meet a distinctive man or an individually felt emotion. On the whole the early poetasters helped to perpetuate debased popular beliefs on the virtues and vices of South African "types". The exceptions to this made a valuable contribution to the growth of a literary tradition.

Blindness to reality gave a false tone to much of our early verse. Writers were particularly handicapped in their approach to the relationship between the white man and the indigenous races. The impediment was not only one of language and background (as in the case of the "Booinek" and the Dutchman) but of pigmentation and tribalism in a frontier where economic interests often clashed.

At this point it would be as well to clarify the two senses in which I have constantly referred to the frontier. On the one hand I have understood it as the shifting boundary between primitive Africa and the advancing forces of technical and material progress, of civilization as the term is generally understood; on the other hand I have adopted it as a convenient term suggesting certain attitudes of mind, certain beliefs

(particularly, though not by any means exclusively) about the importance of race, which are common to many South Africans - black as well as white.

In the latter sense it is difficult to define precisely, for the Frontier Mind is naturally an abstraction which, in reality in the individual, is as complex as most human thoughts and emotions, as mixed in origin as it is varied in expression.

The Frontiersman was exposed, in various ways and at successive periods, to profound influences emanating from Europe, but his world was different. He learnt to value different things so that, in time, the whole ethos of the South African community acquired distinctive (though not necessarily uniform) characteristics.

The increasing pre-occupation of this community with the fetish of race was reflected in the verses of almost every South African English writer of any significance. This theme appears still to be the dominant one in our poetry. By this I do not mean to say that our verse is simply a mirror-image of our race consciousness. Rather I suggest that poets have apprehended Conflict as the overriding factor in national life so that they have felt compelled towards its expression.

From Pringle to Plomer, versifiers interpreted the white-black relationship from one of several vantage points.

The first view to become articulate was the Rousseauesque ideal which touched Pringle. The ~~Paradise~~^{innocent} simplicity and ~~innocence~~ of the noble savage has become a tradition which is still alive in our literature but which appears, at present, to find its best known expression, not in poetry, but in the novel. The Bechuana Boy and the Reverend Kumalo in Alan Paton's best seller are direct descendants of the main liberal tradition in 19th century English writing.

Close contact between pioneer and Bantu produced, in English, a group of writers associated with the romantic tradition. Scully, Gouldsbury, Fairbridge, Cripps and Slater were among those who have left us a small collection of pastoral idylls - some of them not without spontaneity and lyrical appeal as well, at times, as a dawning realism of approach. Contemporary poets do not seem attracted to this idyllic wish-fulfilment: instead they tend to draw ironic contrasts between the (possibly equally romanticized)

savage splendour of the African's past and his present impoverishment.

The cruder, more dogmatic views on race expressed in doggerel by such men as Cruikshanks, have not found a place in our poetry, but the paternalism of Barter has its echoes in Campbell.⁽¹⁾ It was not until the structure of South African society began to suffer rapid changes; not until the emergence of a non-white proletariat and intelligentsia, that a poet attracted by the theme of Conflict, attempted to depict the African primarily as an ordinary human being. Plomer was the first to achieve this with any degree of success.

In listing some of the major themes in our pioneer verse, my intention has been to draw attention to the fact that it is only when these themes were vitalized in symbol and imagery; only when poets began using them to distil thoughts and emotions of universal as well as local application, that we can begin to speak of a South African poetry in English.

This generation occurred seemingly spontaneously in the late 1920s, so that the publications of that era have created a watershed to mark the first streams, in Plomer and Campbell, of an indigenous poetry.

The love for Africa, the sense of belonging which (when electrified by his talents) made Campbell's image-coining possible, resulted in his making the greatest single contribution towards the poetry of his homeland. Campbell captured in The Flaming Terrapin, and in many of his lyrics, much that had been fine and beautiful in the vanished frontier life. To a great extent he avoided in his poetry the problems of the spiritual Frontier which tormented Plomer; bending his energies instead on immortalizing the myth of the hunter, drawing his poetic vitality from experience:

By its cool guidance I unread my books
And learned, in spite of theories and charts,
Things have a nearer meaning to their looks
Than to their dead analysis in parts
And how (for all the outfit be antique)
Our light is in our heads; and we can seek
The clearest information in our hearts. (2)

1. See MPHAHLELE's comments on "The Zulu Girl" in "Black and White", New Statesman, Sept. 1960. p.342.

2. CAMPBELL, "The Sling", Collected Poems..., p.127.

Campbell claimed that hunting had given him his "plastic sense"; certainly it may have sharpened his acute awareness of the physical world. The hunt is in Campbell as it is almost nowhere else in English poetry. It was the mainspring of his imagery, as well as a means of spiritual purification for the hunter - a sacrifice having affinities with both Mithraism and Christianity.

Horses and bulls, the sable and impala,
Sparkle between his fingers, and a sun
That sleeps and rises from the Indian Ocean
Gongs the images of his passion.

...

