



PRINSLOO OF
PRINSLOOSDORP



A TALE OF TRANSVAAL
OFFICIALDOM





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PRINSLOO OF PRINSLOOSDORP.



Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp

A Tale of Transvaal Officialdom.

BEING INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A
TRANSVAAL OFFICIAL, AS TOLD BY
HIS SON-IN-LAW,

SAREL ERASMUS,

(Douglas
Blackburn)

*Late Public Prosecutor of Prinsloosdorp, Market Master
of Kaalkop, Small-pox Tax Collector of Schoonspruit,
etc., etc.*

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GLOSSARY OF DUTCH WORDS

USED IN THIS WORK.

BILTONG—Strips of meat dried in the sun.

COMMANDO—A party of Boers commanded for fighting or any State service.

COMMANDEER—To command personal service or material for State use.

DRIFT—A shallow ford.

FIELD CORNET—An important official who, in addition to being chief of the fighting force in his district, performs every branch of administrative duty for which no special officer is appointed on the spot. In outlying districts he is a veritable "Pooh Bah," holding all the offices there are. On proclaimed goldfields he ranks below the Mining Commissioner.

Glossary.

GRONDWET—The Constitutional Law of the State.

I.D.B.—Illicit Diamond Buying.

INDABA—Kaffir name for a serious conversation or conference; largely used in conversation by Afrikanders.

INSPAN—To put horses or oxen to the cart or waggon.

KEREL—A fellow; as “mooi kerel,” a nice fellow.

KWAAI—Strict, particular, sharp.

LANDDROST—A chief stipendiary magistrate.

MINING COMMISSIONER—The chief Government official on a proclaimed goldfield, having control over all matters relating to the soil. Is the Government nominee on every representative body.

NACHTMAAL—The quarterly celebration of religious worship, to which Boer families travel long distances. It is the one universally-observed social gathering, and is made a general holiday, lasting two or three days.

NEEF—Nephew; used by elders in addressing youths familiarly.

OOM—Uncle. Elderly men are generally addressed as “Oom” by juniors.

OPRECHT—Sincere, reliable.

OUTSPAN—To unharness and release horses and oxen.

Glossary.

PREDIKANT—A minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Predikant is held in great reverence by the Boers, the Doctor ranking next.

RAAD—The Parliament.

RAADZAAL—The Parliament House.

ROOINEK—Red neck ; a contemptuous name for Englishmen.

ROOIBAATJE—Red jacket ; British soldiers.

SCHELM—A rogue ; a rascal.

SCHRICK—A sudden fright.

SJAMBOK—A switch of rhinoceros hide, always carried by a Boer ; pronounced "shambok."

SKOFF—Kaffir word for food.

SLIM—Cunning, artful, tricky.

SMOUCHER—A pedlar.

SOUPIE—A tot of liquor.

STANDS—Building plots, 50 feet by 50 feet, or 50 feet by 100 feet.

STERK—Strong.

STOEP—The raised portion surrounding all South African houses forming a verandah ; the most frequented part of the house.

TAAL—The Dutch *patois* spoken by the Boers.

TANTE—Aunt. Elderly women are addressed familiarly as "tante."

Glossary.

- TICKIE—A threepenny piece; the smallest coin circulating in the Transvaal.
- TREK—To journey by ox-waggon.
- TREK CHAIN—The chain by which the oxen draw the waggon.
- TRANSPORT RIDER—One who conveys goods by ox or mule waggon. Transport riding was the main source of income to farmers before the construction of railways.
- TRONK—The jail.
- VELD—The open country.
- VERNEUKERY—Low, petty cheating; knavery.
- VRACHTER—Really! Truly! A much-used interjection.

Note.—The “V” in Dutch is always pronounced “F,” the “D” at the end of words is always pronounced “T.” Thus, “Veld” is pronounced *Felt*; and “Vrededorp,” *Freededorp*.



AUTHOR'S NOTE.

To South Africans generally, and Uitlanders particularly, no explanation of the following pages is necessary, but for the guidance of readers only slightly acquainted with the Transvaal and the conditions of life therein, it has been thought desirable to give some idea of the scope and character of the book which would help them to a proper understanding of it. For this purpose I think I cannot do better than quote the following from a notice of the coming volume which appeared some time ago in a Transvaal newspaper :—

“It has long been a matter for surprise that the official side of the Transvaal has never yet been laid under contribution for a literary work of more than transient interest. Considering the rich store of virgin material to hand and the vast clientele interested, directly and indirectly, in the country, the market is assured and sufficient to tempt any

publisher. The difficulty, so far, has been the want of a man capable of handling the subject. No newcomer, whatever his literary gifts, can be trusted to describe the Transvaal Boer in his many aspects. To know him, one must have lived with him, speak his language, and have at once a broad sympathy for his limitations, and a sense of humour to present them in an attractive form. The task has at length been undertaken by one eminently qualified, and we have been favoured with a perusal of the MS. of his work, which, under the title of 'Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp,' will shortly be published by Dunbar Bros., of London and Johannesburg. It is absolutely the first attempt on the part of a qualified writer to depict the Transvaaler as he is under the new dispensation. Globe trotters by the score have given more or less inaccurate pictures of the Boer on the farm, and the *veld** of Cape Colony, but no one has shown him in the town and in the official ring—the Boer that is destined for a long time to loom large in the public eye at home; the *slim*, narrow, yet interesting, Boer who is our lord and master and the incubus on the progress of the Transvaal.

“The book takes the form of a biography of Piet Prinsloo, a *voortrekker* from Cape Colony, who

* See Glossary for meaning of Dutch words.

goes through the mill of Transvaal officialdom from Field Cornet to Mining Commissioner, is the fortunate vendor of a gold farm and the founder of the *dorp* that bears his name. The author, who knows the *dorp*, Pretoria, and the Rand equally well, gives us a delightfully vivid and humorous picture of the ways that are dark and the tricks that are not always vain of *slim* Piet and his congeners, and, altogether, has produced the truest and best Transvaal sketch we have yet seen. The biography is supposed to be written by the son-in-law of the defunct Piet, and his avowed object is to vindicate the memory of his much-maligned relative. The author has admirably caught and illustrated that artlessness and delightful inconsequence of reasoning and judgment that is so characteristic of the unsophisticated Boer official, exemplified in such verdicts as that given by the Boer jury the other day who acquitted the defaulting Florida postmaster on the ground that he only stole £400 out of a possible £2,000, and the never-to-be-forgotten apology of President Kruger in the wire scandal: 'My officials are not too well paid, therefore there is no harm in their speculating with public money.' Never before has the 'civilised' Boer and his ways been so effectively and faithfully pourtrayed."

THE AUTHOR.





FOREWORDS.

The removal of my father-in-law, Piet Prinsloo, to a better world by dropsy, and of myself to Rhodesia by the machinations of the Hollander clique in Pretoria, have given me occasion and leisure to write and publish in safety much that is necessary for the vindication of the character of a father of his country and founder of the *dorp* that bears his name. At the same time I take the opportunity to show how the presence of the Hollander and Uitlander in the Transvaal has ruined the character of the Afrikaner. Of the wicked conspiracy by which I was forced to resign my positions of Public Prosecutor, Market Master, and Small-pox Tax Collector I shall have something to say in a later chapter; for the respect which we Afrikanders bear for our seniors compels me to set aside my own

grievances in favour of the greater ones of my dead relative. I am particularly anxious to do this without delay, because the *Uitlander Press* of the Rand and many reptile journals in Cape Colony and the Free State have repeated, under the guise of an obituary notice, many of those calumnies which Piet Prinsloo was too magnanimous and proud to deny or avenge when living.

And here it is proper to state that the true reason which induced *Oom Piet* to remove from the Transvaal to Rhodesia was not, as wickedly suggested by the *Land and Volk* newspaper, to obliterate himself and shirk the action he brought against that paper, but rather that he might, by residing out of the country, the more easily resist the temptation to have his traducers dealt with by a court of justice. Those who know the strained state of feeling existing in the Transvaal at the time referred to need not be told that, had *Oom Piet* gone on with his prosecution of the editor the punishment awarded would have been so severe, and would have aroused such bitter feelings among the *Uitlanders*, that trouble would have resulted. It was to save his beloved country from reproach that Piet Prinsloo, as a true patriot and member of the New Reformed Church, generously forgave his enemies and refused to take shelter behind the new Press Law.

So numerous are the base inventions of his enemies that I feel at a loss how to begin to deal with them; and were it not for the literary reputation I gained as the Prinsloosdorp correspondent of the *Volksstem* and a frequent contributor to *Ons Volk*, I should not hesitate to place the task in other hands. But I fear that were I to do that the enemies of my late father-in-law would say that I was afraid to speak out on matters of which I best knew the inside. After great consideration I have decided to tell all the chief events in the life of Piet Prinsloo, leaving the story to refute the many wicked and libellous sayings that cling to his name, and to put to shame his detractors by telling the truth as far as in me lies.

I am aware that in telling the story as I purpose I shall lay myself open to be much misunderstood; indeed, I shall not be surprised if I be accused of doing the very thing that I have complained of in others—namely, revealing secrets of the career of my father-in-law best left untold. But if I should so err, it will the more surely assist me in my great object, which is to show how the character of the Transvaal Afrikaner has been influenced for evil by the combined wickedness of the English Uitlander and Hollander—particularly the latter. I think that the fair-minded, *oprecht* man will be bound to confess that if Piet Prinsloo had

faults—and although I married his daughter and taught him law, I admit he had many—yet they were not part of his nature, but came from the seed of bad example, from temptation to which he had not been used, and the smallness of the salaries paid by the Transvaal Government.

It is always hard to persuade those who judge us Afrikanders by the spoiled samples on the Rand that we are by nature honest, upright and hospitable, and always addicted to making no charge for forage or food when we know that the traveller who outspans at our farms has no money to pay. Indeed, in the early days of our innocence there was very little money in the country, and a stranger who showed that he carried gold was oftentimes wrongly suspected of being an English spy. Thus it came that we were hospitable and made no charges, for we had not learned the use of money, but took cattle, sheep, and produce in payment for our services or our kindnesses freely bestowed.

Since I have lived amongst the Uitlanders and learned to know them I have thought that our people made a great mistake in being kind to them in those early days, for they have given us Boers a bad name, saying we are foolish and unlearned, which encouraged freshcomers to rob us, a custom they have maintained even to this day.

How often do we read stories told in derision of the Boer which should only be told in his honour? There is, for example, the story about Piet's uncle, Gert Ferrerai. He once sold a horse to a *Rooinek* whom he knew, who paid him not in money, but with a writing called a "promissory note." Gert carried it in his pocket for six years, till it became worn out and dirty. So he found out where the *Rooinek* was living and got the *Predikant* to write him a letter, asking him to give him a new writing, because the old one was getting torn. They printed this story in some book, and for a long time *Rooineks* used to try to pay in such notes instead of gold, which caused grave trouble and losses.

Despite the hard things said of him, I know that Piet Prinsloo was as good a Colonial Boer as any man could desire to be related to by marriage. If his faults were many it was because so much was made of them by his enemies. I shall tell at length and truly the many instances in which he suffered at the hands of the Uitlander, for they will explain the very strong feelings he held against them to the day of his death, and make clear the few actions by which he paid them back, "in their own coin," to use an English saying.

I do not wish it to be thought that I approve of all the conduct of Piet Prinsloo after he had

attained to wealth, for I hold with those who say there is no excuse for a full man to steal his neighbour's *biltong*. I cannot forget that a great Englishman named Lord Bacon did what Piet Prinsloo was accused of doing—he took money to give judgment in favour of the briber. Lord Bacon was a Chancellor, which is even higher than a Landdrost, and much better paid, yet he was not so severely abused in the papers as Piet Prinsloo has been. These spiteful criticisms and exposures caused Piet great sorrow, not that he cared what people said or thought about himself; what most angered him was to know that these exposures caused the Uitlanders to think evil of the Transvaal, and write untrue things of other officials. This is why he worked so hard to get the new Press Law made, though I am thankful that he has not lived to see the great failure of that necessary law against the taking away of men's characters.





Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp :

A TALE OF TRANSVAAL OFFICIALDOM.

CHAPTER I.

THE UPBRINGING OF PIET PRINSLOO.

THERE is little need to remind Afrikanders that the family of Prinsloo is one of the best known in South Africa. The original Edict of Nantes served upon Jacobus Piet Prinsloo the Huguenot, compelling him to *trek* to South Africa, exists to this day, preserved in the Bible of the Prinsloos of Assvogelkop, Cape Colony. People learned in the history of the Colony know that wherever there has been action, civil or martial, there was a Prinsloo to be found. Lest, however, some may blame Piet Prinsloo for some of the discreditable acts of those members of the Prinsloo family who betrayed Graaf Reinet to the English in 1680, I

would mention that there are two branches of the family, and that the Graaf Reinet traitors belonged to the other one, as my father-in-law has often explained.

The birth of Piet was attended by circumstances of sadness and depression. He was the thirteenth child by the third wife of that Hans Prinsloo who led the Burghers against the English tax collector whom they justly killed at Oliphant's Kloof. The year of Piet's birth (1835) was the one wickedly chosen by the British Government for the ruin of the Colonials by freeing their slaves. Hans Prinsloo owned many, and according to the rate of compensation awarded, he should have received £600. But the Government, instead of paying in honest gold, did what all Englanders are fond of doing to this day: they gave the owners pieces of paper called "Treasury Bills," payable in London. Now, it was foolishness to expect poor Boers to travel to England, of which they knew nothing, and cash these bills, so they fell victims to the rascally Englanders who went round the country offering to go to London and collect the money. Hans Prinsloo was deceived by one of these *Rooineks*, who told him that the English Government had no more money, which was why they paid in paper. He so frightened him that Hans sold him the bill for £20. Some

years afterwards he heard that the *Rooinek* went to London and got the £600 in good gold, besides large sums more on bills that he had *verneuked* out of other Boers in the same way. Thus it was that when Piet came into the world he found his family so poor that they had to farm with hired Kaffirs, and even had sometimes to work themselves. Little wonder that the name of Englander was hated by him all the days of his life, and that he distrusted all kinds of written papers!

Piet grew up with his brothers and sisters on the farm at the Paarl, and early gave signs of having great courage and love of liberty. He was a bold young *kerel*, and did many things that caused his father loss and sorrow. It was he who, when there was no fresh meat on the farm for many weeks, because it was too dear to buy, would break the leg of an ox in the trek-chain, and tell his father that the beast had struggled and himself caused the break. The ox being no longer any good for pulling he would be killed, and the family had fresh meat.

For a short time Piet was taught at a farm school by an old German teacher whom he hated, because he pressed him to learn cyphering. But the schooling did not last long, for one day Piet finished the master, though no one knew then how it happened. It came about this way. Piet

and the old German were riding to a distant farm when they had to cross a river in flood. The old man could not see well and had to ask Piet which were the bad places in the ford. Piet showed him a place where the current was deep and strong and the teacher was carried away, so there was no more schooling. In the after days Piet often regretted that he had done this thing, for, said he :

“Had I been able to cypher and read writing as the old teacher wished, I should not have been *verneuked* by so many *Rooineks*.”

He always believed that these visitations came as a punishment for the accident to his teacher, and he taught his children always to treat their school teachers kindly, even if they did not like them. He would often tell them stories of his youth, and strove hard to make them honest, because it was more profitable.

Once when he was a small *kerel* he went with his father to sell forage at a store twenty-four hours distant. While his father bargained the price, young Piet filled his pockets with tins of sardines. But the storeman saw him, and grew so angry because Piet's pa would not chastise him as if he had been a Kaffir, that he would not buy the forage. Hans therefore had to *trek* six hours further, and on the way the lightning struck the

waggon and killed four oxen ; which shows the wickedness and danger of stealing even sardines.

Piet often told this story to his children, with many others of a religious nature, and none of his sons have ever been imprisoned for theft.

Piet remained on the farm until his eighteenth year, when his father and brothers and most of his relations quarrelled with him on grounds perfectly unjust, as he has often assured me ; so he *trekked* with a borrowed waggon and oxen across the Orange River. Being short of Kaffirs to go with him, and having no money, he wrote a letter in the name of his uncle, who was Field Cornet, ordering the jailer to give him four Hottentot prisoners to help get in the mealie crop. The jailer, being able to read only the name, gave up the "boys," and Piet kept them for nearly four years without pay, telling them that if they made trouble he would send them back for breaking out of jail.

