

PRAYING FOR RAIN.



A SERMON

PREACHED BY

THE LATE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL,
RIGHT REV. JOHN WILLIAM COLENZO, D.D.
IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF S. PETER'S
PIETERMARITZBURG.
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EDITORIAL NOTE

For people who were suffering directly as a result of the drought, Bishop Colenso was offering little comfort in his sermon of 17 November, 1878. Instead of urging them to pray for it, he commenced by contrasting prayer with the so-called laws of nature. He pointed out that one does not pray that one of these laws be contravened. While there are prayers for the recovery of the sick, there are none for people to be brought back to life. Nor are there prayers that the farmer's garners and sacks be miraculously filled with grain.

In the same way, argues the bishop, prayers should not be offered that rain miraculously fall from the skies. His scientific mind knew that rain only fell when the weather conditions conformed to certain complex standards. When the winds, clouds and temperature were not in their right conditions no rains would fall, no matter how hard we prayed. To pray like that would be demanding God to contravene his laws of nature and expecting from him a miracle.

Such prayer is not suitable, not so much because it conflicts with the laws of nature, but because it does not do justice to God himself. As Colenso points out:

Yes! if we truly believe in God, the living God, we must ascribe to Him Infinite Perfection, perfect Wisdom, perfect Love.

Our prayers should be consistent with this attitude and assume that God knows what he is doing. Nevertheless we are entitled to approach God and find

in Him a tender, compassionate Father, and be cheered with the light of His countenance.

With this attitude we can instead address him with the words of the prayer taught by Jesus:

Father, Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven!

These were not only taught by his son but were set as an example when in desperation Jesus addressed his father on that night of agony.

Father, all things are possible unto Thee: take away this cup from me . . . Father, not my will, but Thine be done!

This is the example which we are to follow. God is not to be told to regulate his creation or to change his rules. His will is always to be done. But as children we may approach him and ask him for mercy and support.

Father I am not worthy to be called thy child: have mercy upon me and inspire thou me with strength to become a better man than I am, more submissive to Thy Law, more faithful in my duty, more true to my own inner conviction of what becomes a child of Thine.

This is the pattern that prayer should follow even during times of drought.

We pray only that we may be able to go through our appointed trial in the spirit which becomes thy children, in patience and trust and in love to one another.

Many of Colenso's traits are apparent in this sermon, in particular his knowledge and application of science to theology, his rationalist approach and his unwillingness to surrender to sentimentality. God remains sovereign and loving father. Humankind continues to be a family under God, with Jesus as 'our Elder Brother in God's Family'. We as children approach the father in order that the 'spark of Divine Life' in each of us may be nurtured, even when faced with evils and calamities.

Colenso is undoubtedly right in pointing out that rain does not just fall from the skies. Should he have lived today he would have been able to show how the pollution caused by humankind can disturb what we now call ecology. And further, Colenso could have asserted that God is the giver of rain and the director of the weather and in time of drought our subjection to him must be acknowledged. God remains sovereign and father, and a drought such as we are experiencing teaches us that he both gives and withholds rain, just as he gives and withholds love and mercy.

IAN DARBY

Eph. VI. 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

The text leads us to consider the duty of prayer. The idea most commonly held on this subject is that in prayer we are to beseech God to give us, not merely spiritual gifts and graces, blessings for the soul, but especially such temporal blessings as we may think we need — recovery from sickness, worldly prosperity, success in our undertakings, supplies of rain, or a plentiful harvest — deliverance at all events from some immediate danger or distress, “from lightning and tempest, from plague, pestilence, and famine, from battle and murder, and from sudden death.” And happy indeed are those who habitually pour out their hearts in prayer to God, expressing to their Heavenly Father, with all the confiding simplicity of children, all their wishes, all their necessities, all their fears — “in everything by prayer and thanksgiving making their requests known unto God.” It is but natural for us as human beings, dependent on Power and Wisdom above our own, and it is our privilege as Christians taught by our Saviour’s lips, so to do. Happy is that man who in all his troubles of every kind can throw himself upon the bosom of his Almighty Friend, his Faithful Creator, and tell out all his sorrows, as well as all his sins, into the gracious ear of Him who knows them all before he utters them, who tenderly cares for all his children, of whom the Psalmist said of old that, “as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” On this point indeed the Master himself has left us a precious example. “Father, all things are possible unto Thee: take away this cup from me” — or rather, as we read elsewhere “O My Father, if it be possible” — if it be consistent with Thy Holy Will and according to the ordering of Thy Good Providence — “let this cup pass from me.” There spake the human heart of Jesus, shuddering at the near prospect of death and cruel agony, yet ready to endure whatever the Father’s Infinite Wisdom and Love might see good to lay upon him, to drink to the dregs the cup, however bitter, which Perfect Goodness had prepared for him; and so he added “Yet not my will, but Thine, be done.”

Our prayers, then, in the time of our deepest distress, in the prospect or in the actual sense of our saddest bereavements, may be fashioned upon that of Jesus, our Elder Brother in God’s Family: we cannot go wrong if we follow the example which he has set us. Only in the light of that bright example, and of that Divine Teaching which we have received from his lips and from the whole record of his life, we must remember not to pray to God as if we would prescribe to Him what He *must* do to help us, as if we would explain to Him what He does not know, forgetting that blessed word “Your Father knoweth what things ye need before ye ask Him” — as if we would teach the Infinite Goodness and Wisdom what is best and most useful for us — as if we were wiser and better than God, and would make God wiser and better than He is!