Horses and bulls, the sable and impala,
Thunder between his fingers; as they run,
He hears another thunder in the sun,
Time and the sea about Tristan da Cunha. (1)

The Frontier then, has been a real factor in South African literary history. At first it was the world in which the writer struggled to exist then, with the end of the pioneering age, many of its values were retained by the community. The perpetuation of the Frontier Mentality on the question of race has divided South Africa itself, as Delius has emphasized:

'On ethnic trains and buses daily hurry
Divided hues to earn divided bread,
The races may not fornicate or marry,
They even lie apart when they are dead.' (2)

It has been a leftist assumption that the nature of conflict is dynamic, that art will flourish in conditions of social tension. History does not offer much support for this claim - though examples may be found - the novelists of the American south for instance. Certainly the poet cannot live without experience, nor without freedom to express whatever he desired to express. If they feel restricted in both, will there be any poets in southern African in the future?

Rhetorical questions are seldom anything but annoying. I have no wish to prophesy but to point out that most of our versifiers and poets from 1820 to 1927 showed a special sensitivity to the same subjects which concern South African writers to-day. If there is one thing that characterizes our poetry since 1927 it is that South African poets reveal a highly developed sense

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1. WRIGHT, "For Roy Campbell", A Book of South African Verse, p.160.
 2. DELIUS, The Last Division, p.30.

of social responsibility, of spiritual awareness, of human pathos and tragedy. At times this has given an emotional depth and a certain universal validity to both our lyric and our satirical poetry.

One thing in particular, the pioneer versifiers achieved. They made possible in South African English poetry the evocation of "the spirit of place"; that this spirit is a troubled one is a fact that contemporary poets have not tried to ignore.

APPENDIX A.

THE GLEN LYNDEN LIBRARY.

Assuming that the 297 surviving volumes of the estimated 750 which formed the original Glen Lynden Library are a representative selection, it is of interest to note that the largest section consists of educational books. Remembering that, among the dispersed and isolated settlers, education was confined to what was available in the homestead, the library was designed to meet a vital need.

This section includes a series of attractive volumes in The Library of Entertaining Knowledge, covering ^{such} subjects as: Elephants; British Antiquities; Hindoos; Criminal Trials; The Modern Egyptians; Insects and (appropriately enough) The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties. There are a number of histories, particularly of the British Isles (including Clarendon's History of the Rebellion); books of geography; a French grammar; Principles of Elocution, as well as a treatise on the education of children.

Pringle's personal interests are reflected in the comparatively large number of books of poetry. They include: Selections from the poems of Robert Southey (which betrays little evidence of its having been read); Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth (presented to the Library by Thomas Pringle); The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott; Poems on Several Occasions by Joseph Addison; Paradise Lost (presented in 1829 by Friends in Scotland); and Dr. Samuel Johnson (one of a series in The Works of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, presented by Pringle. A volume of Thomson's The Seasons (inscribed on the Fly-leaf: "J. Buchan Sydesriff. Lieut. 82 Regt. 1815) has been much read and underscored. Someone was particularly struck by the lines:

With such mad seas the daring GAMA fought,
For many a day, and many a dreadful night,
Incessant, lab'ring round the stormy Cape.

A volume entitled Poems by Richard Howitt (London, 1830) had been presented to Pringle by the author. It bears the following dedication:

To Thomas Pringle,
Author of "Ephemerides". etc.

Now that fresh flowers on every bank abound,
Up-springing new, with old familiar looks;
And blooming trees shower blossoms to the ground,
Light fairy shallows for the summer brooks;
And songs are loved in every bush and tree,
And sweet as they are loved, and long as sweet,
Do I present fresh flowers, new songs to thee,
Befitting bards, and for the season meet.
Would they were fairer, would they were more gay!
But who may rule the chords which nature strung!
Her child, though not her favourite, to her sway
Submitting still, thus simply have I sung
And, thus by thee befriended, forth I bring
This friendship's offering - blooms of many a spring.

Some of the poetry (as well as a few of the novels) show that an attempt was made to keep the library abreast of the times. The remaining novels include Robinson Crusoe; Jonathan Wild; Peregrine Pickle; Gil Blas; The Vicar of Wakefield (obviously much appreciated) and the works of Scott. (1)

A large section comprises books of travel by land and sea, as well as accounts (some of them fictional) of other frontier communities. There is America by J.S. Buckingham, Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts (by the Author of Redwood, London, 1828); while Voyages from the time of Columbus boasts a delightful engraving in which a gentleman on horseback, his hat still firmly on his head, is rescuing shipwrecked persons. Underneath is the caption: "Singular instance of Intrepid Philanthropy".

The philanthropic interests of the library's founder is very marked in the numbers of such volumes as Travels and Researches of Eminent English Missionaries; Anti-Slavery Pamphlets and An Inquiry into the Causes of the General Poverty of Mankind (Edinburgh, 1814; given to Pringle by the author, William Dawson).

The section on religion is strongly Non-conformist in content: this was natural considering the background from which the Scottish

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1. Pringle refers to the Glen Lynden Library in his letters. He wrote from the Cape to Scott in June, 1821, petitioning him: "to send us out hither, poor exiles as we are, in this forlorn rag end of the universe, a set of the Scotch Novels to recreate our spirits - for which we would thankfully make him such return, as the country affords - such as lions and leopards skins, horns of rhinoceros, buffaloes, Gnoos & elands - elephant & Sea Cow boots - Caffirs & Boschmans skulls - or what may perhaps be more to his taste, a butt of the first wine we can make on our farms fit for a Christian gentleman to drink."
See Pringle, Scott letters, Cory Library. (Photostat: originals in National Library of Scotland).

settlers had sprung. The library included the publications of The Religious Tract Society, as well as copies of The Evangelical Magazine (1827) and The New Baptist Magazine (1825). The Asiatic Observer (1823) contains articles which one would scarcely imagine as being of particular interest to the Glen Lynden pioneers. Perhaps they enjoyed: "The State of Female Society in Greece" or "British Monachism, or Manners and Customs of the Monks and Nuns of England".