So great was the moral influence Piet had upon these "boys" that when a month later he was wrongfully imprisoned at Bloemfontein on a charge of stealing the waggon and oxen with which he made the *trek*, they stayed in the town working for wages, which they gave to him. Often, too, they would help him in the difficult and tiring task of working on the roads, for which he volunteered while staying in the jail.

The story of his escape has often been untruly told. The truthful version, which I have had from his own lips, is this :

The jailer was a man who had learned from Englishers to drink French brandy in large quantities, a habit for which Piet frequently rebuked him, as it was not patriotic to use imported drink when Dop brandy, made in the country, could be had. On one of the occasions when he had accompanied Piet to visit a canteen in the town, the jailer, notwithstanding his solemn promises to Piet not to forget himself, but to return early to the *tronk*, got very drunk. Piet tried his hardest to get him back to the jail, but in vain ; so by way of punishing him for his want of moral courage, Piet gave him a thrashing with his own *sjambok*, and refused to take him home. Instead, he gathered his "boys" together and a Scotch cart and four oxen, and *trekked* across the Vaal into the Transvaal. The drunken jailer lay in the *veld* all that night, and was punished by being removed to Boshoff, where he was made Chief of Police.



CHAPTER II.

THE VOORTREKKER.

WHEN Piet Prinsloo first came to the Transvaal it was very different to what it is to-day. The Republics of Potchefstroom, Utrecht and Lydenburg were quarrelling with each other for independence or mastery of the entire country. They wanted much to fight, but cartridges cost three and four shillings a dozen, and there was no money in the land, so that £25 would make any Republic victor. Piet, being *slim*, would not join any party till he knew which would win.

Soon after he arrived he married Katrina Petronella Charlotte Erasmus, eleventh daughter of old Niklaas Erasmus, who brought him a three-thousand morgen farm at Potchefstroom, £200 in gold and English banknotes, a fine set of china plates and cups, and her own coffin. Piet had

found a lot of stray oxen on his *trek* from Bloemfontein, so that, with his waggon, he was very well off, and soon became a man of importance, for there were not many Boers in those parts who had two hundred sovereigns, and he was pointed out as the right man to be Field Cornet, which lighted the *veld* of his desire.

Katrina, too, desired much that her man should be Field Cornet, for young Nick Keet, who should have married her when she was fourteen years old, had been made one, and she wanted much to spite the girl he had married instead. So she gave her man no rest, but day and night talked of how great a thing it was for a man to be Field Cornet, which was more true in those days than now, when a Mining Commissioner is the greatest man. Then the pay was small for all officials, and often they had to wait many months for something on account. But Katrina said :

“What matters it if the pay is small and uncertain? Is it not a great thing to be able to call out on *commando* men who have not been friendly to you, and compel them to fight Kaffirs when they are afraid? And does not the Field Cornet take charge of the goods of people who die strangers in the land until their friends can come for them, which is generally never? And is not a Field Cornet a man that all desire to be friendly

with lest he should make them obey the law? And does he not receive presents from those whom he excuses from serving?"

This was how Katrina talked day and night, till Piet grew angry.

"How can I," said he, "be Field Cornet while Oom Jaantje is yet living, and there is no empty place?"

But it availed naught, for *vrouws* will not listen to words of reason when their hearts are set on things. At last Katrina saw the wisdom of what her man said, and she asked all her relations (of which she had hundreds) if they knew of a Field Cornet who was old or likely to die.

After much inquiring she heard that her uncle, Jan Coetzee, Field Cornet of Rustenburg, was not only old, but had learned the vices of the Englanders, and drank too much French brandy and whisky. So she made a plan.

"Piet," said she, "you shall go to Rustenburg and stay with my uncle, and take cases of brandy and make him drink heavily."

They waited till a transport rider was going to Port Elizabeth, and gave him ten sovereigns to buy as much French brandy as the money would get. In six months Piet got the brandy and *inspanned* his oxen into his best waggon and *trekked* to Rustenburg.

Oom Jan was pleased with the present, and sat up late that night with Piet drinking, so that he had no prayers for the first time for many months. Now *Oom* had married for his third wife Kaatje Liebenburg, who was but young, being only sixteen, and without experience, so that she could not master her man like an older *vrouw*. At first she would have broken the bottles, but she was in fear of Oom Jan, so she went to bed and thought out plans.

"Why," thought she, "does my nephew come with dear French brandy if it is not that he wants to get favours from my man while he is drunk?" And she made a good plan to talk with Piet and find out from his own mouth what he was doing.

Next night she made no trouble because the two sat long drinking, but stayed with them and pretended to drink too, though it was from a bottle she had well weakened with water. Jan got drunk very soon that night, and while he lay sleeping on the floor, Kaatje worked her plan upon Piet. She was very pleasant to look upon, and had a way of making all the young *kerels* do her will, even though they had *vrouws*. She made Piet drink yet more brandy and then helped him to talk about himself, which was not hard, for Piet's tongue was always in harness

ready for the *trek*, which caused him much trouble in life. This night he must have told Kaatje all his plan to be Field Cornet, though he says he did not; but when men are full of *dop* and young *vrouws* full of curiosity, it is always the women who win.

Next day Kaatje kept Piet hard at the bottle till he took sick. Then Kaatje secretly sent a messenger for the Predikant.

Now it happened that this minister was what in English they call "teetotal," and used to saying hard things of all who drank, even if they did not have to sleep after it. While the messenger was riding Kaatje came to Piet.

"*Neef*," said she, "I have heard that the Predikant is coming to beg your brandy to give to the sick. He is a great hypocrite, and drinks it all himself, and makes as if he does not know the taste. I want you to make him ashamed, and talk to him as if all the Boers in the Transvaal know of his drunkenness, for we dare not talk as we would wish, for he is our Predikant; but you are not in his district and need not fear."

So Piet said he would say all that she wished and more. And Kaatje kissed him and gave him a big *soupie* of brandy and then another, and waited for the Predikant.

When the minister came Piet was like a *Rooinek* for noise and drunkenness. Before the Predikant could say "*Hou gaat it?*" Piet began. He called him a jackal in the *kraal*, who could not stand because he was so full of brandy, and made the room smell of it.

"We know of you and your brandy-drinking, even in Potchefstroom," said Piet.

What he said in all is not fully known, but never was a Predikant so foully traduced.

"Is he often like this?" he asked of Kaatje.

"Always, Predikant; at least he has been so all the time he is here."

And the Predikant went away; and so did Piet's chance of ever being Field Cornet of Rustenburg, for the Predikant is a strong man, and no one dare vote for a Field Cornet whom he said was not fit to belong to the Church.

When Piet grew sober next day Kaatje told her man all that Piet had said to the Predikant, and how that he had come to spy the nakedness of the land and be Field Cornet. So Oom Jan said hard things to Piet, who *inspanned* and *trekked* back to Potchefstroom, thinking hard how he should make himself clear with Katrina, for he had lost the brandy and his chance, and Katrina was a *kwaai vrouw*, and Piet found it not easy to make her believe what was not true. That was a

bad and sorrowful *trek*, but it made Piet think out a fresh plan, of which I shall now tell.

After he had made peace with Katrina, which took many days, he told her what he had thought on the road from Rustenburg.

I have said that Piet had sat quiet while the rival parties in the country fought for the mastery in the Transvaal. On the way back he learned that the Potchefstroomers were making the most headway, so after talking it over with his wife, as all good Boers do, he threw in his lot with them by lending the Government £25 to pay for the transport of cartridges they had bought in Natal, but could not get through for want of money. Later on, Piet did more: he lent them £60 to pay off arrears of salaries to the Field Cornets and the State Secretary, which saved the Republic, for if these officials had not been paid they would have gone over to the Lydenburgers, and as they had over 600 cartridges among them this would have given the victory to that Republic.

In the fighting that now broke out Piet did not take a part, but secretly lent money in small sums to all parties, so that whichever won would be indebted to him and would have to give him some office, so that he might get back his loans and something over. Piet's aid at this time was very valuable, for cartridges had gone up to fourpence

apiece, which made war very expensive and a thing not to be lightly undertaken. Still, matters moved very slowly, because, having few cartridges, the Boers had to talk more than fight, which filled the time very slowly, and made it that Piet was obliged to ride transport to earn money, for all he had was now lent to the Governments.

Piet was very sore at this, but the end showed that it was good that he was not paid, for when the diamond fields were found he made more money than he could have done, even if he had been Field Cornet. It was the illicit trade that first brought big money to him, as it did to many men now great and rich on the Rand, but not by fraud and wickedness, as in their cases.

Piet had been riding transport to Kimberley two years, and one morning he was on the market with his waggon when two men—English *Rooineks*—came and said :

“Piet, do you want to make £15?”

“Ja,” said Piet, for he now loved to make money.

“Then,” said they, “if you will take us to Bloemfontein in your waggon we will give you that,” to which Piet quickly agreed, for it was good money for going so short a distance out of his road. Being quite honest he did not think it strange that men should wish to pay the same

money to travel by slow waggon as they would be charged for a quick Cape cart. Nor did he even think it still stranger that the men should want him to pick them up two hours out on the road. It is true that he spoke about it in the canteen, but not because he thought it strange, but to boast of his good bargain.

As it happened, this was the one time in his life that Piet let his tongue slip to his own profit, for a man who heard him boast asked him what the men were like, and Piet told him. Then said the man :

“I am a detective, and these men are carrying out a parcel of stones. You must be *slim* and hold your tongue and do all they wish, and see everything. When we catch them we shall pay you more than the £15 they will give you.”

Next morning at sun-up Piet began his *trek*, and, when he came to a kloof he knew well, the two men came out and got on the waggon, and lay under the tilt. An hour later Piet heard horses coming fast behind, and looking back, saw four policemen, but he said *nix*, though his heart came into his mouth, for he saw that his passengers carried revolvers, and he feared there might be shooting, which he did not love.

Presently the men heard the horses too, and looked very scared, but only whispered together.

Still Piet made no sign, but sat quiet. Then his heart gave a great jump, for he felt a hand go into his side pocket, and he knew that the parcel of diamonds had been passed to him. At first he would have cried out, but, when he thought, he knew no harm could come to him as the police did not suspect him.

When the detectives came up they ordered the waggon to stop, and while two of them made the two "I.D.B.'s" strip off every bit of their clothing, the others searched the waggon, even under the iron tyres and the nut bolts. Meanwhile the two men stood and laughed, and asked the police if they had searched the horns of the oxen and other impossible places, which made the police very angry, especially when they could find nothing. The chief detective took Piet aside and asked him in Dutch if he had seen the parcel.

"Nay," said Piet, as he truthfully could, for he had not seen, but only felt, the parcel, when the man slipped it in, and when he himself secretly put it in his tobacco pouch.

Then the police rode away amid the jeers of the two men, never having searched Piet, whom they thought was as good as one of themselves.

When the detectives had been gone half an hour one of the men put his hand into Piet's pocket, saying :

“You have earned your fifteen quid,” and then gave a big cry.

“Where is my parcel?” he asked.

“What parcel?” asked Piet, with a very grave face.

The man told how, on hearing the police coming, and knowing the waggon could not get into safe ground over the Free State border before they came up, he had passed the parcel into Piet’s pocket.

“*Alamachtig!*” answered Piet, “that explains why that police *kerel* felt in my pocket and hastened behind the waggon. He has your diamonds and would not say so to his officer.”

The men began to bluster and make a great noise, but Piet was ready for them.

“You *schelms*,” said he, “you tried to get me into trouble by putting the diamonds on me and now you quarrel with me. Get off my waggon, for I will not travel with such as you.”

Piet was not afraid, for the police had taken away the men’s pistols, and they were too small to fight with their fists like common *Rooineks*. So Piet took up a *yokeski* and beat them off the waggon and saw them with pleasure start to walk back to Kimberley.

When they had gone well away Piet got under the tilt and unfastened the parcel. He nearly

fainted when he saw over one hundred beautiful large stones, which he knew were worth many hundreds of pounds, for he had seen many such in Kimberley, and had often wondered that such small things should be so highly valued. He could not eat nor sleep for thinking how he should turn them into money without being himself *verneuked*, for he was no match for the Jew diamond buyers.

At last he thought of a plan. He knew that Dirk Hartogh, who kept a wayside store on the Kimberley Road, was said to deal in stones, so he buried all but two in an ant-hill in the *veld*, which he marked so that he might find it again, and went on to Dirk's store, carrying the two stones in his mouth, meaning to swallow them if the police should change their minds and come back. But nothing happened, for he was now out of their jurisdiction, and he got to Dirk's place.

When he got word in private, he said :

"Dirk, if you found two diamonds on the market at Kimberley, what would you do with them?"

Dirk laughed as he said,

"I should go to Dirk Hartogh and ask him what he would give me for them."

Then Piet showed the sample stones to Dirk, who was very pleased and offered £30 apiece. He

brought out the money and put it into Piet's hand, for Dirk was often honest when he bought stones, knowing that if he were not he would earn a bad name, and have no more customers.

But being himself a Boer, like Dirk, Piet knew the ways of those who had been spoiled by the *Rooineks*, and it was a long time before his faith in Dirk grew strong.

At last he told Dirk that there were over a hundred better stones in a place known only to himself, but he would not tell where it was until Dirk brought out a bag with one thousand sovereigns, and told Piet they were his if he produced the stones.

Piet had never seen so much gold before, and he agreed to take Dirk to the ant heap; which he did. Dirk took the stones he found there, and handed over the money on the spot, and Piet went to his farm very happy and glad that there was "I.D.B.," although before he had said hard things about it, not having made profit out of it. Still, being honest by nature, he was sorry that he had not given the fifteen pounds back to the men who had brought him such fortune. Katrina, however, did not agree, for, said she:

"They were great rogues and would have got you trapped."

When Piet counted the money paid by Dirk he found it £20 short, and he was no longer sorry that he had not returned the men their passage money.

Piet now sat down quietly; for why should a man work who has a thousand pounds? He still took no part in the quarrels, not even in fighting the Kaffirs, for, said he:

“There are many burghers who have done nothing for the country, while I have lent money, which I have never had back.”

Often he was called out on *commando*, but each time he was excused from serving on grounds provided for in the “Grondwet,” and because of the financial aid he had given to the country.

The way he escaped under the shadow of the law shows how useful it is to be able to read. Although he could not read writing, Piet could read printed papers and some books if not in too High Dutch, though not so well as his neighbours believed; but as none of them could read at all they did not know that he was deceiving them.

When the Field Cornet ordered him on *commando* Piet would bring out a big copy of the “Grondwet” and show an article in it.

“Read it,” says Piet, “and you will know that burghers who have lent money to the State cannot be called out.”

And old Hans Scholman, the Field Cornet, who hated Piet, would take the book and look hard at it, and make as if he were reading it, moving his lips and looking as a Landdrost does when he reads the law-book handed him by an attorney. Then, when he thought he had looked long enough, he would say :

“You are right, *neef*, I had forgotten that ; we must obey the law.” And Piet would be excused.

This caused his enemies to be jealous and spiteful, and to make false charges that Piet escaped service in the field by unworthy tricks, which was foolishness, for he did not understand the working of them until those who imputed them to him showed how they were planned. This slandering of his good name grieved him much at the time, but when in the afterdays Piet himself became Field Cornet, he was glad that these false charges had been made, for he then knew all the wiles of the burgher who would escape serving the State on *commando*, for they had themselves taught him, and they were sorry, for he made all serve according to law, or pay heavily to be excused.

It has been often thrown at Piet Prinsloo that he never fought for his country. Such critics do not seem to understand that a man may help his

country in other ways than by bleeding, as, for instance, as Piet did, by lending it money. It is true, that during the Zulu war he was in the service of the English, against whom we then had no quarrel, so there could be no reproach. Even then he inflicted injury upon them. He had a contract to supply oxen, and often has he told how he brought cattle in by day, got paid for them, and then "stampeded" them at night, only to catch and sell them again next day. Thus he spoiled the Egyptians, who were so soon to be our greatest enemies.