The remnants of the library is deficient in handbooks such as might have met the practical needs of the Settlers. (Domestic Medicine or the Family Physician is almost the only exception). It contains the useful admonition: "Even houses which are built for the poor ought to be dry".

It is possible that the absence of books on such practical matters as gardening and husbandry was due to their popularity. The librarian must have found it difficult (the times and communications being what they were) to secure the return of whatever the library provided in the way of "Do it yourself" instruction.

APPENDIX B.

EXTRACTS FROM EARLY CAPE PERIODICALS.

The Cape of Good Hope Literary Gazette, Cape Town, W.
Bridekirk.

"To the Table Mountain".

Magnificent and mighty land! till now,
That from creation's dawn hast since upreared,
Defying time and storm thy rugged brow,
Say! was is (sic) cloud-cap't thus, thou erst appear'd
To that bold Mariner, what time he clear'd
The Cape terrific, and unknown before
Across the South Atlantic time he steer'd
His bark, all reckless of the tempest's roar
To India's fabled land, and undiscover'd shore!
For high renown, and not for wealth he sought
Let Gold allure the sordid and the Slave -
For Fame it was the daring GAMA fought
With these mad seas the victor of the wave!
And as he pass'd the promontory, gave
The name of Hope to this tempestuous sphere
Which recreant souls had never dar'd to brave,
And call'd the Cape of Storms till then with fear
He of the Antarctic seas the dauntless Pioneer!

W.

Cape Town.
(No.5. Oct.13, 1830. p.67).

The anonymous "W" was also the author of the following:
the most literate, sustained and interesting narrative of its
type which I came across in my pursuit of miscellaneous verse
publications. The Byronic attitude of the author is as obvious
as the Miltonic echoes in the text. It is not without its
affinities with the poetry of Campbell: the description of the
sea-boy "whose sleep was cradled in the dashing spray"; the
image of the lion and the albatross; the delight in the storm
together with the romantic affirmation of the concluding lines.

"The Cape of Storms"
Written at Sea.

Spirit of Gama 'round the stormy Cape,
Bestriding the rude whirlwind as thy steed;
The thunder cloud, thy car - thy spectre shape
Gigantic; who upon the gale dost feed
And drink the water spout; - thy shroud, the skies; -
Thy sport, the South and vast Atlantic sea; -
Thine eye, the light'ning's flash! - Awake! arise
From out the deep, in dread and awful sov'reignty!

Now hast thou risen! By heaven it is a sight
Most God-like, grand, and glorious to behold;
Three elements contend, and fierce in fight
As those who warr'd with mighty Jove of old. *
Oh, God! if any doubt thy being, or rate
With vain and impious mind, at nought thy pow'r,
So may it be such daring sceptic's fate
To pass the Cape of Storms, when angry tempests lower.

* The Titans.

Jehovah! what is man compar'd with thee -
Or son of man - in mockery of sense,
That he should dare assume the Deity?
Oh, Man! would'st learn to know thine impotence,
Thy littleness, and inferiority,
Come hie thee to these regions of the storm,
Behold the face of God upon the sea,
And worship in the gale, his dread Almighty form!

But see the darkling spirit of the night,
That brooding sate upon the wat'ry plain;
Flies at the approach of thee, Ethereal Light!
Awaking now the universe again!
The sea-boy wet, rude murling of the blast,
Whose sleep was cradled in the dashing spray,
And rock'd upon the high and giddy mast,
Regardless of the storm - unseals his eyes with day!

Ye who would further seek to know of Light,
Go read it as recorded in the page * * Milton, Book III.
Of that immortal bard, bereft of sight
Himself - the god like Homer of his age!
Oh! for one spark of that celestial flame,
That inspiration once to Milton giv'n,
Which lit his way to never dying fame;
The fire - 'the pomp, and prodigality of heav'n'!

In dread magnificence, the lurid sun
Now pierces thro' the tempest troubled sky,
And drives the thunder clouds dark rolling on,
As Satan and his rebel tribe were seen to fly
Before the red right arm of God! - No streaks
Of orient purple tinge, announce his rise,
In solitary splendour he awakes,
And seizes, as by storm, at once on all the skies!

Did'st mark the whale that dash'd along the deep,
'Hugest of all the ocean born that roam' * * Milton, Book I.
Like that Leviathan, whom once asleep,
The mariner (as on through Norway's foam
He steer'd his rude and shatter'd skiff) at night,
Mistook for land, so vast and still he seem'd,
And anchor'd thus - then rose in wild affright,
When morning's dawn upon the mighty monster beam'd.

Again he comes! gigantic as the beast
Of old, that God in mercy sent to save
The prophet Jonah, from the foamy yeast
Of waves, his else unknell'd - unshrouded grave!
Three days and nights, the slimy monster sped
His way, as thus the chos'n of God he bore,
By 'raging floods' and 'seas encompassed',
Then cast him all unscath'd upon the Syrian shore!