Much has also been made of Piet's absence from Laing's Nek and Majuba, as if every Boer in the State could have been there! It happened that Piet had volunteered for that *commando*. He was at Paardekraal at the Declaration of Independence, and made a stirring and great speech. His assurance of his resolve to shed his blood for the independence of the Transvaal had a great and encouraging effect upon those Boers who were lukewarm and anxious about their farms and their *vrouws*, and who thought they had done their share by placing a stone on the heap that to-day forms the famous monument at Krugersdorp. No one was more ready to fight than Piet, although he was afraid the English would win. But the night before Nick Smit's *commando* started for the

Natal border, Piet had a dream that his mother was sick. To his last hour Piet was always a religious man, and he could not disregard such a plain warning and fight happily. He, therefore, offered to stay and mind the farm and the womenfolk at Jan Botha's place, while Jan went to fight. Jan wanted a new saddle, which Piet bought him and gave him five sovereigns beside, and waited till Farnie Duplooy, the transport rider, should come in from Kimberley. Piet knew that Farnie would have met *kerels* from the Colony at Kimberley, who would know if the *vrouw* Prinsloo was dead or sick.

Besides, there was yet another reason. The money Piet had lent was still owing, and he would not fight for a dishonest Government that might be beaten; but he did not say this to everyone. He rejoiced very much when the independence of the Transvaal was established, and from that day was a good and loyal *oprecht* burgher of the State.





CHAPTER III.

LANDDROST OF VREDEDORP.

A YEAR later, Piet gained the great ambition of himself and his *vrouw* Katrina. He hit on a plan that was great, though Katrina always said it was her thought and not his. However, he went to Pretoria when he knew the Government had no money to spare and made a great outcry for his long overdue loan.

“If you have no money to pay me, make me a Field Cornet,” said Piet.

“But how can we make you a Field Cornet if there is no vacancy?” said the State Secretary.

“Easy,” answered Piet. “You must ask any Field Cornet to give an account of the money he has not paid to the State, and if he cannot do so, discharge him.”

"Would you not rather be a Landdrost?" asked the State Secretary, "for it is much easier to find out a Landdrost than a Field Cornet."

Piet knew that this was said because the Government could not afford to quarrel with men who can command votes as Field Cornets can, and he was more than ever resolved to hold out for a Field Cornetcy. But the State Secretary had a glib tongue, and pressed the Landdrostship so hard that Piet began to grow weak, and said he would ask his *vrouw*. So he went back to the farm and talked to Katrina.

"Piet," said she, "you are a great fool. Is not a Landdrost higher than a Field Cornet? And look at the fines you handle."

"But," said Piet, "I cannot read writing, neither can I write more than my name, and a Landdrost has much writing to do."

"Nay," said Katrina, "you can have a clerk and get part of his wages."

This decided Piet, and within six months the Government asked the Landdrost of Vrededorp to show his books, which they knew he could not do. So he was sent away and Piet had his office and his house.

For a long time Piet was sore that he had listened to the advice of Katrina, for the office was well-nigh worthless, except for the salary,

which was sometimes not paid for months. And the burghers turned good on purpose to spite Piet, whom they disliked for getting their old Landdrost sent away, and they would not prosecute their Kaffirs, but flogged them themselves. Piet read up all the local laws that the burghers had forgotten or did not know of; but even this brought in very little. If he fined a Boer for shooting game on a Sunday, the man never had any money to pay, so all Piet could do was to take an ox or some eggs. If he did this the Boer was sure to come in a day or two and borrow the ox for ploughing or transport riding, so that Piet lost count of the fines, which were scattered all over the country.

Then there was another great drawback. There was no jail at Vrededorp, and if there had been there was no money to pay a jailer. Piet turned a stable into a jail, but it was only wattle and daub, and when drunken Kaffirs were inside, they fell against the walls and tumbled outside, so that there was much repairing, and the guard had to keep his rifle and hammer going all the time.

Of course, the papers made great fun of this, which made Piet very angry, until a good thing came along. It was a wind-storm, which one night carried the jail away and lost fifteen Kaffirs, who were worth two sovereigns each for fines.

At the same time the great cattle stealer, "Scotty" Smith, was in the weak *tronk*. He came to Piet and made a great stir because he had been hurt by the falling walls, and said he would bring a law action against Piet.

This same "Scotty" was the cause of great laughter against Piet, and this was the way of it, though I would say there was no shame to anyone in being *verneuked* by a clever man like "Scotty."

He drove up to Piet's farm in a smart spider, with four fine horses, and a lame gelding tied to the back board. It was sundown, and "Scotty" asked if he might *outspan*. "Ja," said Piet, for he saw that the *Rooinek* could pay for all he might have. So "Scotty" *outspanned* and came in to supper, and asked such a beautiful blessing in the *Taal* that Piet was greatly pleased, and brought out the fresh beef which he had at first denied having.

So pleased and innocent was he that when his Kaffir, Sixpence, called him out and said, "*Baas*, that is the great 'Scotty' Smith, the horse thief—I know him well," Piet was very angry, for he thought that a thief like "Scotty" could not ask a blessing before meat. So he tied Sixpence up and gave him a dozen with a *sjambok*, and made him unsay his slander, which the boy frankly did.

Piet was not suspicious until next morning, when Jan Fourie, the Field Cornet, rode on to the farm, and told Piet to keep a close look out on his horses, as the great "Scotty" was in the district.

"Shall you know him by sight?" asked Piet.

"Ja," said Jan, "there he is by the *kraal*; he is looking which he shall steal, the blue *schimmel* or the roan. I know him well, and shall go and find some *kerels* to catch him while you make him drunk, for there is £50 reward for him."

"Nay," said Piet, "you shall stay and make him drunk while I ride, for I am Landdrost."

"Then must you stay and keep him prisoner while I ride and *commandeer* a guard," said Jan, "for I am Field Cornet." And he rode away.

Then it was that Piet wished still more that he were Field Cornet, for "Scotty" was a *sterk kerel*, and had no fear of Landdrosts, but preferred to steal their horses above everybody's.

Piet called "Scotty" and asked him to drink some *dop*, but he would not unless Piet drank also. So Piet weakly agreed, forgetting how brandy had once been his undoing. They sat on the *stoep* and drank much until Piet grew sleepy. He did not then know that "Scotty," being from Scotland, where they drink only whisky, was hard. Piet lay down in his *kaross* and slept heavily.

When he awoke it was near sundown and he

felt very sick. Katrina was away at Potchefstroom, or it would not have happened. He called the Kaffirs, but none came ; so he went out and saw that the *Rooniek's* spider was gone, and instead of there being his own three horses in the stable, there was only "Scotty's" lame gelding and three boys tied up to the manger, for this was "Scotty's" way of leaving.

Piet waited long for Jan to come back, but he did not, for he was in great terror of "Scotty." At sundown who should ride up on Piet's own blue *schimmel* but "Scotty" himself. He came up to the *stoep* as if nothing had happened.

"So you are awake," said he. "I'm glad, for I want some money, and could not find it while you were drunk. Come and show me where it is."

Piet had a bad *schrick*, but he thought out a plan.

"Scotty," said he, "I know that it would be foolishness to say I have none, for you would do to me as you did to the postmaster at Dutoits, make me crawl into my own oven. The money is in here."

He led the way to the *tronk*. "Scotty," thinking it was a stable, and knowing that Boers always hide their money in strange places, went in. Then Piet ran out quickly and shut the door,

calling to the Kaffirs, who put a Scotch cart against it. "Scotty" just fired a shot through the door and broke the arm of Sixpence.

Piet put a boy on the blue *schimmel* and told him to ride fast to Jan Fourie's place, while he got his rifle and fired shots into the *tronk* from the corner of the *stoep*. "Scotty" did not reply, but lay still, and Piet watched in front while the two Kaffirs, with the elephant gun, kept guard behind.

Then it was the great storm came, and the darkness. For six hours they watched and waited for Jan Fourie, who never came, saying it was too dark to find the road at midnight. The *tronk* was blown over, and the Kaffirs ran away, while "Scotty," with his revolver pointed at Piet, abused him terribly; then made him find the two hundred sovereigns he had hidden, and give up his four guns and all his cartridges.

After he had made Piet get him coffee, he tied him to the stall of the stable, which still stood, and handcuffed him, and at sun-up he rode away. It was three days before they could get the handcuffs off Piet, for "Scotty" had taken away the keys, and no file could cut the hard steel. Piet always thought that "Scotty" had taken his guns also, for they were not to be seen.

The papers made great ridicule of Piet, but

Jan Fourie got applause, for he lied greatly, saying he was chasing "Scotty" all night, when the truth was that he took his best horses and hid them in a *kloof* four hours off, lest "Scotty" should come for them.

But good came out of evil, for the Government built a strong *tronk*, and paid a couple of white guards.

About a year afterwards a young German doctor *outspanned* at Piet's place. He was a learned young man, and was looking for gold and other things in the earth, and selling physic for lung sickness in cattle. When he had drunk some water he was very much excited, and put powders into it and looked hard and long.

"Meneer Prinsloo," said he, "show me where this water is got, for there shall I find iron and coal, and you are a rich man."

So Piet showed him the well. The doctor took a bucketful and put part of it in a bottle and carried it away to be seen by the people in Johannesburg who understand such things.

When he had gone, Piet sent a Kaffir down the well, thinking he might find the coal and iron for himself. Instead, they found the rifles and handcuffs and keys which Piet thought had been carried away by "Scotty."

This is why Piet had no belief in the learned

men who came to prospect for gold on his farm, in later years. "They are frauds," he would say, "and do not know rust from coal."

It is only when one knows how often and how cruelly Piet was robbed by the Uitlander that one can understand the great bitterness he always felt towards that greedy nation. The silliness of that German doctor embittered him against scientific men, so that he refused to let his farm be prospected for six years.

When a gold reef was at last found on it, and he sold the farm, he was again *verneuked* by science. A Johannesburg syndicate had offered him £25,000 for the property, and he was going to ride into the Rand and get the money, when the great John Brown, who is now what is called a millionaire, came to the farm.

"Piet," said he, "I will give you £100,000 for the farm; not in pieces of paper like those swindling Johannesburg Uitlanders, but in golden sovereigns, Kruger's and Queen Victoria's," and Brown showed him a bag full of more gold than he had ever seen. Next he showed Piet a long writing, which, being in the *Taal*, he could almost understand, for it was not like the Uitlanders' agreement, which was in English, and full of strange words. So Piet signed it without consulting Katrina.

Brown counted out the money. First he counted one hundred sovereigns, and Piet, who could not write arithmetic, laid them out in rows on the table, like spans of oxen, sixteen in a span, for he knew that six spans made one hundred, less four. Next Brown counted out one thousand, which took Piet a very long time to check, for one thousand is sixty-two spans.

“There,” said Brown, “goes one hundred; there goes a thousand—one hundred thousand.”

Piet did not quite understand, for he thought one hundred thousand was more than that, but Brown counted twenty-five thousand in the same wicked way, to show how much greater his offer was, and confused Piet till he could see only the glitter of the gold, and, growing greedy, he took it, and signed the receipt, which Brown had cunningly made out for £100,000.

If Piet had not boasted to Jan Fourie that he had sold his farm for £100,000, it would have been well; but again his free tongue brought him trouble. When Katrina came home she counted the money, and told Piet he had been *verneuked*; but he would not believe it till the Predikant came and counted also. Then Piet saw what had been done.

The Predikant wrote to Brown and asked him to bring the rest of the money, but Brown's

lawyer replied that Piet was a thief and was trying to swindle Brown, and that he could bring lots of witnesses who could swear that Piet had told them he had received £100,000; besides which they had Piet's own receipt for that amount, all of which Piet knew was true, and he was sorry that he had boasted so loudly. But he resolved that all his children should learn arithmetic, and he was more than ever sorry that his school teacher had been drowned.

Piet was not the only Boer who was foolish in money matters because he did not know arithmetic. There was Jacobus Bantjies, who had the farm Bantjiesdrift. When the Uitlander came to him and asked for how much he would sell his farm, he did not know what to ask, for he had only heard of big money, but had never seen any.

"There is lots of gold there," said he, though he did not know if there was or not.

"Ja," said the Uitlander, "there may be and there may not be. What do you want?"

"Two millions," said Coos.

"Ja," said the Uitlander, "but the Gold Law says that two millions must be paid in paper and shares. Will you not rather have this knapsack full of sovereigns?"

"I shall ask Sonnie," said he, and called in his *wrouw*, to whom the Uitlander showed the knap-

sack. Then he wrote some figures on a piece of paper.

“That is two millions,” said he, “which will you take?”

“Take the knapsack, Coos,” said Sonnie, “it is the most;” and they did, and found there were only five hundred sovereigns.

A Boer cannot close his eyes when the gold shines. Were it not so, our people would not have given away their rich gold farms for knapsacks of sovereigns, but would have held on for millions. It is a punishment for their greed.

Piet was caught by the same fever as soon as the gold he got for his farm was put away. Katrina wanted it put in a chest and buried under the kitchen floor; but Piet was wiser, for he knew that if he gave it to the Netherlands Bank people it would grow. He had a hard task to make Katrina come to his way of thinking, for, said she:

“Why should these people pay you for taking care of your money? Truly, Piet, you grow foolish, and will not get wisdom.”

Piet got the Predikant to make it clear to Katrina, and she agreed, though at first she would have Piet bring the money back every Saturday, lest robbers should break in on Sunday, when the bank people were at *Kerk*. The Predikant told

her that Piet would lose by this, so she yielded, though she gave Piet great trouble, making him go often to the bank to hear if the money was still there, till he grew tired, and one day brought all the money back and gave it to Katrina to hide, when she was happy, though Piet was not, for he knew he was losing his interest.

“Why do you want interest,” said Katrina, “when you can go to Pretoria and get the money you have lent to the Government?”

And she gave her man no rest until he went after the money, which was one hundred and twenty pounds.

The State was now rich and could pay Piet, but the years had gone by and no money had come, so he travelled to Pretoria. *Slim* Frickkie Keiser was in the Treasury then, so Piet told him what he had come for.

“You have no need of gold,” said the Treasurer, “for you are a rich man, and should be ashamed to trouble the Government for so small a sum. If you are wise you will give me a receipt for that money, else the Government may want to see your books and know all about the fine money.”

Then Piet was very scared, for he had not kept good account of all the money he had received for fines. So he gave Keiser a receipt in full for the hundred and twenty pounds which he had

never had, but Keiser collected it from the Treasury and kept it. Nay, worse, for when he was candidate for the First Raad he told the burghers that he had paid the debts of the Government, and showed them Piet's receipt. This gained him many votes, for burghers are foolish, and believe all that is told to them if the lie be but in the *Taal*.

There was another thing that made Piet hate Englanders. One day two of them *outspanned* at his farm on their way to Magato's country, where they were after mineral concessions. Now it happened that Piet was very good friends with that great chief, Magato, and he told the Englanders this; also that a word from him would help them much, as a bad word would spoil them, for he meant that the *Rooineks* should pay him for his good word. He also told them that he had a concession from the chief to bring boys to the Rand mines, getting £1 premium for each Kaffir he brought, which was true, but foolish to say, for a Landdrost may not do this—if he be found out. But Piet loved to make himself to be rich and great before *Rooineks*. So in the end the men paid him £10 for his good word, which they themselves wrote and Piet signed, though he knew well that it would be of small account, for Magato was a strong chief and

disliked the Boers, and would never listen to their advice, for he feared a trap to steal his country, and set light value on their good words.

Piet asked the *Rooineks* to tell Magato that the small-pox sickness was on the roads that the boys would travel to the mines, which was true. These rascally Englishers made a plan when they heard this, and gave out to Magato that they were doctors who could "vaccinate," which is salting for the small-pox. Magato, being foolish, and having had one great visitation of the disease, believed them, for he knew that the white men salted for small-pox. He gave them ten sovereigns and twenty oxen to vaccinate all the young men in the *kraal* and all his wives, which the scoundrels did, but they did not use the right stuff, but condensed milk.

Those Englishmen passed through the country vaccinating Kaffirs for half-a-crown and Boers for five shillings each, and never before was there so much money in a tin of milk. And to this day there are those who say that Piet was a party to the fraud, because he gave the *Rooineks* a letter to Magato. Such people do not know that the villains came back to Piet's farm and vaccinated him and all his family in payment of their forage bill. But worse came when Magato learned the truth from the German missionary. He was very

mad, and sent an *induna* to Piet to bring back the £10 and the twenty oxen paid to the *Rooineks*. Piet paid them, for he feared he should lose his contract for boys if he did not. And what he feared came true, for Magato took away the contract and gave it to the German missionary, whereby Piet lost over £200 per month.





CHAPTER IV.