Hark to the sea-mew's wild and piercing shrieks
As round the strong ribb'd bark they hover nigh,
Now o'er the waves white foam they skim their beaks -
Now far away they speed, and seek the sky!
- But mark the might and majesty of motion
Of him * who sweeps cloud cleaving from the height * The
Of heav'n - it is the Condor of the ocean, Albatross.
So nobly doth he soar aloft - so bold his flight!

The aspirations of this bird arise
Above those eagles that are seen afar,
O'er Chirombazo, loftiest in the skies -
Of Andes, 'Giant of the Western star' !
From mountain on to mountain let them urge
Their narrower flight, and habitations change,
His resting place the South Pacific surge -
All hear'n his Eyrie, and Immensity his Range!

Against the conquest crown'd Dictator's sway
From Sardis, when the noble Cassius drew
His legions forth, in battle's stern array,
E'en such a bird it was, that hov'ring flew
Upon his 'former ensign' - then would feed
From out the soldier's hands, and flapping fly
His broad extended wings, that seem'd to lead
The embattled Romans on to certain victory!

But at Philippi sought, he then was gone
And vultures, crows, and kites, were seen instead
For those whom hope of conquest had flush'd on,
Now vanquish'd lay, the dying and the dead!
- 'Twas such a bird, all wild and young that rose
When Swedish Charles, with 'soul of fire' went forth,
And 'frame of adamant', mid polar snows,
To plant his standard on the steeple of the north -

But when the fickle fortune of the war,
As history tells, on dread Pultowa's day
Forsook the warrior king, and woo'd the Czar,
The bird had wing'd his eagle flight away! -
On daring pinion borne - 'twas such that o'er
The modern Hannibal was seen to fly,
Above Saint Bernard's Alpine snows, to soar
To Fame's proud Temple, and 'unutterably high'.

There were, who said o'er Lybia's arid waste,
And chief the Pyramid's dim solitude,
The self-same bird, his flight had boldly trac'd,
And once before on Lodi's bridge been view'd -
To sweep Marengo's field, he left the Alps,
A laurel wreath inscrib'd he waved on high,
Then gain'd with nobler speed, their 'snowy scalps',
The wreath enroll'd, Napoleon and Victory!

By Danube's darkly rolling tide, and o'er
The field of Austerlitz - on Eylau's plain
At Friedland - Jena - Berlin - Ulm - once more,
All splendid did he re-appear again!
On Moscow's conflagration - when the sun
Turn'd ghastly pale, and sicken'd at the sight,
The eagle saw his race of Glory run,
He tried in vain to soar - then shriek'd and sunk in
night!

Oh! haste and look upon yon glorious zone,
The bow of God, which girdles half the sky,
The heav'nly arch, by the Almighty thrown
In vast and infinite variety
Of tints most beautiful, - th' Immortal's span
To mortal sight display'd in time of yore
The great Creator's covenant with man,
That whelming waters should e'er land prevail no more!

Thou pledge redeemed of the Deity!
To man below, in consolation sent,
Thou fairest, brightest vision of the sky,
I hail thee! Dolphin of the firmament!
For each succeeding varied change imbues
Thee with a magic colour, that doth shine
More splendid than before - till all thy hues
Proclaim the God at once, - like him, thy form divine!

And if on earth thy beauty be extreme,
When view'd o'er mountain height, or level plain;
Far, lovelier far, thy variegated beam,
Expanded o'er the surface of the main,
With either horizon thy resting place,
Thou mak'st the sea the mirror of thy light;
The ocean back reflects thy radiant face -
Like lovers, each belov'd - both gazing with delight!

Jehovah! with thy name commenc'd my strain!
Jehovah! with thy name it shall conclude,
By those alone who track the dark blue main,
The grandest of thy wond'rous works are viewed,
I envy not the man, whose inward fire
Of soul, expands not, riding o'er the deep,
Whose mental aspirations soar not higher
With the wild waves, 'ere night behold him laid in sleep!

For me! whatever dangers yet may lower
Upon my life, or errors be my fate -
So shall it soothe me, in my latest hour,
That once, at least, I tried to celebrate
Thy praise; and in Thy temple of the sea,
Its canopy, the clear and cloudless sky,
That thus I struck the lyre, and bent the knee,
Oh, God! in homage to thy pow'r and majesty!

With love of fame, my dam of life swoke,
And hopes of honour - that ambition fired;
Too soon the demon disappointment broke
Upon the day-dreams which those hopes inspir'd.
And be it so - yet, haply if I dare
Uplift a suppliant's voice to heav'n 'twould be
That God in mercy migh(t) accord my prayer
To die a hero's death in planting Freedom's tree!

I little reck what soil it be upon,
So danger lead, and point to glory's star
In fighting on the plains of Marathon,
Or 'neath thy banners, noble Bolivar!
For since young Freedom's standard is unfurl'd,
On Atho's crags, and Pernambuco's shore,
Alike to me, the east or western world,
So that my soul escape amid the battle's roar!

When life from selfish joys is disallied -
If callous gloom succeed to cherish'd hope -
'Twere nobler far to fall by Freedom's side,
Than on to live a noody misanthrope,
Or die a heartless suicide - if life
Hath ceas'd to please - what higher aim can be
Than in the glorious rapture of the strife
To breathe our last upon thine altar - Liberty?

But 'circumstance' is, aye, one's blight and curse,
It mars our best and brightest hopes - since then
It may not be my lot to spur my horse
In Freedom's ranks, and aid my fellow men
(Embattled in her sacred cause,) in rending
A tyrant's chains, a bigot's iron crown -
The patriot's and the martyr's laurel blending,
And dying, strike some Selim, or Pizarro down.

Perchance the grandest boon to be be(s) tow'd
By heav'n on man - the shortest, best relief
From all his mortal sufferings, and load
Which life entails of misery, and grief -
The termination of his woes, might be
As now he braves the billows of the Cape,
To grapple with grim Death upon the sea,
The whirlwind for its courser, and the storm its shape,

So might the bark become his coffin's shell,
The murky cloud enshroud him as his pall
The roar of distant thunder ring his knell,
The lightning's flash illumine his funeral!
His winding sheet the wild white curling wave,
The rolling billow as his bier, be lent,
The rain his tears! the ocean for his grave,
The Cape of Storms itself his mighty Monument!

W.

Cape Town.
(No.4. Sept.15, 1830. p.48)

"W" probably only visited the Cape when his ship called at the port. His verses had nothing in common with Settler Writing, of which the following is far more characteristic in theme and execution (although it is comparatively rare to find such a lengthy narrative):

"The London Emigrant and Ostrich".

When dreary war's sad days were o'er, and gentle peace
returning,
And times were chang'd, and prices down, - many a one
went mourning,
I left my place in Berkley-square, my curricl and
dandy, -
My shatter'd fortune to repair, by making wine and
brandy, -
I left old England'd chalky cliffs to southern climes
resorting,
Where albatross and flying fish and dolphins gay were
sporting;
I left old England's frost-bound streams and snow
white covered mountains.*
To greet more kind congenial gleams, green woods, and
shady fountains.
I thought upon South Afric's plains that are describ'd
by Barrow,
And wish'd that I were safely there, behind my plough
or harrow.

* (Last day of Dec.1819 - Great Frost).

My mind was fill'd with clustering grapes and
pretty wreaths of flowers,
And how I'd court the rural Muse in Great
Fish River's bowers;
For I had heard of shepherd's lives, of
Coridon and Flora,
And many a pretty tale had read of
Demon and Pastora,
With lambs and ewes, and country views,
and fields of golden grain,
My mind was fraught, and then I thought of
cities with disdain.
Upon the boundless vast expanse for many
a month now sailing,
On close encumber'd decks confin'd, - to
me 'twas like a jailing.
At length on Afric's stormy coast, thro'
surge and foam we landed,
Though one good ship was burnt and lost,
and others nearly stranded.
The whales and monsters of the main along
the coast were playing,
The elephant and huge sea-cow upon the
strand were straying,
The vulture and the pelican above our heads
were soaring,
The fiercer tyrants of the wild in the deep
woods were roaring,
The bustard and the eagle tribe,^{*} in search
of snakes were walking,
The ostrich and the gentle crane along the
plains were stalking,
With birds of every form and hue each narrow
Kloof was ringing,
Whose croaking sounds and hollow notes were
anything but singing.
In snow-white tents, on rations fed, upon the
beach now lodging;
In bullock-waggon, strong and slow, with
Dutchmen rough, now dodging
With Afric's swarthy flat-faced sons, or
starv'd Malay attending,
Through tracts so strange and scenes so new,
from morn to night we wander'd.
Reflection scarce the change could bear, our
wits were well nigh squander'd;
The panther cruel through the night, with ev'ry
beast was howling,
The dread hyene on our heels, with wolves and
wild cats yowling;
With aloes and mimosas gay, the plains were
studded over,
The drifts and banks were hanging green with
shrubs more sweet than clover,
With hyamanthus red and gold, the very shade,
was glowing.
Strelitza here, in and blue, appear'd in
stateliest pride,
Whilst pendant flowers of diff'rent hues hung
from the round bush side,
Which, vying with the various greens, in concord
sweet with view,
Whilst ev'ry plain, and hill and dale, seem'd
prodigal of shew:
The lovely doves and woodpeckers with beauteous
lowries fluttering,

*The secretary
bird)

The toucans and the sprew's gay, in every
bush were chattering;
In deeper woods were buffalo's (sic) and every
savage creature,
The monkey and the wild baboon, and brutes of
ev'ry feature,
With quaggas and the wild gazelle the plains
were scatter'd over;
The mountains brows and scarry cliffs the pendent
shrubs did cover.
On Great Fish River's wide-spread plains at
length our course was ended,
Locations fixed, and wattled huts with these
new scenes were blended;
But now misfortune, bitter guest, who long my
hopes had blasted,
With rust and mildew, drought and blight, our
last small means had wasted;
In these fair plains and healthy climes, we
strangers almost fasted,
The porcupine our gardens robb'd of what the
drought had left us,
The tyger, wolf, or wild dog, still of sheep
and kine bereft us,
Whilst fiercer Caffres drove our plains of all
that these had spar'd,
And worse than Job, or Prodigal, we hungry
settlers far'd.
One time, as wandering with my gun, 'twas in
the morning early,
Hoping to find a buck or bird, for I was
starving nearly,
When, straying through a sandy flat, with
heath and long grass cover'd
I luckily 'spied a nest - of ostrich eggs
half smother'd,
Where many an ostrich snug and safe [■] had made
her dear deposit, [■](many ostriches
lay their eggs
together)
And safer thought her charge was laid than
miscr cask in closet.
So large a burthern safe to gain, homeward
I quickly posted;
And soon I hoped for breakfast good to have
some nicely roasted.
Returning quick with roomy sack and double-
barrell'd gun,
I sharply then my prey did pack, and home
prepar'd to run,
When who should now with wond'rous speed and
fiercest wrath appear,
And close pursuing on my track had soon
approach'd my rear;
But Mrs. Ostrich, stout and bold; with wings
and feathers rowing,
With gall and spite and bitter rage and angry
fury blowing,
Then strait a circuit round me took as I stood
there confounded,
And sure if I had longer stay'd she would have
me surrounded.