THE JEALOUSY OF NICK GROBLER.

PIET PRINSLOO had enjoyed his ambition four years when I married his third daughter, Sannie, and was made Public Prosecutor of Vrededorp in the place of Franz Grobler, who was son of Nick Grobler, Landdrost of Schoonspruit, and stole postage stamps.

It was Nick Grobler who was the great boulder in the road of my father-in-law's happiness. Jealous, vindictive and greedy by habit, he was like an Englishman and Hollander in one, and he hated Piet Prinsloo as much as Piet despised the nations whose vices Nick possessed in his big, vain body. I am persuaded that Nick Grobler was in the pay of the enemies of the Transvaal, for no true patriot would so often and so wickedly expose the weakness and mistakes of an

Afrikander as he did those of my father-in-law, in addition to speaking English, even in court, instead of the *Taal*. Though I cannot prove it, there is no doubt that he inspired all the malicious articles about Piet Prinsloo which often appeared in the *Critic* and the *Patriot*. I am sure of this, because Nick wrote a very much better hand than my father-in-law, though I know that when he was first made Landdrost he used to sit up at night to practise writing, which was why at first he always sentenced Kaffirs, whatever the offence, to three months, two pounds or ten lashes, because he had not yet learned how to write other sentences. But in the end he wrote very well, as I must confess, for the State Attorney told me he could often read nearly the whole of the evidence taken in cases by Nick, which was not so with my father-in-law until I became his son-in-law and Public Prosecutor. Then it was agreed that I should make my writing very much like his, and write out all his judgments—a long and weary work, for Piet had a loose tongue and filled many long pages.

As soon as Piet Prinsloo was made Landdrost of Vrededorp, Nick Grobler started to show his wicked nature against him, and continued so to do until Piet left the Transvaal. His first spitefulness was to publish in the Transvaal *Patriot* a letter

asking if it were true that a certain Landdrost had been in the Bloemfontein *tronk* for cattle theft, or had been refused membership of the *Gerevormede Kerk*.

Piet, very foolishly, made me write a letter to the editor, saying that the libel could not apply to him, and that he wondered who could be meant. He also made grave charges against Nick Grobler. The editor of the *Patriot* did not print the letter, but showed it to Nick, who went to a law agent, and the agent wrote Piet a letter of demand for payment of £100 and an apology in a lot of papers.

“What shall I do?” asked Piet of me, after he had blamed me for writing the letter and causing all the trouble.

“You must refuse to pay or apologise,” said I, “and prove that he took money from the wives of Kaffirs to let them off floggings, and does not pay into the Government all the money he gets for fines. You must tell me the dates when he did all this, and the names of the Kaffirs who have paid him.”

This made Piet very angry, and he spoke foolishness, as he always would when he let his tongue run fast.

“I don’t know the exact days,” said he, “nor can I remember the names of the Kaffirs, but I

know that he has done this, for am I not myself a Landdrost?"

For a long time I strove with him to show him that such a case would be given against him, even by the judges in Pretoria, and at last he saw reason, so I drew up an apology, which was the same one I kept in my desk to write out for Boers who slander their neighbours. I always charged £2 for writing it out, and the editors of the papers where it was printed paid me half what they got for publishing it, which was very profitable for me. The apology was the usual one that is always in the Dutch papers every week, and said:

"I, Piet Prinsloo, Landdrost of Vrededorp, declare that when I said Nicklaas Grobler had stolen money from the Government and had taken bribes from Kaffir women, I spoke what I knew was not true, for Nicklaas Grobler does not take bribes, and I confess, with shame, that I am a great liar, and cannot speak what is true about people who are honest like Nicklaas Grobler.

(Signed) "PIET PRINSLOO."

Witness.

There was at first a little trouble about the £100, but it was arranged by Hans Breda, who saw Nick, and told him that Piet had written to the Government to ask for Nick's books to be examined, but that the letter would not be taken

to Pretoria if Nick gave a receipt in full for the £100, which he did, being guilty and afraid of an examination of his accounts.

Piet often had to sign this apology, for, as I have said, he had a slipping tongue and said many untrue things about people who made him angry. But, like all Boers, he was always ready to apologise when found in the wrong, as the papers in the *Taal* can testify, for they have many such apologies, which is a good practice, making men and women pause before they say slanderous things.

Piet was himself a great believer in this way of settling quarrels until his daughter married Sacke Keet, the law agent. Then he no longer encouraged it, but advised the disputants to consult a lawyer, unless he knew they would go to the Attorney Beyers, who was son-in-law to Nick Grobler, and a much cleverer man than Sacke, and would have got much more practice in our court if Piet had not always given judgment in favour of Sacke's clients when he could, and advised Beyer's clients to compromise or apologise, which habit, I must say, he carried too far, for it gave the *Critic* something to write about him nearly every week, and often caused his cases to be upset on appeal, which is very annoying to a Landdrost. The editors of the *Critic*

and the *Patriot* never let pass a chance of having a shot at Piet for any errors he made. It is true that while Landdrost he made some mistakes through his want of knowledge of the law, as who does not, even the judges of the High Court at Pretoria? Piet would, for instance, never listen to cases quoted from law books.

“It is only a trap for me,” he would say to me; “they want to show me up.”

So when a case was quoted by a young attorney who did not know Piet’s custom, my father-in-law would ask:

“Who said that?”

When he was told he would answer:

“That might do for his court, but I’m Landdrost here, not the man you are quoting,” and then he would give judgment as he pleased.

That was how young Keet got into favour with him. He would never quote cases unless they agreed with the opinion of the Landdrost, and Piet said he was the smartest lawyer in the district, though he was not.

There was another mistake he made which caused him and me to be much laughed at once. He would put too great faith in Jim, the native interpreter of the court. Jim was a *slim* Kaffir, and though he was thought to know most Kaffir tongues I think he only knew one or two; and the

prisoners used to say afterwards that Jim made them plead guilty when they had done the opposite, just to save time, for he was very lazy, and got angry if the court sat after twelve. Jim was one of the boys Piet brought with him from the Colony, and was now getting old, and for that reason Piet let him take liberties, which shows that it is a mistake to treat Kaffirs with kindness. Besides this great annoyance that he brought upon us, many Kaffirs were flogged and imprisoned who would not have been convicted if Jim had spoken the truth. I tried my best to get Piet to have Jim lashed, if only to make him careful, but he would not, and had to suffer, as all people do who let Kaffirs be master.

The story of our mishap was this. Four Kaffirs were brought up for robbing and beating four others. Jim was very lazy that day, and took no trouble, so that the four prosecutors were put in the prisoner's box and the four prisoners made witnesses.

Jim saw that he had blundered as soon as the first prisoner was called to give evidence, but fearing that I would get him lashed if the mistake were found out, he said nothing, but told the Landdrost that all four said they were guilty. So they got six months and twenty lashes each, while the

real culprits were let go—the most astonished and pleased Kaffirs ever seen !

We did not find it out till the four had been flogged, and even then Piet would not have Jim punished, but said the innocent Kaffirs deserved it, for he had no doubt they had lied about the robbery and would have deserved flogging some day. However, Piet let them off after they had worked for a month on his farm.

The *Critic* and *Patriot* got hold of the story, but there was no Government inquiry, for the Executive never took notice of what the *Critic* might say about officials, which was just, for why should a Landdrost be punished for the stupidity of a Kaffir ?

Nick Grobler made great delight out of that mishap, and used to make people laugh in his own court by asking his own interpreter if his name were Jim, when he began to interpret Kaffir evidence. But it is always dangerous to rejoice over an enemy before he is dead, and Nick Grobler found it true a few months after, when he was made the laughing stock of the whole world. It came about in this wise :

Nick is a big and strong man and very vain of his strength, so that a lawyer has but to say nice things about his powerfulness to make him his friend. Of course all the lawyers who practised

in his court knew this, and he had been so much flattered that he vainly believed he was the strongest man on earth, which was his undoing, as pride always is.

There was a white man charged with stealing a big calf from a locked up *kraal*. Now it was clear that, the *kraal* being locked, the thief must have lifted the calf over the wall, which would have been a feat of great strength indeed. The prisoner was defended by Paul van Diggelen, who was very *slim*, and saw a good plan for throwing dust in the eyes of Landdrost Nick.

“Landdrost,” said he, “that calf weighs 500 pounds. Is there any man who could lift a live animal of that weight unaided over a six-foot wall? I only know one man who could do it, and that is yourself. Just look at the prisoner, Landdrost—a poor, miserable ‘mannikin’ that you could eat for breakfast. Will you allow the Public Prosecutor to scoff at you by saying that a *Rooinek* like that can do what you can? Landdrost, it is an insult to the court, as well as to you.”

When Van Diggelen had got thus far the Public Prosecutor saw that a great point had been made against him, for the Landdrost winked at Van Diggelen, as he always did at the attorney he had made up his mind to favour.

“Landdrost,” said he, “does Mr. van Diggelen mean that you stole the calf?”

For a moment the Landdrost was thoughtful, but his great vanity would not let him see beyond the compliment to his strength to which he had been used.

“Nay,” said he; “Mr. van Diggelen means that I am the only man who could do it.”

“Very well,” answered the Public Prosecutor, “if you are satisfied so am I; but strength does not always go with a great, fine body like yours. Even this small thing may have strong arms, for is he not an Englander, and all *Rooineks* are taught to use their arms that they may knock down policemen and other respectable people? This man is a *Rooinek* and has very strong arms.”

“It may be,” said Nick; “but he is short and could not reach up to the wall.”

“*Vrachter*, Landdrost, you are right,” said Van Diggelen; “he is short, like the Public Prosecutor.”

This was a very cunning hit, for the Prosecutor was a small man and was always angry when people said so. His *vrouw* was very big and was his master, and people made fun of him for it. He replied very shortly:

“I am taller than you, anyhow.”

“I am sure you are not,” said Van Diggelen ;
“what say you, Landdrost ?”

“Ja, you are not so big as my Public Prosecutor,” answered Nick.

This Van Diggelen would not agree to, for he had a sharp tongue, and was not afraid of anybody. So a long wrangle began.

“It is time to adjourn ; let us go to the Police Office next door and be measured,” said he ; “and the Landdrost shall be judge.”

The Public Prosecutor was afraid of the test, and objected because it was not usual.

“I knew he would be afraid,” said Van Diggelen, very sneeringly, which made the Public Prosecutor very angry. He replied he was not afraid of Van Diggelen or anyone else, and moved out of court, saying :

“Come on, Goliath,” and all the court went into the Police Office.

When the measuring was over, the Landdrost gave the verdict for his Prosecutor, although Van Diggelen was quite half-an-inch the bigger. A great quarrel began, which Nick stopped by ordering them back into court.

“Where is the prisoner ?” asked Nick, when he had taken his seat. And all saw that the man had slipped away unseen during the discussion.

“Ja; where is your man, Van Diggelen?” asked the Prosecutor.

“He is not my man, but yours,” answered Van Diggelen; “I did not bring him here, but you. I expect he has gone out to be measured.”

All in court laughed very loud, especially the policeman, whom the Prosecutor angrily asked should be committed for contempt of court for letting the prisoner go.

This was done, but they had to let him out to search for the runaway, who never came back to learn which was the taller.

Nick Grobler was always pleased to sneer at the ignorance of Piet Prinsloo in the matter of writing, yet, though he could write much better than Piet, he was several times made to look very foolish over the very thing that made him vain and malicious.

There was once a case in which he had given his usual foolish judgment with a wink, as we say, and the man who lost carried it to appeal in Pretoria. When the judges came to read the evidence taken down by Nick, they could not make anything of it, for the writing that Nick was so proud of was not so plain as if written by a *slim* Kaffir. The judges were very angry, and said things about Nick that made the country laugh when they got into the papers, though

the Chief Justice did also sensibly say that it would be better if the Government would appoint a writing-master to instruct Landdrosts. The sting, however, was in the judgment. Said the Chief Justice :

“This is an appeal from a judgment of the Landdrost of Schoonspruit. In the ordinary course we should dismiss the appeal on the ground that the evidence is not before us, but in view of the fact that we have never had a case from that court which we have not found necessary to reverse, our inability to read the notes of the Landdrost is of no importance, and we have no hesitation in upholding this appeal.”

This made Nick look very foolish, for he hated to be laughed at. But he was even more ridiculed over the case of Jan Meyer.

The story told is this :

Nick had been promised £50 by Jan if he gave judgment in his favour. To make sure that the judgment should be a sound one, and not reversed on appeal, Jan's attorney wrote it out beforehand, telling Nick that he must copy it out in his own handwriting to make it look real. Nick sat up very late the night before the trial and copied out the judgment he was to give. Next day he heard the case and made as if he were taking large notes of what was said, but he was all

the time thinking that he ought to have had more than £50, for the judgment was a very large one.

The moment the attorney for the defendant sat down, Nick opened his desk and took out the judgment in the sight of all the court, and began to read it. Everybody looked very surprised, and Jan's attorney turned red and swore, but said nothing else. Neither did the other attorney till he heard judgment given against him, when he lost his temper, and said: "Landdrost, I protest. That judgment is not your own," meaning that it had been written for him.

On this Nick got red in the face. "You are a great liar, Beyers," said he, "and you have no respect for the court."

Beyers was bold and cared nothing for the dignity of the court of justice, like Nick did.

"Landdrost," said he, "you could not write that judgment, you have been too busy," meaning that Nick had been taking down the evidence all the time.

This made Nick very wrathful, for in his blind vanity he thought Beyers meant that he could not write.

"Look for yourself," said he, throwing the judgment at Beyers, "and never tell me again I cannot write. That took me till four this morning, while you were playing cards."

“ I thought so,” said Beyers, and gave notice of appeal, which he, of course, won.

The laughter of the world made Nick very sore, but what hurt him most was that Jan refused to pay him the £50 he had promised, which was why Nick never again gave judgment to oblige his friends without being paid in advance.

There was another case whereby Nick Grobler showed his malicious enmity against my father-in-law. I have told how Piet Prinsloo, all through his life was embittered against paper money, for he could never forget how his father was robbed by Treasury Bills. On the top of this came the very serious matter that he could never read writing well, and was so often made to suffer by those who could, that he was afraid of strange paper, though he lived to see that writing, when properly used, may be made very convenient. For this reason he had all his children taught to write, even the girls. I myself quite agree that much harm has been done to the Boers by reading and writing, and Piet Prinsloo and many others of the *voortrekkers* have good reason for opposing it as a dangerous thing. Still, I have not the objection against it they have, for I have received a very superior education, otherwise I could never have risen to the position of Public Prosecutor and been complimented on the

fewness of my errors in spelling, as I was by the State Attorney.

Not being a great penman himself, Piet pretended to set small store on writing, and when cases of forgery and other writing frauds came before him he would say rather unwise things, such as—"It is not the prisoner who should be here, but the man who taught him to write," remarks that got Piet laughed at in the papers. Yet, for all this, he secretly knew that the man who could write well had most chances of making money, particularly if he were an official. If, as was the case before Piet could trust me, a Landdrost has to carry his letters to be read by others, he often lets out secrets which would be best kept. Often, after giving a judgment in a case, Piet would receive a letter something like this :

"DEAR LANDDROST,—I thank you very much for giving judgment in favour of me, but I think your price is too high, and I want to know if you will return £10 of the £20 I gave you."

Now, when a Landdrost receives letters like this, which he has to get the Predikant to read, it makes him look foolish, for it is hard to convince Predikants that members of their church are honest. These letters used to be written by Nick Grobler, I am certain, for the stamp was always put on carelessly, after his manner of doing all his

business, except what was bad. These letters cost my father-in-law a lot of money, for he was obliged to give those who read them for him a good sum to hold their tongues. Even then the *Critic* learned all about them; but I advised Piet to take no notice, which advice he wisely acted upon.

But the thing that made Piet most anxious to learn to read writing, and which had that effect, was a misfortune that happened before he had been Landdrost two months. He had to try a case wherein one Uitlander sued another for money lent on a promissory note, which was a kind of writing that Piet did not then well understand. While the evidence was being given, Piet paid very little attention (as he often did when only Uitlanders were concerned), and was tearing up paper into very small pieces, which was his habit, being much like a woman and setting no value on papers.

Presently the advocate asked for the note to show to a witness. Piet never thought of the tearing up, but made the Kaffir Jim and the attorney hunt for the lost paper, till one of them found a piece of it torn small.

“What matters it,” said Piet, “it was but a dirty piece of paper.”

“But it was my case,” answered one attorney.

"Then a dirty case you had," said Piet.

"I cannot go on without it," continued the attorney.

"So much the better," was Piet's reply, "for such pieces of paper are the root of all evil," and he gave judgment for the other side because that attorney had made no trouble about the destruction of the note.

There was the usual appeal, but before it could be heard Nick got hold of the man who had lost the case and told him to sue my father-in-law for the note he had destroyed. Although it was unjust, I could see that if it came before the judges Piet would perhaps lose his place, so I showed him it would be better to pay £100, which he did, and the appeal was withdrawn.

People who do evil often forget that they will certainly be punished, and quickly, as was the case with Nick Grobler. He made Piet lose £100 and get laughed at, but my father-in-law brought judgment upon his head very shortly. It came about that a fine Government residence at Schoonspruit was to be sold. Piet learned that Nick had made a plan to buy it for himself very cheaply, after the manner of those who know how to do these things. The sale was advertised in the *Staats Courant*, which mattered little, as few see the Government paper, but most people see

the notice that the law says must be pasted on the place to be sold for eight days. Therefore Nick had this pulled down as soon as put up, and all would have gone well for Nick, who could have bought the place for next to nothing in the absence of bidders.

But Piet Prinsloo would not allow this great wrong. He put advertisements in all the Rand papers in English and Dutch, praising the property very much. When the day of the sale came there was a crowd of buyers, and Nick was far outbid. But the sting of the punishment lay in this: Piet had sent the advertisements on Government letter paper, and when it was found that the Government had not authorised the advertisements, Nick had to pay for them, as he dared not quarrel with the newspaper people, who knew even more about him than did my father-in-law.

But the greatest visitation received by Nick at the hands of Piet was in the matter of his son, young Klaas Grobler, who was in the telegraph office at Schoonspruit. Though he could hardly send messages properly, he always knew when any business was going on that his pa could snatch away from the rightful people. Piet laid a very clever trap to catch both the wicked son and his yet more wicked father. He telegraphed

in the name of a mine manager at Johannesburg to a labour agent at Schoonspruit, giving him an order to take 500 Kaffirs to the mine at £2 premium apiece. Piet rightly thought that Nick would not resist the chance to make £1,000 so easily, which came true. Young Klaas somehow stopped the telegram, and took it to his father, who made a long journey into the Magaliesburg, and, with trouble and expense, collected the 500 boys, and sent them into the mine, only to learn that they were not wanted, and that no wire had been sent. Piet was almost satisfied with this vengeance, and Nick lay quiet for a long time, and did no harm to my father-in-law, who, however, sent an anonymous complaint to the Chief of Telegraphs, which ended in young Klaas being sent away to an office where he had small chance of making money, although he was raised from junior clerk to second in command.





CHAPTER V.

FOR PRINCIPLE AND PATRIOTISM.

ALTHOUGH my father-in-law always triumphed over the imaginations of the wicked, yet he began to grow very sick of the many cruel attacks upon him in the *Uitlander Press*. There was hardly a month that he was not wickedly held up to ridicule, so that, when he went to Pretoria, the President himself would laugh and say: "You are a nice *kevel*, Piet; you make all my Landdrosts jealous. You get all the notice."

Then, again, the office did not make Katrina so great a *vrouw* as she had hoped, for Vrededorp was in a proclaimed goldfield where the Mining Commissioner is the chief man and makes most money. Piet had made very little, for he had so often been suspected of taking bribes that people in whose favour he had given judgment were afraid to make him even the smallest present,

for somehow the papers always got hold of it, or, at least, enough of the story to make Piet angry. So for a long time he wished that he were no longer Landdrost, and his desire went back to be Field Cornet, but not in a place like Vrededorp, where there was a newspaper like the *Patriot*, but a long way up North, where no one would trouble him if he made a mistake, for he was so kind-hearted and ready to help people who asked him, that he often got himself into the papers from this cause alone. If ever he could help anyone who was not a Hollander, a *Rooinek*, or a Jew, he would always show the charitable side of his nature, even if he got no payment for his great kindness. And this, in the end, caused him to lose his Landdrostship at Vrededorp. It was over Dr. Coetzee and the floggings at the Vrededorp Jail. It happened like this:

When the young doctor was appointed as District Surgeon he was not married, so that his income was sufficient. But, being very foolish, he married a *Rooinek* girl, who, being born in England, had wasteful tastes, and was a very bad wife, making her husband take her to Johannesburg to the theatre and other gay, disturbing places. When in England, Dr. Coetzee had learned to play at cards and billiards, and to drink whisky, so that he neglected his patients

till he had none, and all his income was from sickness at the jail, and post-mortems, which were not numerous. One day the doctor was arrested for debt, and his wife came crying to Piet to help him. She wished Piet to pay the money, and talk to her husband, making him promise to leave billiards and whisky.

“Nay,” said Piet, “he will not do that, for he is young, and has been poisoned by *Rooineks* with love of these things. He must earn more money.”

“But how?” asked Mrs. Coetzee. “The Government has twice refused to make his pay bigger.”

“It is very easy,” said Piet. “You know that he gets a guinea every time he examines a Kaffir who is to be lashed. I shall in future flog all Kaffirs who cannot pay fines, instead of sending them to *tronk*, and your husband will, perhaps, earn £100 a month, for we flogged over that number last month. But he must give me something out of that fee.”

Mrs. Coetzee was very thankful, and told Piet he was a man with a soft heart, which pleased him, so that he lent her the money to pay the debt, taking an I.O.U.—very much against his will, through his distrust of paper money. It would have been well if he had never overcome his prejudice in this matter, for that I.O.U. led to great trouble and misunderstanding.

When Mrs. Coetzee got home she found that a friend had paid the debt. Being a *Rooinek* and greedy, she said nothing about the money she had got from the Landdrost, but spent it on herself, which did not come out till many months afterwards, when Piet quarrelled with the Doctor for not paying his share of the flogging fees, and demanded payment of the I.O.U. The *Critic* got hold of the story and threw out wicked hints that made Piet unhappy with Katrina and caused Dr. Coetzee to send his wife away. But this did not happen for a long time after Piet had been kind to Mrs. Coetzee. He kept his promise, and sentenced so many Kaffirs to the lash that the papers said Piet was "brutal and inhuman," when all the time it was only out of pure kindness for Mrs. Coetzee. One day the Doctor came and said :

"Landdrost, I have been thinking that the Government will kick when I send in my bill for the lashings. I have bethought a plan which will make us both right. I will send in a complaint to you that the prison is too small and unhealthy, and advise you to flog Kaffirs rather than imprison them, as the cost of feeding and doctoring them will be greater than the fee for flogging."

"That is good," said Piet, and it was done, so

that when the Government, as was expected, wanted to know why the District Surgeon's bill had suddenly jumped up so high, Piet sent in a copy of the Doctor's letter with one of his own, advising that a new jail be built, and fixing the cost at a sum so large that he knew the Government would do nothing. And it all came as Dr. Coetzee said it would ; and all would have gone happily, but the Doctor grew greedy and would not give the Landdrost a share of his fees, so trouble came, as I have told.

The end of this story shows how foolish it is for men who live in glass houses to throw stones. Dr. Coetzee went to the *Patriot* and told them that Landdrost Prinsloo wanted a share of the fees of the District Surgeon, and the editor put in a small paragraph that anybody could see was meant for Piet, who foolishly retorted by sending to *De Burger* a letter asking how much the District Surgeon of Vrededorp made by taking bribes from Kaffir women to certify that their husbands were not fit for the lash, which charge was true, except that Dr. Coetzee did not let them off all the lashes, or he would have got no fee for the examination. All this got into the papers, and for once the Government wanted to know what truth there was in it, which made Piet very angry, particularly that the Government

should listen to what an English editor had said. This made him let his loose tongue slip, and when next he had a case for lashing a Kaffir he said that as the Government was so foolish, he would send the Kaffir to jail for three months, so that, being very sick, he would have to be doctored at Government expense, and give nothing back in return. Then Piet went on to say :

“I have seen in an English paper a scandalous thing about myself, a thing so wicked and untrue that only an Englander or Hollander could say it. I shall not deny it, for it is not worth a moment's notice from an honest man. This shows the great mistake the President makes in letting these Uitlanders print papers, for they tell nothing but lies about us. I shall go to Pretoria and see the President, and ask him to allow no more papers, for they are enemies of the State, and have brought us only trouble and wickedness. They are the scabby sheep in the *kraal*, and will give the disease to us who are clean and honest. They will make our children like to themselves, for through calling us ignorant, and unfit to govern, our children begin to believe it true, for they are poisoned with the ways of the Uitlander and despise us who fought and bled for the country and shot down the *Rooibaatjes* at Majuba and at Bronkhorst Spruit

The *Rooineks* buy our farms and make great riches, but give us no share of the wealth they make. They are a useless, foolish nation these Uitlanders, who can only travel in a railway carriage or an American spider, and drink whisky all the time. Their *vrouws* are very feeble things that cannot do anything for their men but spend money, and make our young men wish to marry them, which they have not courage to do, knowing the silly way the Uitlander women have to be sought and have money wasted upon them before they are married, so that their husbands may leave them very much alone after they have made wives of them. And when they have got wives, these Uitlanders do not know how to use them any more than they know how to treat a Kaffir. He never consults her in his business, and having made himself no man to her before marriage he is no man afterwards, for he lets her be his master all the time. None of these Uitlanders read the Bible, because they have these scandal sheets in which they pay men to write foul and wicked things against one another and against *oprecht* burghers. Why does not Oom Paul *commandeer* them to fight Kaffirs, which they cannot do, and would all be killed as a just punishment for their many wickednesses? They cannot fight; but they lie, telling us of the

thousands of soldiers they have in England, which is only a small state, where they have farms of fifty morgen, instead of three thousand, as we have. The land is not big enough to hold one quarter of the soldiers they say they have. But all *Rooineks* are liars. Do they not lie when they come into court, so that I never believe an Uitlander, and always give judgment against him? I once read in an English book that there were 30,000 Englanders in prison. We have not five hundred in all the *tronks* in South Africa. They have to keep hundreds of judges to punish criminals, but we have but five in all the State."

There was a great deal more which was not taken down, which was perhaps as well, for the speech made a great stir in the country, being printed in nearly all the papers, the patriotic editors putting it in because they were pleased, the enemies of the State printing it only to do Piet an injury. The part they made the worst of was that wherein Piet said that he never believed Uitlanders who came to his court. It was not wise for him to speak out so truthfully, for it made him a marked man, and when the litigants appealed from even his just judgments, the judges gave it against Piet, for they said he was, on his own admission, prejudiced against Uitlanders—which was true. The worst of it all was that whenever a foolish thing was said

by a Boer Landdrost, the English papers always put it on to Piet, whether it was true or not. Piet wanted to deny that he had made the speech, but he could not well do that, because he had read over the copy made by the young man who took it in shorthand, and had signed it. Besides, he let such a long time go before he took notice, that it was not easy to disprove it, as we could not find the young man, whom Piet might have talked to, and shown how harmful it was for a Landdrost to be so criticised.

When Piet went to Pretoria the President called him a great fool, and said he was his stupidest Landdrost, for he was always getting the State into the papers.

Piet replied with anger, and soon afterwards he resigned his position as Landdrost of Vrededorp, for he was not the man to be treated like a child; besides, he was tired of the office, and saw that he might make more money as a Field Cornet and go into trade.

There are those who maliciously say that the true reason for the outgoing of Piet Prinsloo was that he had taken bribes. This is a great and wicked untruth, for though he was asked about it by the Executive, he denied it. The true reason was that he refused to marry a Boer girl to an Uitlander. Piet had very

strong thoughts on this subject, and never would encourage the daughters of the soil to take husbands from among the strange peoples who overrun the Transvaal. If a Boer wished to marry a *Rooinek* girl it was not so bad, for she became half a Boer by so doing ; but it was not so when the *Rooinek* wanted a wife from among us. Piet always warned such couples of the great wrong they were doing to their country. But young *kerels* and girls who want to marry do not think of patriotism, and this made Piet very angry. He talked to them so sternly that he grew unpopular as a marrying Landdrost, and in one case the judges ordered him to marry a Boer girl to a *Rooinek*, which he did, but he said he would never do so again, and his resolve came true, for Piet cared nothing for the paltry fees when patriotism was involved. There is, however, yet greater reason for Piet's action, for the Bible tells us that we must not take wives from among strangers, and not even the President can set aside that law.

There is one great and good thing to the favour of the Transvaal Government: it never deserts its friends or allows them to be hunted to the death by their enemies if they are true sons of the soil. When a public servant is unjustly attacked, as was my father-in-law, the Government refuses

to pay any heed to the wishes of those who would ruin him, and if there are reasons why he should give up the post in which he has gained unpopularity, the Government will always give him another equally as good, so that his enemies shall not triumph over him nor he be tempted to turn round and show ingratitude to the State as has been done by greedy and unpatriotic officials. In the case of Piet Prinsloo the Government stood his friend, although the papers abused him with wicked charges that were untrue or, at least, could be explained away; but Piet was too proud to reply to his accusers. He waited some months till the outcry had quieted down and then went to Pretoria to arrange for a Field Cornetcy.

Katrina was at first much against him, for she said a Landdrost was higher than a Field Cornet. But Piet soon brought her to his way of thinking when he showed her that a Field Cornet could make even more money than a Landdrost, without having the papers watching all he did and printing it. But it was agreed between them that Piet should take no office unless it were on a proclaimed goldfield, for it was useless to go where people were poor, and the Uitlanders, no doubt, are richer and better able to pay than Boers. It was a long time before a vacancy came that Piet cared to fill—nearly two years; but at

the end of that time he was made Field Cornet and Collector of Customs for the Kaalkop District, which, though not a proclaimed goldfield, was a place after his own heart, for there the Field Cornet was an even greater and more-to-be-considered man, because he had also the Customs, which all men try to evade.

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CHAPTER VI.

FIELD CORNET AND STOREKEEPER.

IN the time that Piet was waiting for his appointment there was little money coming in, so he resolved to go into a wayside store, though not in his own name, for he might any day be made an official, and if, as he hoped, he was made Customs Collector as well as Field Cornet, the law would not allow him to be a storekeeper also. The way he contrived it was this :

Ever since the first days when he came to the Transvaal Piet had seen that all traders who made money and kept stores were Jews, and whenever he had been *verneuked* it was mostly by such people. So he fixed it in his mind that if ever he traded or had a store, he would have a Jew for a partner, for, said he :

“It is not right that a man who stands well in the *Kerk* should do so much villainy as must be performed by those who would make money in a store.”

It happened that one day, before Piet had been made Field Cornet, a young Jewish *smoucher* broke his leg by falling down a shaft on Piet's place, and had to lie up at the farm for many weeks till the limb was well. Before this happened Piet one day opened, by mistake, a letter belonging to the Jew, which had come from a lawyer in Pretoria. When Piet got it read for him he learned that the young *kerel* was planning to bring a law action to make Piet pay for the accident. He said nothing, but laid a great plan. First he made out a great bill against the Jew for the lodging and food, also for the forage eaten by the two horses belonging to the Jew, and gave it to him. Isaac, which was the Jew's name, made a great noise, and there was a quarrelling for all that day, for the amount of Piet's bill was more than Isaac had purposed to sue Piet for. When the storm was over, Piet made an offer to Isaac that they should go into partnership with a store and canteen, which was a good plan, since it gave Piet a manager who understood trade. Isaac was not long in saying “yea,” and to it they went.

Now, Jews are always successful, and Isaac was like all his nation, and brought great profit, and money came in fast. But Piet's foolishness came upon him, and he was near to spoiling all, through his religiousness, just as his patriotism caused him to lose the Landdrostship through the affair of the marriages.

Just when they were doing better even than Piet had hoped he was taken up with a foolish notion to make a Christian of Isaac. Knowing that if Jews eat pork they nearly cease to be Hebrews, he made Katrina put pork secretly into the food, when Isaac thought he was eating some kind of buck. But he was always particular of what Katrina cooked, and found the pork, although he was short-sighted, and he made almost as much noise as when Piet gave him his bill when he had broken his leg.