Down went the eggs, down went the gun, no
time was left for musing,
Or my poor bones with stump and beak she soon
would have been bruising;
For had I stay'd to fire my gun in this my
fear and dread,
And only main'd or wounded her, she soon had
kick'd me dead.
But not fight but run away, then stay here to
be slain,
For he that once can get safe home may live to
run again.
Wearied and faint, quite near my hut, I fell
down by a tree,
And follow me she might or not, I ne'er look'd
back to see.
When having shaken off my fear, and also gain't
my breath,
I started on my legs again, and vow'd I'd be
her death.
Of brother cockneys brave and stout, a gallant
squad I muster'd,
Who talked big, as forth we march'd and bragg'd
and swore, and bluster'd;
We vow'd, if she should us attack, to stand by
one another,
And boldly charge her just as though, each fought
to save a brother;
But coming to the spot at last, we look'd a
little paler,
And held our peace, but whether 'twas for want
of it, or valour,
I never learnt, for she had left, the coast both
wide and clear,
And as we could not see her nigh, it quite
remov'd our fear.
Mysterious case! the sack and eggs were nowhere
to be found,
And my poor double-barrell'd gun lay broken on
the ground.
We quickly judg'd, without debate, 'twas best
to hie away,
For fear that she behind some bush might still
in secret lay.
Pleas'd now to think she was not there, but
sorry for the eggs,
For I, with hunger and with fear, could scarcely
keep my legs,
So, picking up my broken gun, strait began to
trudge,
Looking behind us now and then, as we fast home
did budge;
Each boasting what he would have done had she been
at the place,
Though all were very glad at heart she had not
shown her face.
Now, brother sportsmen, here attend, to this
my sad narration.
And ere you start on sports like these,
Consider well the occasion.

Selim. Tharfield, Albany, Nov.10.1830. ("Tharfield", the homestead
of the settler, Miles Bowker. He had nine sons. The identity
of "Selim" is uncertain).
(Vol. 1. 1830. p.97)

The following extract is an example of the type of didactic verse inspired by the philanthropists.

"On a lady teaching a Female African Slave".

Peace! Peace on earth, and fair good-will to you,
"Ye sons of Men!" Such have the glad sounds been
That bore the tidings of this lovely scene.
Picture of peace, and love, and mercy too, -
Picture of holy charity! Serene
And mild, and beautiful, as ever threw
Its quiet Guido-tint on rapt'rous view.

For here are earth's extremest ends combined,
And sweet it is to note how peaceful grows
The straggling desert flower, beside the rose -
The rose of England; and to find
The sculptur'd lip of massy bronze, so close
To one, (by the deep contrast more refin'd,)
The breathing image of a spotless mind.

And sweet to mark with what a docile gaze, -
With what a soul-subdu'd and soften'd look
Her lustrous eye gleams o'er the Sacred Book!
Whose mighty pow'r omnipotent, allays
The struggling passions that have fiercely shook
The bosoms of her race in other days,
And turns the war-song to a song of praise.

.....

(No. 8. Jan. 5, 1831. p.98)

In No. 10 of the second volume of the Gazette the editor announced:

The following impromptu lines by Coleridge, have been kindly presented to us in the handwriting of their author. - Ed.

God Omnipresent
My Maker! of thy Power the trace
In every creature's form and face,
The wond'ring Soul surveys!
Thy wisdom, infinite above
Seraphic thought, a Father's love
As infinite displays.
Thou mad'st, then fillest, Earth and Air,
Yet didst the liar, Man, declare,
The whole Earth's voice and mind!
O! let us still with heedful heart,
Lord! even as Thou all present art,
Thy presence know and find!

Then come what will of weal or woe,
Joy's bosom spring shall steady flow:
For tho' 'tis Heaven thy Self to see,
Where but Thy Shadow falls, Grief cannot be!

Sunday, 19th June, 1814. S.T. Coleridge.

The Cape of Good Hope Literary Magazine, James L. Fitzpatrick, Esq.
(editor) Printed and published by E.J. van de Sandt de Villiers,
Cape Town.

This magazine, which appeared in 1847, was another attempt to establish an indigancous periodical in English. Its promoters hoped that it would become "the Champion of South African Literature." They put forward a number of reasons which (in their opinion) augered well for the success of the venture. One was the presence at the Cape of "gentlemen connected with the military and civil government of the colony, and members of the learned professions..." another was:

...Unlike the British settlements in other parts of the globe, we do not look to the mother country as our only connecting link with the civilized world...The arrival of Indian news is looked forward to almost as eagerly as that from England...