Finding he could not convert Isaac in secret, Piet tried to do it openly, telling Isaac he ought to be ashamed of himself. Isaac had great gift of the tongue, and would talk so well that had it been possible he would have converted Piet to be a Jew, but before that came Piet would grow angry and strike Isaac, who ran away and hid in the stable till Piet's anger was over, which made Piet very sad, for he could not understand why Isaac would not be a Christian, but was content

to come to a bad end rather than say that he liked pork, which, in secret, he no doubt did. Still Piet would not cease to try, and many were the quarrels they had together, which always ended in Piet getting the worst of the argument and Isaac the *sjambok*, until one day something happened by which Piet himself was nearly converted. He and Isaac were crossing the river by the drift. The rain had come very heavy and suddenly and the stream was strong. Isaac's pony lost his foothold and was carried away. He got hold of the rocks in the middle of the stream and clung tight, calling out loudly for Piet to save him, for he was very greatly frightened, the more so as he hated to get wet. Piet rode fast to the farm and got a rope and the Kaffirs to help him. On the way back a thought struck him. As Isaac was so much afraid, why not make him be a Christian? So Piet stood on the bank opposite where Isaac clung and shouted nearly dead with fear.

"Isaac," said Piet, "before I throw the rope, will you be a Christian?"

"Nay," said he, "I cannot."

"Then must you drown."

But Isaac was very obstinate, and would not give way. Piet threw him the rope.

"If I hold tight, will you be a Christian?"

asked Piet. Still Isaac would not, so Piet talked kindly to him over the bank, and for once Isaac did not try to answer his arguments, for he was weak with fear.

At last he said :

“Piet, I shall let go and drown, then what will you do at the store?”

“I shall get another Jew and convert him,” answered Piet.

“You talk foolishness,” said Isaac. “Did you not make me your partner to bring you Jewish *mozzle*? If you make a Jew into a Christian his luck goes, and where are you?”

“Hold tight,” said Piet, and he pulled Isaac out as fast as he could.

But while he was helping him up the bank Piet himself fell in, but whether it was that Isaac pulled him he never knew. It is sufficient that Piet was carried over the boulders and broke his arm, while Isaac had no hurt at all.

For a long time they used to argue about this, Isaac saying it was a judgment on Piet for trying to convert a Jew, while Piet said it was a judgment on him for not completing the conversion. They could never agree who was right, but Katrina had another explanation. It happened that the pony, which was worth fifteen pounds, was drowned at the time, and, as the loss had to be shared by

both, it proved that Piet was wrong in trying to convert Isaac, and Isaac was wrong in needing conversion, so they left it that way.

Later on Piet had good cause for sorrow that he had not let Isaac drown, for he found that his partner used his great *slimness* rather for himself than for him. He had a brother in the Kaffir labour business, and these two planned to make money out of Piet. Isaac came in from Johannesburg one day and said he had met a man from a mine who would give £3 a head for five hundred boys, and Piet found the money to send into Swaziland to get them. But Isaac's brother waylaid them on the road and took them on to the Rand, thus making over a thousand pounds at no cost to himself. Isaac made as if he were very angry, and persuaded Piet to send for five hundred more. This the foolish man did, and again they were stolen by Isaac's brother, and the wicked pair prospered.

But although this only showed the foolishness of doing good to Uitlanders and Hollanders, there were times when he profited greatly by the *slimness* of Isaac. It always happened during *nachtmaal* that the *vrouws* who came to the store would steal many small things; but Isaac, having no religion himself, always suspected those who had, even the Predikant, and kept an extra sharp

look-out at such times. His great smartness was of much advantage to Piet on these occasions, for he had judgment in dealing with women who stole. As soon as *nachtmaal* time came he would put in the store stocks of such ornaments as women cannot see without wishing to possess. When they took the things, as they always did, Isaac had a nice way, especially when the *vrouws* had rich husbands like the *vrouw* Kok. Isaac had put on the counter some pretty imitation silver snuff-boxes that cost only sixpence each wholesale in Pretoria. *Vrouw* Kok came to buy things one *nachtmaal* and Isaac saw her slip one of the snuff-boxes into her pocket. Now, Piet had no cunning, and if he had seen it he would have, perhaps, been rough with her; but Isaac did nothing until he made out the bill. When *vrouw* Kok read it she saw an item for "one silver snuff-box, £2 10s."

"What is this?" said she; "I have had no snuff-box."

"Pardon me, madam," said Isaac, as smoothly as if he were a *Rooinek* clerk in a Johannesburg store, "Do you not remember my showing it to you, and you said you would give it as a present to the Predikant?"

"Nay, but you are mistaken," she answered.

"Nay, but it is here," and Isaac touched her pocket. "The Predikant will be very pleased,

and it is very kind of you to think of him," Isaac went on.

Vrouw Kok would have liked not to take it, but when Isaac mentioned the Predikant she grew fearful, and paid the £2 10s.

There was another time when he punished Dirk Hertz for being dishonest. Dirk used to bring in oranges to sell, but he could not count high numbers, so Isaac caught him in this way: When one hundred oranges had been counted, Isaac put a florin into his hat, and another for each hundred. When the lot was so counted, Dirk would reckon the florins and know how many hundreds he had to be paid for. While the last hundred was being reckoned, Isaac pretended that he was wanted in the store and went away, leaving the hat full of money. Dirk, being foolish and greedy, would steal a handful of the florins, not seeing he was robbing himself, for one hundred oranges were worth six or eight shillings.

Old Hans Botha was caught and punished in the same way, though he was not foolish or wicked enough to steal money. He was very fond of peppermints, like all Boers, so Isaac used them as counters instead of coins to check the bundles of forage. Half-a-dozen times Isaac would go into the store and keep Hans waiting till the old man grew tired and sucked the

peppermints, and often Isaac made twenty bundles of forage for threepenny worth of sweets. And thus was greed and theft properly chastised!

But in the end Isaac did not profit Piet. There came a time when the *Patriot* printed a piece about Field Cornets who ran private businesses contrary to the law. Piet grew frightened, though his name was not painted on the store with Isaac's, and in a foolish fit he listened to Isaac who advised him, and, by lighting the fire of his great vanity, made him pay dearly.

"Piet," said he, next day, after the *Patriot* came out, "I have written a letter to that paper. Listen!" And he read it:

"Sir,— My attention has been called to a paragraph in your last issue wherein you insinuate that Mr. Piet Prinsloo, Field Cornet of Kaalkop, is a partner with me in the business I carry on at that place. I beg to inform you that Mr. Prinsloo has nothing to do with the business, except that when I met with the accident on his farm he generously gave me £500, with which I started the business."

This was signed by Isaac.

Piet's vanity was roused by being referred to in such flattering terms as a generous man; besides, he had all along been fearful lest Isaac should

claim money for the damage to his leg, so that he jumped at the chance to prove that he had compensated Isaac, and wrote beneath the letter: "This is true. Piet Prinsloo."

The letter was sent to the *Patriot* and printed. Two months afterwards Isaac drew the money out of the bank and coolly told Piet that he could get away, as, according to his own letter, he was no partner. And this he had to do, for he dare not fight the case in the courts.

Somehow Piet was doomed to be worsted by Uitlanders, even in matters in which he had great experience, as, for example, the election of Jacob Smit.

It is well-known how in the days when the Uitlanders grew bold with prosperity and discontented even to revolution, they tried hard to rob the country of its beloved independence by putting into the Raad men who had been bribed to do as they told them. They spent large sums in trying to corrupt loyal burghers, who, however, only took the money, promising to vote as they were told, yet voting as their own conscience told them. At last the Uitlanders grew cunning and would not say which was their man, so that Field Cornets found it a hard matter to know what to do. It was also the means of Piet making a great mistake, for which he has been blamed.

When Jacobus Smit and Paul de Wet were candidates for the first Raad at Kaalkop District, Piet could not find out which was the Uitlanders' man, for both swore solemnly that they knew nothing of anything save their loyalty to the State. So when the burghers came and asked Piet for whom they should vote, he did not know what to answer them, but to make certain he told half to vote for one, and half for the other, which would have kept matters equal. But one day, just before the poll, Sam Levy, the great Johannesburg Uitlander, who was *slim* enough to keep out of the Reform business, *outspanned* at Piet's place, saying he was looking out for claims, and among other things they fell to talking about the election.

"I suppose you will work and vote for Paul de Wet?" said Sam.

"I don't know," answered Piet; "I am Field Cornet, and have to look after the election. It matters nothing to me who wins. But," said he, by way of feeling where Sam Levy's interest lay, "I think Jacobus Smit will get in."

At that Sam grew very angry, and abused Jacobus in bitter language, calling him a scoundrel, and ending by laying Piet £100 to a sovereign that Smit would not be elected.

Now Piet did not stop to think. He could only see that De Wet must be the Uitlander man, and

that he could win £100 by working to get Smit in, so he jumped at the bait and began to work hard for Jacobus Smit. He told the burghers that he had had a letter from the President, telling him that De Wet was an Uitlander's man, which made most of them do their best to defeat him. When burghers who could not write came to vote, Piet filled in their cards with Smit's name, and if a De Wet man did not feel sure whether he was on the register or not, Piet got out the book he kept in duplicate for that purpose, and showed him his name was not there, and that he could not vote. This is one of the great safeguards that a Field Cornet has to keep unsuitable men out of the Raad. But for this we should have the burghers voting for all sorts of dangerous characters, who would vote even against the President when once they were in the Raad.

When the voting was over it was found that Jacobus Smit was elected by 146 votes to 65, and Piet and all the loyal burghers were very glad.

Three days later Sam Levy came to pay the £100 he had lost.

"Piet," said he, "you deserve this money, for you have made it very easy for our man."

"Nay," said Piet, "but I have made it as hard as I could, and we knocked him out."

"We are quite satisfied," said Sam. "Go on

knocking them out like that, and we will always book you £100 to £1."

It was not until Piet talked it over with Katrina that night that he saw that Jacobus Smit was the Uitlander man, and that in winning that hundred pounds he had been fighting for Sam Levy. Then he grew so angry at having been defrauded so meanly that he tied up three of his Kaffirs and gave them twenty-five each before he could read the Psalms or say a prayer as usual that night.

Such base tricks are the common weapons of the Uitlanders, who will spend money freely to bring about their dishonourable objects, which no Afrikander would ever do unless sorely tempted by the want of money or the example of men like Levy.





CHAPTER VII.

THE FOUNDING OF PRINSLOOSDORP.

IT is often that good comes out of evil, and if those rascally Englishers had never vaccinated Magato and his people with condensed milk Piet would, perhaps, never have owned Prinsloosdorp!

When Magato no longer allowed Piet to have boys for the mines, and the criticisms of the Press made him afraid to take money as presents for fear of traps, his income fell away, and Katrina began to talk to him in strong language. His need of money had grown greatly, for his habits had become expensive through much acquaintance with Hollanders and Englishers in Pretoria and Johannesburg, who have been the curse of our country, teaching our sons and daughters habits of luxury and expense that their fathers and mothers knew not. Piet

himself, though Afrikander born, and otherwise of much good sense, took up many foolish and unmanly habits. He slept no more in his clothes, as his father and grandfather had before him, but wore thin things that he called "pyjamas," both winter and summer, which would have proved serious if he had been called suddenly to defend his farm against Kaffirs, as his grandfather had often been. He also drank French brandy instead of *dop*, smoked cigars and made no *biltong*, but bought fresh meat from the butcher. All these wasteful customs caused great expense, and Katrina never ceased to righteously complain, which made Piet go into town, where he learned to play billiards, and always lost money to Uitlanders, who are taught to play and gamble at their schools.

For many months Piet had been thinking out a plan to get rich, for not alone the serious talking of Katrina made him thoughtful, but the envy he felt when he saw men like Grey, Wolhuter, and Caledon selling for large fortunes farms which had cost them only a span of oxen. Piet's farm was a long way off the line of reef that had made the fortunes of the farmers on the Rand, so that prospectors would not come to look for gold there, and Piet had made up his mind that there was no reef on his farm, for he no longer had

faith, through knowing so many Hollanders who have no religion. But a great change was coming, though he knew it not.

One day he was at Pretoria to see the Government. His son Hans was now nearly seventeen, and was wanting to marry. So Piet thought it would be good if he could get the young *kerel* made Postmaster of Schoonspruit.

At Pretoria he met Hans Breda, who was Mining Commissioner of Vrededorp, and was making so much money that Piet was very envious, for only three years before Hans was so poor that Piet had to lend him oxen to plough with. It was the time when Piet Joubert was running for the Presidency against Oom Paul.

“For whom shall you vote in Kaalkop?” asked Hans, who was a great Kruger man.

Says Piet: “I shall not vote for the man who refuses to consider the son of a burgher who has bled for his country.”

“But you never bled,” says Hans; “you were too *slim*. You bled it.”

This made Piet very angry, for he hated to have such things said; yet he was ever talking of having bled for his country, although everybody knew he had not fought except with his tongue to get back the money he had lent the Government.

“If my boy is not made Postmaster of Schoon-

spruit, I shall vote for *slim* Piet, and make all my burghers do so," answered Piet.

"But," said Hans, "the young *kerel* cannot read, and you know the President has come to set great store on reading and writing in Government officials."

This made Piet yet more angry, for it was not true that young Hans could not read; he could read many words, if they were not too hard, though he could not read writing well.

"It is not that my *kerel* cannot read," said Piet, "but because the President gives all the posts to Hollanders, and forgets those who bled for their country. Can Farnie Kok, the Pass Inspector, write, or a dozen others who have fat billets? Then why not give my son a chance?"

But Hans was not to be moved.

"Nay, Piet," said he, "a Landdrost need not read or write, for he has a clerk who can do both for him, and a Field Cornet need not be able to read, though I am in favour of their being able to do so. But a Postmaster, who has to do so much with letters, must know how to read writing, or how can he tell when treason is going on, or how shall he know that claims are to be pegged and business done? No, Piet, if your *kerel* cannot read he will miss many chances for making money in the Post Office."

“But cannot he have an assistant?”

“Certainly he can, but the assistant will know more than the master, and young Hans will have to share with him what he makes.”

Then Piet thought that he could sit in the Post Office a great deal and see what was going on.

“But what would the papers say?” asked Hans; and Piet saw that this would not do, for he had begun to be afraid of these meddling editors.

These two talked and talked over the plan for a long time, but Hans would not hear of the post business.

“If you want money so badly why not have your farm proclaimed a goldfield?” asked Hans at last.

Piet’s heart gave a great jump, just as it did the day he found the diamonds. It was the thing nearest his heart to have his farm proclaimed, but he could only dream of it.

“How can this be done if there is no gold there?” asked Piet, in great wonder.

“Then must we put some there,” said Hans. And Piet marvelled still more, for he, being honest, was very slow to see an advantage.

“If I show you how to get the President to proclaim your farm a goldfield you must promise

to vote for him, and make all your burghers do the same."

Piet promised gladly, and, after a long *indaba*, he went back to his farm very happy, yet withal very perplexed, for he could not see how Hans Breda could do what he had promised by finding gold where it was not, which showed that my father-in-law had not yet learned all the wickedness that the Uitlanders have brought into the country.

His first work was to tell the burghers what his opinions were about the Presidentship. This was easy with those who always came to him to ask how they should vote, but there were a few obstinate men in the district who read *Land en Volk* and other papers which were disrespectful to Oom Paul, and said that he was only a friend to the Hollander.

The worst of these was Jan du Toit, who had a quick tongue, and made thereby much discontent, for he could read both print and writing, and subscribed to several papers, especially *Land en Volk*, which he would read to the burghers, and told them that all it said was true.

Piet called the burghers together and told them they should all vote for Oom Paul, otherwise there would be another Kaffir war, and he would have to *commandeer* all who had brought it about by voting for General Joubert.

Although Piet had tried to keep Jan du Toit away from the *indaba* by holding it when he thought Jan was in Krugersdorp, his plans fell through. Jan came, and made great trouble by asking Piet why he had so suddenly changed his mind about Piet Joubert.

Piet answered that he had learned many strange things in Pretoria which had made him resolve that Oom Paul was the proper man.

Jan told the burghers that they were all sheep, and ran just as Piet cracked his *sjambok*. Then he read from a paper that Oom Paul had said there would be no Kaffir war, as the chiefs had paid hut tax; so there would be no need of a *commando*, which had been brought about entirely by General Joubert, who loved his *volk*, and hated fighting. "So," said Jan, "it is Piet Joubert who has saved you from *commando*, and not Oom Paul, so you should vote for him."

This speech had great effect, and Piet saw that all were going with Jan du Toit, so he made a master stroke.

"All law-abiding burghers are supporting Oom Paul," said he.

"And am I not a law-abiding burgher?" asked Jan.

"I don't know whether it is obeying the law to keep eight families of Kaffirs on a farm to do

your farm work, when the law says you shall not have more than five."

This was a very sharp cut, for it was well-known that Jan had more Kaffirs on his farm than the law allowed, and it was the duty of the Field Cornet to move them away and prosecute the farmer.

Jan was quite conquered, for if he lost his Kaffirs now he would not be able to get in his mealie crop; so for a little while he was very quiet. At last he said:

"You are right one way, Piet. It is right that our President should make good laws. We have seen what Oom Paul can do, but *slim* Piet has not yet made any laws, so, perhaps, it is better to trust the man we know best."

This speech turned a great many who would have voted against Oom Paul, and all went well for Piet's man, and he waited with great impatiencè for the carrying out of the promise of Hans Breda.

One day a man they call a "prospector" came to Piet's place, bearing a letter from Hans, saying he had come to find the gold.

Instead of going right away into the *veld*, he asked for whisky, as all prospectors do, and sat down on the *stoep* and began to drink and smoke and talk to Piet in very bad Dutch. He drank all

that day and the next day till Piet began to grow anxious about the reef, and said so, but all the prospector would say was: "That's all right; trot out another bottle."

For four days did the man do nothing but drink whisky and sleep; but on the fifth he was quite sober, all the whisky being finished. Then he asked Piet for a shot gun, a few cartridges, and some *dop* brandy. This, he said, was not to drink, but to wet the reef.

Before he left he took all the shot out of the cartridges, a thing that puzzled Piet very much. Then he went out into the *veld* to look for gold, and would have no one with him. At sundown he came back carrying pieces of rock tied up in his handkerchief. They were bright and sparkling with gold specks.

"What do you think of that?" asked the prospector.

Piet said they were very fine specimens.

"Specimens be blowed," said the prospector; "I've got the whole blessed reef in that handkerchief, but I can find some more; but that's no business of yours, you've got to hold your tongue. *Verstaan ye?*"

Piet answered that he understood, although he did not; and particularly he did not understand what the prospector should want with a shot gun.

But he did not dare to ask questions, for the prospector said so much that was not clear about the need of silence that Piet could only say *nix* and wonder.

The prospector went back to Johannesburg next day, and soon after Hans Breda sent for Piet.

"Piet," said he, "that *verdomde Rooinek* found too much gold. He must go back and find better stuff."

Piet was astounded beyond words. How could a man find too much gold?

"*Ach*, man, the *Rooineks* in Johannesburg are not fools," said he. "Would you buy a cow if the seller told you she gave a hundred bottles of milk every morning? Would you not know that he lied?"

Still Piet was in the dark, and could not understand anything except that they had to go to Johannesburg and find that prospector.

With very great trouble, they found him at a dirty hotel, where he had been drinking ever since he left Piet's farm. Hans talked long to him in private. When he came out he said:

"He wants £200 before he will go again, and we must pay all that he owes here."

Piet grew very angry, and said he would not pay a *tickie*. "Let us get another prospector," said he; but Hans laughed, and said it was impossible.

“But in a big place like Johannesburg there must be many.”

“Nay, there may be many, but there are prospectors and prospectors,” answered Hans, a saying that puzzled Piet amazingly. Hans explained that they must employ this same prospector, otherwise he would say there was no gold on the farm.

“But what matters it what he may say; have we not seen the gold with our own eyes?”

Hans laughed again.

“You do not understand these Uitlanders,” said he. “They go much on names, and they will buy your farm if this man tells them it is good; otherwise it will never sell.”

When Piet learned that he had to find £200 he came near to drawing out of the enterprise, for £200 was the price of four spans of oxen, and took a lot of collecting together in the form of presents from people who wanted favours. But Hans at last overtalked him, and he paid the money, together with £16 which the prospector owed to the hotel for whisky. Then they set out for the farm.

It was again nearly a week before the prospector would quit whisky and start out to find gold, but at last he went, and again he took the gun with him, and brought back specimens of rock; but

Piet noticed that they were not so rich as the first ones.

Piet remarked on this to the prospector, who explained it :

“ You see,” said he, “ the stuff I got before was twenty-two carat ; this is only eighteen carat. It doesn't do to show your best stuff at first, because you keep that for yourself.”

This satisfied Piet at the time, because it explained much that was before mysterious. He asked the prospector to show him where he had found the gold, and he took him to a cutting that had been made in the early days of the gold discoveries on the Rand. Piet had often been there, but he never saw before the wonderful shining specks in the rock. They were there in thousands. He asked the prospector why they had never been noticed before.

“ If I told you that,” said he, “ I should give away my business. It is all science, and this is the branch of it they call ‘ salting ’ ; but whatever you do don't show this to anybody who understands science, or you will never sell the farm. The price of gold would go down to nothing, as this property of yours will glut the market.”

‡ Piet believed all this because he was honest, and he gave the prospector so much whisky that it took him four days to get well again.

The long waiting and the worry of journeying to Pretoria that now set in sometimes made Piet sorry that he had resolved to have his farm proclaimed, for he was not quite sure about the gold being there. But Hans Breda told him he was on no account to talk of this matter to anyone.

Never before did Piet know how many and how greedy were the officials in Pretoria who had to do with proclaiming a farm. No sooner had he agreed to let one man have so many claims than another came and proved that he was much more influential and necessary than the last. Then would come another official, who would make Piet promise to give his son an appointment, or a commission or something that had profit sticking to it. Piet did not so much complain of the long delay and the many promises made by the Government that were broken, for he knew that Oom Paul was not favourable to more goldfields, because they brought in Uitlanders. But he did think that Oom Paul ought not to let his officials bleed an honest man like himself by threatening to do things that would put a *skid* on his waggon; and sometimes he thought that these long delays and frequent breakdowns of all arrangements were designed to give the officials time and excuse for making money by pretending that they were able to hurry matters on. All this

cost much money, for many officials were poor at the time of Piet's visits to Pretoria, and borrowed money or got him to sign papers as security for money they owed, all of which Piet did, though with a sad heart, for he was not satisfied that these men could do what they promised. Then Hans was like a hungry Kaffir, coming time and again for advances for this and for that, without which he said the whole thing must collapse. Piet had by this time spent nearly £2,000, and had signed securities for officials to the extent of nearly a thousand more, and he stayed much in Pretoria, for he was afraid to go home and tell Katrina that nothing had yet come for all this trouble and outlay. She would say hard things of Hans Breda till Piet would begin to mistrust him, for the constant creaking of a *vrouw's* tongue makes men suspect their best friends. Then Katrina would ask questions that Piet could not answer, wanting to know why he did not sell the farm if it had so much gold, instead of letting others come and dig it. Piet tried to make her believe that it was because he was afraid of being robbed as he was when he sold his first farm to Brown, the Rand millionaire; but Katrina called him foolish, and said that she would count the money this time, which was an answer to his excuse, and made him angry that he could not think of a better.

Just as Piet was beginning to think that he had suffered enough he received news that the farm had been proclaimed. There was a big advertisement in the *Staats Courant*, and within twenty-four hours the farm and all the adjoining country had been overrun by men from Johannesburg who came to peg off claims. It was a great day for Piet, and even Katrina ceased to grumble, for she had counted up and found that the claim licences would bring in £300 a month, which was a very fine sum of money. But next day, when the Predikant had gone over the figures and made it out even more, Katrina began to abuse Piet for not having sooner had the farm proclaimed. Piet gave her a great answer full of sharpness. Said he: "I should have had it proclaimed before, but I had not talked it over with that *schelm* Hans Breda;"—which was the phrase Katrina had always used when she spoke of Hans.





CHAPTER VIII.

MINING COMMISSIONER OF KAALKOP.

EVER since Piet Prinsloo had been able to understand the fulness of these things he had been possessed of two great desires. The first was to be a Mining Commissioner; the other to have a township bearing his name. He had always known that a Mining Commissioner was much greater than a Landdrost, though until the goldfields were proclaimed his heart had been with a Field Cornetcy, because Field Cornets had great power over their fellows. But since he had thought on the matter and had heard Katrina's daily bewailing after money, he held the Field Cornet in small esteem, and envied the Commissioner almost as much as Katrina envied his *vrouw*. The Uitlanders cared nothing for the

Field Cornet, and even laughed at him ; but it was not so with the Mining Commissioner, for he was as a king, having command of all the gold claims in his district and chances of making hundreds of pounds where a Field Cornet got only a few shillings or a stray ox or two. Besides, the Mining Commissioner was the Government man on Licensing Boards and other public bodies that controlled much money, and their *vrouws* were always richly dressed, which Katrina never ceased to call Piet's attention to.

One day, when all the claims on Kaalkop had been pegged out by people from Johannesburg, Piet went to Vrededorp to see Hans Breda, and told him how much he wanted to be a Mining Commissioner, and to have a township after his name like Kruger of Krugersdorp and Klerk of Klerksdorp.

Now, as it happened, this was the great mistake of Piet's life, and shows us how foolish it is not to be content when we have got all that we ought to want ; which is another of the many curses brought upon the land by the greedy Uitlander and Hollander.

When they had smoked for a long time and drunk coffee without speaking, Hans said :

“ Do you not know, Piet, that the Gold Law will not let a man be an official on a goldfield

and still hold claims? If you would be a Commissioner you must sell your proclaimed farm."

Piet did not like this, but having begun to know that such laws were made in such a way that loyal and *oprecht* burghers could break them if it gave them advantage over an Uitlander, he asked Hans if this were not so.

"Ja," said Hans, "Oom Paul is *slim* and good to his burghers. He has thought of all this, and I will show you how you can hold your farm and yet be a Commissioner. But, Piet, it will cost you a lot of money."

Piet knew this, for he had not forgotten the days in Pretoria when he did little but pay the debts of the officials who helped to get the farm proclaimed.

"Hans," said he, "you are a *slim kerel*, and know enough to be President," which speech pleased Hans much, being greatly vain of his cunning.

Then he told Piet how he should plan it all.

"You will," said he, "sell to a man your farm and rights for £50,000."

"And who will he be?" asked Piet.

"My nephew, Jan Kemp."

"But he has not a thousand *tickies*," said Piet, much surprised.

"That speech shows how little you know of

business," answered Hans. "He will be what the Uitlanders call a 'nominee,' which is a man who has no money or will of his own, and does only what he is told. He gives you no money, neither does he take your farm, for you still hold it in secret, and when people say, 'The Mining Commissioner is the owner of the land,' you say, 'It is false, for I sold it to Jan Kemp, and there are writings to prove it.'"

"But where do I gain?" asked Piet, who was not yet quick at business.

"You gain," said Hans, "by being at once the owner of the land, who receives half the claim licence money, and the Commissioner who shows purchasers where the best open claims are for a present, and has a big share in secret when companies are floated to take over the claims."

The end of it was that Piet agreed, and signed the writings that Hans got an attorney to prepare.

Once again did Piet's slippery tongue bring him trouble, for he told several people how he had sold his farm for much money. This got into the newspapers, and brought great worry, for the people to whom Piet owed money would no longer take his excuses. But he put many of them off by telling them that being a burgher, the Landdrost who tried the case must give judgment in

his favour, and those who were not new to the ways of the Transvaal were sensible and waited, but the foolish ones took Piet into court, and, of course, lost, for the Landdrost owed money to Piet, and was eager to have a share in the Kaalkop claims. But though he won, he never forgave the papers, but tried hard to have a law passed to suppress them.

The next business was to make Piet Mining Commissioner of Kaalkop, and get the township proclaimed. It was very hard and long work in Pretoria, for there were so many to whom the next commissionership had been promised, both by word of mouth and by writing. But Hans Breda knew well how to arrange such things, for it always happens that the Government promise the same office to many, and in three months Piet was made Mining Commissioner of the Kaalkop Goldfields District, and the township that was laid out was called "Prinsloosdorp," so that Piet obtained his heart's desire, though he saw not the grief and misfortune it was to bring him through the jealousy of those who deserved good fortune less.

When a township is proclaimed by the Government it is the custom to fix a day whereon the stands shall be offered for sale to the public by the Government auctioneer, and it is always a

great day. The Uitlanders from Johannesburg attend in large numbers, the great financiers send a man to buy for them, the railway runs a special train to the nearest station, and altogether it is even a greater day than *nachtmaal*.

Piet and Katrina were very happy when the day came, for they had reckoned that the stands would average £50 apiece, which would make them very rich, for there were six hundred of them, and they would bring £30,000. All of this money would not go to Piet, for so many of those officials who said they had brought pressure on the Government to proclaim the township would have to receive a share of the profit. But Hans Breda said that this would not amount to more than £10,000, as he had brought his great influence to bear to make them less greedy than they would otherwise have been.

I have said that Hans had been of great service to Piet in his plans, but I have now to show how even men like him can be spoiled by the corruption of the Hollander.

There was a goodly attendance of the public, mostly speculators from Johannesburg, for it was the season of what they call the *Landboom*, and, inasmuch as Prinsloosdorp would be the capital of the new Kaalkop Goldfields, all were eager to buy land. So the sale began, and Piet grew

gladder and gladder as the first lots of stands in the least desirable positions were sold at £40, £50 and £60 apiece. Hans Breda was bidding up the price as he had promised. Presently came the turn of the stands in the centre of the township, which are always most valuable. The bids began at £50, and the Johannesburg men bid boldly by tens; but Hans was always close on their heels until, when he bid £350, the Uitlander left off, and the stand was knocked down to Hans Breda, while Piet marvelled, being strangely puzzled. But there was greater cause for wonderment awaiting him.

“How many will you take?” asked the auctioneer.

“The whole block of twenty,” answered Hans, as coolly as if buying half a load of forage on the market.

Piet grew sick and faint, for he had believed that Hans spoke truth when he had told him he was not a buyer but a bidder. Besides, how could he pay £7,000? Piet did not know that a wicked scheme was afoot to *verneuk* him, but he learned it soon.

In the conditions of sale there was a provision that if a purchaser did not pay for his stands by two o'clock, they would be again put up for sale. Now, all had been sold by shortly after one o'clock,

and there being a return train near that time, all the people from Johannesburg left. Then, when there was less than a dozen people on the spot, Hans Breda went to the auctioneer:

"I am sorry," said he, "but I cannot pay for the stands I have bought."

So the auctioneer, according to the rule, put up for sale all the stands surrendered by Hans, and there being no one left with money, Jan Kemp bought them all in at £10 each.

And the real purchaser was Hans Breda, who next day sold all the stands, so wickedly and cheaply purchased, for £200 each, and gave Piet not one shilling for his share.

Piet was very wrathful.

"Why did you serve me so badly?" he asked.

"Because," answered Hans, quite unashamed, "I deserved to make a bit for myself. If I had not shown you how to 'salt' the ground you would not be Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp to-day."

"'Salt' the ground," asked Piet, in amaze; "what is that?"

"Making it taste better," answered Hans, with a laugh.

Then a great light burst on Piet. For the first time he understood why that prospector borrowed a shot gun, but no shot, and he knew that the gold dust had been fired into the rock on purpose

to deceive. And he was grieved, for he stood high in the Church; but he had not the heart to tell those who had pegged claims that they had been robbed, for it would have made them sore also.

“It is all the fault of letting those Uitlanders into the country,” said Piet to Katrina, when he had told her all. “Such a thing would never have been done in Cape Colony in the old days.”

“Nay,” said Katrina, “for you had no gold claims to ‘salt.’”