On the whole this was a very uninspiring publication. The occasional verse "A Paraphrase of Horace" and "Fairies" reveals that the authors were determined not to acknowledge their environment. Almost the only exception is "Dirk van Splinter, a legend of the Devil's Peak" by H. van Plaaks, published in volume 11, No.5. Volume 11, No. 6, contains a sentimental tale by Mrs. Ward: "Annie Maxwell, the girl who wished to better herself". It is set in England.

The Cape Monthly Magazine. William Brittain,
Cape Town, January to June, 1857.

The editor of this publication made a special effort to encourage local versifiers. In volume 1 he proffered critical comments in a series of articles entitled "Rejected Contributions". Volume 11, July - December, 1857, contains a verse narrative "The Wild Hunter's Legend" which is entirely derivative.

The magazine boasted a regular "Literary Review" in which special attention was given to volumes of African hunting and Travel. There was also a fictional serial of (and this was rare) local interest: "Xafirs and Kafirland - A Settler's Story".

Occasional verse was still appearing regularly on the black man. Here is an extract from "The Scene of the Zulu Massacre, after the Battle":

Rotting on the reeking strand,
Children of wild Zulu-land,
Stark and bare their corpses lie
Stretched beneath the scorching sky -
While the scavengers of heaven,
Gorge the feast that death has given.
Wheeling, circling overhead,
With their giant wings outspread;
Slow and stately they descend,
Slow and stately downward bend;

APPENDIX C.

EXTRACTS FROM SAM SLY'S AFRICAN JOURNAL.

(William Layton Sammons, Ed., Publisher, and Proprietor)
... Cape Town.

In "African Poetry, original" - a regular feature of his journal, Sam Sly printed original contributions. He often added critical comments.

"Makanna" (1)

On Amakoza's verdant plain,
Where Keiskamma's waters flow,
Thus the eagle-eyed Makanna
Supplicated, bending low.

"By the lonely orphan's moaning,
By the widowed woman's sigh,
By the childless mother's groaning,
Great Ulangha hear my cry.

By the crimson blood that tinges
All the rivers of our land,
By the shouts of fiendish triumph
Bursting from the Christian band.

By our country's bleeding sorrows,
By the white oppressor's sneer,
By our father's bones polluted,
God of Battles lend thine ear.

From the white cloud where thou ridest,
Stretch thine arm of vengeance down
From the brows of Amanglazi,
Snatch proud victory's stained crown."

Hark! the prayer ascends to Toguh,
Borne on the tornado wild,
And his voice above the whirlwind
Answers thus his noble child.

"Rouse thee, rouse thee, great Makanna,
Rouse thee like a Chieftain brave,
Seize thine asagai and buckler,
Be a warrior not a slave.

Let not fear thy bosom enter,
Nor thus weeping idly kneel,
Child of heroes, thou must grapple
With the pale marauder's steel.

Where thou seest the white cloud gath'ring,
There my mighty arm shall be,
And the fiery bolts of heaven
From the foe thy country free."

Rising from the earth, Makanna
Upward turned his eyes again,
While thus he vowed, "O King of Heaven,
"By the spirits of the slain,

"I do swear I will devote me,
To my injured country's cause,
Not till freed from white oppression,
Stay my hand or fearing pause."

Then with hope his bosom glowing,
Quick he seized his ruthless spear,
Rushed to battle, like a warrior
Hurrying to some triumph near.

Who shall shed the tear of sorrow
Over freedom's bloody grave,
Where her high-soul'd sons have fallen,
'Neath the children of the wave.

Clothed with life, and youth immortal
Freedom yet shall leave the tomb,
Like a Phoenix from her ashes,
Rising, dissipate the gloom.

Wild and free in deserts cradled,
She again shall wake our fire,
And oppression pale and treabbling,
Fall 'neath her indignant ire.

Cape Town. W.Y.

(Vol. 2. July, 1844, No.56. p.2)

The Frontiersman's reply to this (published in the same journal) was, very understandably:

"The Africaners' War Song".

Air - "A' the Blue Bonnets are over the Border".

March! march! Cabo * and Caledon!
Mount your fleet steeds, they are sleek - in good order,
March! march! Stellenbosch - Swellendam,
Every brave Burgher must off to the Border!
Drive old Macone
Right into the Somo
Spare not his hordes who have butchered our brethren!
Down with Sandilli,
With Botman and Rili;
Soon will their bones on the plains be seen withering.

* An old Portuguese name for the Cape.

(Vol. 3. Feb. 1846).

During the Kaffir wars numbers of doggerel songs of this nature were written and set to popular tunes.

There is an entertaining reference by Sammons to a predecessor of his; a most optimistic gentleman, called Dempster, who published The Cape of Good Hope Pamphlet (1841), "the first of which proved the last". The author was nothing if not confident:

Like an increasing population
From a rising generation,
Or important emigration:
So will this publication
Have a wide circulation...

a Penny Publication printed here may be rendered far superior to any other of the sort that can be Printed in Europe, and I don't see what could prevent them from being exported to all parts of the globe for sale.

(The Cape of Good Hope Pamphlet, H . Dempster, Cape Town. (1841)

APPENDIX D.

STAFFORD CRUIKSHANKS.

"Who's Who, in Grahamstown" (1)
(A sketch after "Hiawatha").