Since the Engländer and Holländer have been allowed to come into the Transvaal they have by their evil example done much to make our young burghers immoral and infidels. They have tried their best to shake our faith in Providence by all sorts of profane and blasphemous acts, such as shooting into the clouds to bring rain, as they did with awful wickedness in Johannesburg. That act was in itself shocking, and brought its just punishment in the rinderpest. But what made it worse was that some infamous Uitlander wrote to a Johannesburg paper that a wounded cherubim with a broken wing had been picked up in the *veld* near Johannesburg, the hurt having been done by the bursting of the shells fired into the sky. Now, I do not for one moment believe that such a wounded cherubim was found as described, but

there are a large number of ignorant but religious Boers who heard the story, and it made them very angry with Paul Kruger that he did not prosecute the men who caused the guns to be fired. Then there came out of it another trouble, for it was reported that the cherubim with the broken wing was being taken to Oom Paul at Pretoria, and that the waggon would pass through Mulder's Drift. The result was that nearly two hundred Boers rode six and even ten hours to see what they had often read of in their Bibles, but when they got there no waggon was found. The Johannesburg papers said they were a large Boer *commando* marching on Pretoria to compel Paul Kruger to grant reforms to the Uitlanders. Now, as all the Boers who rode out were Kruger men it was hard that they should be thought to be friendly to the Uitlanders. Still, it was not easy to explain why they had all ridden so long and so far, for they were ashamed to own that they came to see a cherubim whose wing had been broken by profane Uitlanders. So they went back very gloomy and angry that they could not think of a proper excuse. Within the next month four Field Cornets and several minor officials who were with the party were discharged for being suspected of sympathy with the Uitlanders, and when the Predikant of the Dutch Reform Church at Booms-

dorp preached one Sunday about cherubims, most of the Boers left the church, and there was a great uprising against the Predikant, whom they sought to have removed.

One of the men who laughed much at the story of the wounded cherubim was Nick Grobler, he being a great infidel, as was proved by his burning sulphur over his mealies to keep away locusts, which are sent as a punishment.

But one of the greatest proofs of the grief that awaits the wrongdoer was supplied by the great and rapid growth of Prinsloosdorp, and this in spite of the jealousy and wickedness of Nick Grobler, who tried hard to make his own Vrededorp better and more prosperous than my father-in-law's *dorp*. Although Schoonspruit was twenty years old when Prinsloosdorp was proclaimed, and had the best water supply and the largest Reformed Church in the district, yet as soon as Nick Grobler listened to the voice of the infidel Hollander and tried to bring Piet Prinsloo to ruin, his *dorp* grew small and Piet's larger. First came the great schism in the church, brought about by Nick's daughter going to a dance during *nachtmaal*. Nick refused to see that she had done a great sin, being a teacher in the State school; and when the Predikant reproved her and dismissed her from her post, Nick, instead of being

humble and contrite, impounded the Predikant's cow for grazing on his farm, and put up the Sanitary Inspector to analyse the milk sold by the Predikant, and finding it half water, Nick fined him the full penalty. This was very bad, but he did worse. He gave leave to the owner of a skittle alley to put up his gambling tent on the market square during *nachtmaal*, so that the young Boers gambled for and lost the money given them to put into the collection box, and stayed away gambling instead of being at church.

When Piet Prinsloo heard of this he was stirred to great anger, and publicly declared that Nick was in league with the owner of the skittle alley and received half the profits from money that rightly belonged to the church. Of course, he could not prove this, though I have no doubt it was true, so he had to sign another apology and pay £10 to the *Kerk* fund.

So while Nick Grobler was daily chastened for his wickedness, Prinsloosdorp grew and flourished like the green bay tree. There was a jail, four white canteens and seven Kaffir canteens along the line of reef; and Piet, being chairman of the Licensing Board, had great opportunities for making money. The jail being always full of Kaffirs, he had as much work free as he wanted for his garden and his farm, which was a very

great consideration when Kaffirs wanted £4 a month. Nick Grobler tried to make trouble out of this for my father-in-law, but, digging a pit, he fell into it himself.

It came about in this way :

Vrouw Keet was talking with Nick's girl *Kaatje*, saying she wondered how Nick could keep so many Kaffirs unless he improperly used the prisoners.

"My pa does nothing of the sort," said *Kaatje* ;
"our Kaffirs only cost us their *skoff*."

"Then I wish you would tell me how it's done,"
said *Vrouw Keet*.

So *Kaatje* told her.

It was the old trick that is largely used all over South Africa by the Boers to punish idle and impudent Kaffirs ; but Nick used it to escape paying them their just wages, which, though right when a Boer is poor, becomes a scandal when the man who does it is a Landdrost and can pay for services.

A day or two before the Kaffir's month was up, Piet would find a pretence for being very angry with the Kaffir, and would tell him that on the last day of the month he would give him twenty-five lashes, hoping that the boy would be frightened and run away without waiting for his wages, which they mostly did. But when the

new Pass Law was made, the boys were afraid to leave without their passes, for if caught they would be flogged for having none. So they would stay and take the flogging from their *baas* rather than lose their money and get a flogging at the jail besides.

But Nick was a match for this. He would give the boy his discharge pass and an order to take to some distant Field Cornet to give the bearer twenty-five for laziness and impudence. He would explain the letter to the Kaffir, and start him off early in the morning. It was very rarely that the boy delivered the letter to the Field Cornet or came back for his money!

Thus it came that Nick Grobler paid no wages to his boys, yet always had plenty of labour, for he promised them £4 a month, which was the mine wage.

Mrs. Keet told this to me and I wrote to the *Critic* about it. What was better, we caught one of the boys with the flogging order, and Nick was thoroughly exposed. But he got free labour just the same.

The thing that made Piet even richer was a great and clever plan which Hans Breda showed him.

I have told how Oom Hans *verneuked* Piet over the sale of the stands, which made them no longer

great friends. But one day, two years later, Hans lost the mother of his wife, and this made him feel to want to forgive his enemies. So he came to Piet, whom he had not spoken to since the sale.

“Piet,” said he, “I did you a great wrong over that *stand plaatsen* sale, and I want to show you that I am sorry.”

My father-in-law was still angry, and secretly sorry that Hans had no longer his wife’s mother to trouble him, so he replied gruffly, as if not ready to forgive him, until he heard him say :

“Piet, I want to show you how to get back that money you lost.”

“Hans,” said Piet, “you are a *verdomde schelm*, but you are *slim*. Show me how I can get back my money and we shall again be friends.”

“That is good, Piet ; you are a good Bible-reading man,” said Hans, and he went on : “You have a lot of stands on the outside of the town which are no good because they are away from the *dorp*, and nobody will go there to build houses and live.”

“That is so,” said Piet ; for he had always been angry when he thought how Hans had got the best stands and he the worst.

“Well, suppose the Government offices were to be burnt down, as big buildings often do. Would

it not be patriotic if you offered to give for *nix* sufficient of your outside stands to rebuild the offices on? And would it not make all the rest of the stands outside go up in value?"

Piet had by this time learned more business, and was quicker to see an advantage.

"Hans," said Piet, shaking hands with him for the first time for two years, "I am quite and truly glad that your mother-in-law is dead, though I was sorry when I first heard it. Now we can be friends again and forgive one another, and make some money together. Eh, *koos*?"

And they had a long *indaba* together on the *stoep*, and Katrina listened at the window and heard it all, and was glad that her man was no longer unfriendly with Hans Breda.

About three months after this talk on the *stoep*, the court-house and the office of the Mining Commissioner caught fire in the night, and, water being very scarce, the whole of the block was burned down.

Piet and Hans went over to Pretoria and offered the Government ten stands on the outside of the town on which to rebuild the public offices.

"It is making the Government a present of five thousand pounds," said Piet, to the members of the Executive, "for the old stands are worth that now for building stores and private offices."

A lot of time was spent in getting the plan through, for, as usual, a great many officials in Pretoria wanted a share in the thing for their trouble, which is only another way of saying that if they had not been considered they would have done all they possibly could to prevent the Government accepting the offer. But Hans Breda knew well how to deal with officials, having himself been one in Pretoria, so all went well. The Government offices were put up outside the town, and all that Hans had said came true, for the other stands in the neighbourhood were bought up at a largely increased price. Piet got the Licensing Board to grant licences to two canteens there, and in less than a year Piet made £7,000, of which Hans and the Pretoria crowd took only £3,000 for their share.

This great success made Nick Grobler furious with envy. He prompted the *Patriot* and other papers to make a great stir about what they called "The Prinsloosdorp Scandal," and a memorial was got up and presented to the Government complaining that it was a shame that people who had to do business with the Mining Commissioner should have to go two miles out of the town to see him. But as it is nearly all Uitlanders who have business with the Mining Commissioner, the Government took no notice, and the member for

the district said in the Raad that it was just like the Uitlander to find fault with a patriot like Piet Prinsloo, who had generously given the stands to the Government.

Thus was Piet exalted as a great and good man, and the wickedness of Nick Grobler was of no effect.

Piet had a great joy about this time in seeing his enemy humbled in the dust once again. Nick had but one daughter, Kaatje, and she was married to a Hollander, who Nick got made Postmaster of Rooidam. After he had been married to Kaatje only nine months he borrowed £500 from Nick, stole all the postage stamps and money in the office, and ran away to his own country, leaving Kaatje with her father, where she is even to this day.

And the very day that this great calamity and righteous judgment visited Nick Grobler, my father-in-law was presented with a memorial signed by fifteen burghers of the district asking him to stand as their candidate for the First Raad at the next election !



CHAPTER IX.

AT THE DOOR OF THE RAADZAAL.

THE causes which made a chance for my father-in-law to stand as candidate for the First Raad were brought about by the folly of Hendrick Walker, member for the Groot Plaats District. He was a Colonial of English descent, and though he had married a Boer *vrouw*, he was not to be thought as good as a true Transvaaler.

He thought himself very *slim*, yet when he took presents for his votes he would boastfully speak of it in canteens, and wrote many foolish letters saying how much he wanted for his good services when concessions were being voted upon.

Piet Prinsloo always mistrusted Walker because of his *Rooinek* name, and he was very rejoiceful when he got hold of a copy of a letter Hendrick

had written to a Hollander at the time that Kaalkop was proclaimed a goldfield, promising to get him the Mining Commissionership if he gave him £20 per month.

Being a patriotic burgher, Piet resolved to make a plan to punish Hendrick, not so much because this half *Rooinek* had tried to injure him, as for the reason that he had wished to benefit a Hollander at the expense of a son of the soil who had bled for his country.

Piet said nothing until the requisition had been signed. Hans Breda had the getting of it up, and, as we afterwards found, many of the names on it had been written by Hans himself, so that he might keep the ten shillings that Piet was prepared to pay each burgher who signed freely.

When the requisition was published in the papers, Piet went to Pretoria, and saw Hendrick Walker in the Raadzaal.

"Have you come for my seat?" said he, when he saw my father-in-law looking round the chamber.

"Ja," answered he, "I am tired, Hendrick, and want to rest in the Raadzaal."

"But why would you push me out? I have never done you harm."

"Not when you tried to get a Hollander as Mining Commissioner of Kaalkop?"

“It is a big lie, such as the devil himself tells,” said Hendrick, turning very white.

Piet said nothing, but took out the copy of the letter, and let Hendrick read it.

Again he swore it was a false thing, but when Piet told him things that were in other letters, Hendrick no longer denied.

“You are a *slim kerel*, Piet,” said he; “so let us make a plan that shall pay us both. You are a rich man, but I am poor. Why should you get me out of the Raad, where I make so little compared to other members, who can get what they want for their votes.”

“That is because you have a *Rooinek* name. The other members vote against you, and you carry small weight. I could make ten times what you do.”

“Perhaps,” answered Hendrick, “but things are not what they were. Those *verdomde* papers find out so much that they have frightened people who would make us presents. Last session I got less than £500. If the Schoonspruit-Plaatskop railway concession goes through I am to have £1,000 in cash and one thousand shares. I will give you the shares if you let me keep my seat in the Raad.”

Hendrick knew that Piet was strong in the district, and could push him out if he would, for

he could afford to pay higher for votes than he. Besides, he was greatly afraid of the letters, though he did not know that Piet did not have the originals, only copies, for the owner wanted £500 for them.

So the two had a long *indaba*.

“Look here, Piet,” said Hendrick. “If you become a member of the Raad you may no longer be a Mining Commissioner—it is against the law that officials sit in the Raad. Which would pay you best—to take money from the Uitlanders and stand in with their company schemes, or draw £2 per day, and have to live in Pretoria at a cost of nearly £10 per month? If you will let me stay on I will give you, in addition to the shares, £20 a month, for I think we shall have a good year, as so many concessions and other favours have to be granted and well paid for.”

So it was agreed that Piet should keep the letters as security for the £20 per month, and at the last moment, when it was too late to put up another candidate, he was to retire from the election, and leave Hendrick to walk in unopposed. And it was so done.



CHAPTER X.

PIET PRINSLOO'S LAST TREK.

THE events which led to the retirement of my father-in-law from the Mining Commissionership of Kaalkop, and the numerous undignified charges made in connection therewith, are too fresh in the public memory to need more than a very brief reference.

I have sometimes thought that the remarkable series of misfortunes that followed the re-election of Hendrick Walker for the Raad, was a providential chastisement on Piet Prinsloo for permitting a man like Walker to remain in the Raad, even though the £20 a month was faithfully paid up.

It may be that Nick Grobler, by means of mole-like planning, contrived to bring about the undoing of my father-in-law; but whatever the

cause, he, all at once, became the target at which the bullets of the unjust and sinfully jealous were shot without ceasing. First, he was accused of making a big profit out of the mealies sent by the Government for the starving Kaffirs in his district. Those who say these things do not know so well as Piet Prinsloo that a Kaffir despises a white man who makes him gifts; therefore it was that he made them pay what they could afford for the mealies. It has been untruthfully said that he had charged as much as £10 for a bag. This I can emphatically deny, since the highest price paid by any Kaffir to my father-in-law was £9 10s. It is useless to attempt to point out to prejudiced people that if the Kaffirs had not been made to pay for the mealies they would have held the Government in low esteem, and spent the money in buying cattle that were certain to have died from the rinderpest.

The great final blow came when the Government, acting, doubtless, under the advice of certain Hollanders, who are like the lion, ever seeking whom they may devour among the sons of the soil, appointed a new and unnecessary official, whose very existence is an insult to the burghers who serve the State. He is called an Inspector of Public Offices, and, like the secret spy and jackal that he is, he creeps round the

kraal and springs in at the most unexpected hour, demanding the books, if there be any, and a full explanation of every *tickie* that may be missing.

One day he arrived at Prinsloosdorp without any warning, and found that, by the omission of some stupid clerk, Piet had not sent in about £350 of claim and licence money. Although there were I.O.U.'s for most of that amount signed by my father-in-law, this inspector refused to acknowledge them, and reported the matter to Pretoria.

Piet, always quick with his tongue, said what he thought of a Government that would suspect its oldest supporters, and ask them to account for money as if they were ordinary servants. He let it be understood in Pretoria that he would exert his influence against the President at the forthcoming election in the Kaalkop District, so the Government wisely let the matter drop.

But influenced, I doubt not, by Nick Grobler, the *Patriot* took the matter up, and made such charges against Piet that some of the burghers began to think there was something in them.

Week after week all sorts of scandalous stories were printed about Piet, and even of myself. Most of these stories I have given the true version of, so that honest men can see there was no ground for the wicked and malicious charges of

the writers. Piet was quite prepared to leave the charges alone, deeming it undignified to enter into explanations with Uitlanders. But there were Hollanders in Pretoria who hated Piet Prinsloo because he had never spared them, and had rightly done his best to get them pushed aside for sons of the soil. They brought great influence to bear upon the Government, and Piet was ordered to prosecute the editor of the most wicked of the papers that had made charges against him, namely, *Land en Volk*. Piet had been told in confidence that if he let the Public Prosecutor loose on the editor he would be certain to run away; so my father-in-law swore an information against the man, who, instead of running away, printed the summons in his paper, under the heading

“GOT HIM AT LAST,”

which shows how bold this class of man grows when left alone by a too merciful Government.

Piet consulted with me and other friends capable and honest enough to advise him, and he decided not to continue the prosecution; not that he feared the result, but because so many innocent people would be dragged into the case, and mentioned in a way that would cause them great annoyance.

“Sarel,” said my father-in-law to me, “I have served the State for forty years; I have bled for

my country, and I have lent it money, and yet the Government insults me by counting my cash. They further insult me by wanting to count the cash that has passed through your hands—you, my own son-in-law, whom I myself raised from Market Master to Public Prosecutor. If we sat quiet under this insult, Sarel, people would say we deserved it. Let us leave the country. I have long wished to see if Rhodesia is as good as they say it is. We will buy a farm on the border, so that if the *Rooineks* again invade the Transvaal from that side, we shall be on the spot to fight them, and so prove that, though our country has treated us so ill, we are still patriots. And, Sarel, if they are too strong for us to fight, we can hurt them in another way. We can sell them our transport cattle and our forage, and so spoil the Egyptians by getting their gold."

And thus it came about that we *trekked* northwards.



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