Should you ask me, gentle tourist -
Or, more distant gentle reader -
What and where is lovely Grahamstown,
City of the saints and settlers:
Should you further make enquiry
Of its size and population,
Site, construction, and resources:

I should answer, I should tell you,
'Tis a city named - and proudly!
From a mighty man of valour,
Brave, unselfish, and descended
From the illustrious Grahams of Fintra.
'Tis the city, far most English
That South Africa has boasted;
Far the healthiest and fairest,
Most renowned in song and story,
Fitted rarely by position,
Wealth, advantages, importance,
For the seat of Legislature;
Population - still increasing -
At the present twice six thousand,
Half of whom are Europeans,
Or the sons of British Settlers.

Worthy tourist! distant reader!
Should you ask of the remainder,
I should answer, I should tell you
Of the rabble heterogeneous -
Some are Kafirs, some Tambookies,
Fingoes, Totties, Zuluz, Gonas,
Mozambiques, Korannas, Bushmen,
Whose description, from Othello,
Would have scared Brabantio's daughter,
Half the Senators of Venice,
Or the Ottoman invader!

Should you ask me of their standing
In the Colony as subjects
To the best of living monarchs,
Callings, industry, and merit:
I should answer, I should tell you
That our Sable fellow-subjects -
Blazoned forth, in law, our equals -
Best can give the information,
Best explain their social standing,
Best unfold their black intentions
To their kind emancipators,
To the best of living monarchs.

Here they glide in pairs and trios!
Here they lounge and lie in dozens,
From the gate-beleagured Drosty
To the much too close Location,
Scenting every door and gangway,
Tainting every street and corner
With an oderiferous perfume,
Worthy of the sty or tanyard;

Watching what poor European,
With more cash than brains to mind it,
To their wiles may fall a victim!
Sometimes, truly, for a wonder,
Some of them will work for payment,
Taking care to give more trouble
Than would weigh against their labour.
On the whole - I've proved too sadly -
Theft and fraud their general talent,
Industry the rare exception.

European! young or hoary -
Think upon your early training;
When in church, or kirk, or chapel,
Of't you heard, with Christlike pity,
Hazy eyelids, heaving bosom,
Yarns about the "happy negro,"
Stories of some "pious negro" -
Tales about the "grateful negro" -
Wonders of the "industrious negro!"
How like slaves the darlings laboured -
How like saints the darlings worshipped -
How like warriors they were suffering!
This you heard, good European -
Till you ran (how wise!) and parted
With your shirt or birthday present!

True, I've seen the nigger happy,
In his Bacchanalian orgies
Happy with the fumes of brandy -
Happy in his hopes of plunder;
But his gratitude - or honour -
Industry or godly bearing,
I, in sadness, must abandon
To some luckier discoverer, -
Who perchance may see more reason
Than myself for giving credit
To the tale that from fair Adam
And his fairer God-given consort
Such Yahoos could have descended.

APPENDIX E.

THE BULLETIN.

(English lyrics on the Anglo-Boer War).

The Bulletin, the "Quarterly Journal of the South African Home Reading Union" was later superseded by the South African Bookman.

The following lyrics by poets in England were published in The Bulletin (New Series) Vol. 1. 1909 - 1910. (F. Davis & Sons, Maritzburg.)

"The dead Drummer".

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined - just as found:
His landmark is a kopje-crest
That breaks the veld around;
And foreign constellations rest
Each night above his mound.

Young Hodge the Drummer never knew -
Fresh from his Wessex home -
The meaning of the broad Karoo,
The Bush, the dusty loam,
And why uprose to nightly view
Strange stars amid the gloam.

Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow up a Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

Thomas Hardy.

(Vol. 1. p. 18).

"I Heard a Soldier"
(first published in The Bulletin, July, 1907)

I heard a soldier sing some trifle
Out in the sun-dried veld alone;
He lay and cleaned his grimy rifle
Idly, behind a stone.

"If after death, love, comes a waking,
And in their camp so dark and still
The men of dust hear bugles, breaking
Their halt upon the hill.

To me the slow and silver pealing
That then the last high trumpet pours,
Shall softer than the dawn come stealing,
For, with its call, comes yours!"

What grief of love had he to stifle,
Basking so idly by his stone,
That grimy soldier with his rifle
Out in the veld, alone?

Herbert Trench.

(No.2. p.71)

"April on Wagon Hill"

Lad, and can you rest now,
There beneath your hill?
Your hands are on your breast now,
But is your heart so still?

'Twas the right death to die, lad,
A gift without regret,
But unless truth's a lie, lad,
You dream of Devon yet.

Ay, ay, the year's awaking,
The fire's among the ling,
The beechen hedge is breaking,
The curlew's on the wing;

Primroses are out, lad,
On the high banks of Lee,
And the sun stirs the trout, lad,
From Brendon to the sea.

I know what's in your heart, lad -
The mare he used to hunt -
And her blue market-cart, lad,
With posies tied in front -

We miss them from the moor road,
They're getting old to roam,
The road they're on's a sure road
And nearer, lad, to home.

Your name, the name they cherish?
'Twill fade, lad 'tis, true:
But stone and all may perish
With little loss to you.

While fame's fame you're Devon, lad,
The Glory of the West:
Till the roll's called in heaven, lad,
You may well take your rest.

Henry Newbolt.

(No. 2. p.112)

The Bulletin did not usually publish verse from England. Its policy was to pay attention to local writers - both English and Afrikaans - and it was a source of encouragement to men like Cripps and Slater. These sentimental lyrics make an interesting contrast to the poems on the war written by English speaking South Africans since the conflict.

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