The prayers of many however, do in fact lose sight of the fundamental principle of our religion, that God is unchangeable in Truth, in Wisdom, and in Love, as if they were worshipping some capricious heathen deity, whose will could be overcome and changed by our importunity. And such prayers also lose sight often of the fact that God’s Laws in Nature are unchangeable. This truth is so clearly revealed, and indeed in our day is so generally recognised, that no intelligent person will now be found asking God in plain terms in his own particular case to set aside some law of the natural world,

to violate His own established order in the Universe and work a miracle on his behalf. No one, for instance, would pray that the Sun may rise in the West, or that a stream, which bars his way or threatens to drown him, may be dried up or turned aside in its course, or that some dearly loved one may be raised to life again. Why do men not ask for such things as these? Because they know that God's laws in the natural world are never broken, they have learned by experience that in such cases as these the unchangeable order of nature is never disturbed. But other natural laws are not as yet so generally recognised or so fully understood. Everyone knows that one who is dead will not be restored to life again in this world — not that God cannot do this, if He will, by His Almighty Power and Wisdom, but that experience teaches us that He will not do so, He will not disturb in this way the order which He has Himself established, and we never expect Him to do so. But it is not everyone who realises as certainly the fact that, in order that there may be a fall of rain, certain causes in the atmosphere must be at work and certain changes must take place in it, and that, until those conditions are fulfilled, there cannot possibly be rain, — that is, there will not be, according to God's established order, any more than a lifeless form will be restored to health and activity again. Hence we often hear of prayers being offered for rain or against rain, while we never hear of any sensible person praying that a dead friend may be raised to life again. If only men considered that to pray for rain or for fair weather is simply to ask that God, for the sake of some person or people, would work a miracle, just as it would be to ask that he should raise the dead — and considered also how unwise, how irreverent, how presumptuous, is such a request, when we really understand what it means — we should not hear of prayers being made for rain or sunshine any more than we hear of prayers for the raising of the dead.

Suppose that a man's crops are suffering from drought, and that he asks of God relief in his distress. He does not simply pray that his crops may be saved from destruction, nor does he expect that they will be saved without rain. He knows enough of the fixed laws of nature to be sure that the grain, in order to grow, must be nourished with rain. He prays therefore expressly for rain: that is to say, while recognising *one* law of nature which regulates the growth of the grain, he takes no account of that other law of nature, equally unchangeable, which regulates the fall of rain. In other words he asks for a particular miracle to be wrought for his own special benefit. The wind must be changed in answer to his prayers, and the clouds be driven over his fields. But that change of wind requires certain changes in the atmosphere in the direction from which it came, and will produce certain changes in that to which it goes. And, if we thus go back along the chain of causes which produce storms and calms, rains and droughts, we shall always find that a link — nay, a thousand links — must be violently broken, and the whole order of nature thrown into confusion, in order that this one man's fields may have the rain which he desires. In praying for rain, then, he prays that a miracle may be wrought on his behalf, just as much as if he prayed that his crops may be saved by some miraculous agency without any rain at all. And why does he not do this? Or why does he not ask that the grain may be made to grow in his garner without any sowing or reaping at all, that the sack may grow full again, through some miraculous agency, as fast as it is

emptied? He does but prescribe the mode in which the miracle shall be wrought which he requires; he undertakes to instruct the Almighty in what way He shall fulfil his wish and save his harvest! And the wind, which brings up the rain for him, may wreck a vessel caught in it on some lee shore, or hinder its progress to the port, where medical aid might have been obtained for one on board, shattered by accident or struck by disease, whose friends are longing — perhaps are praying — that just the very opposite wind might blow, and bear them swiftly to the haven where they would be!

If, indeed, our knowledge of the laws of Nature, and of all the powers which must act together to produce certain results, were perfect, we should no longer ask God for many things, which now are often the subject of prayers put up in the Church or in the secret chamber. It has been truly said that with most men prayer begins where the knowledge of the laws of Nature ends, and that, as that knowledge of the laws of Nature ends, and that, as that knowledge advances, prayer retires backward, and confines itself more and more to that region to which it specially belongs, to those things which concern the spiritual world and the Life Eternal. A man would not in these days pray that a deadly poison should be changed on his behalf into wholesome food. But many will still think it proper to pray for the removal of a drought or a pestilence — not for increase of patience to bear the trial, faith to go through with it, wisdom to make the best of it, charity to feel for the sufferings of others under it — but for a miraculous removal of the cause of distress, by some suspension or violation of God's laws established in the Universe. By those who understand that one miracle, one interruption of the regular working of the laws of nature, is, according to the Divine Order, as impossible as another, such prayers will not be offered — except it may be out of mere human weakness, with full recognition of their unfitness, and with a mute appeal to the merciful compassion of Him who bears, like a tender parent, with the infirmities of His Children, who “knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust.”

Twice during the past week have I been called to read the Burial Service over the remains of those who were dearly loved — who are loved tenderly still, but have left blanks in their families, and places vacant, which in this life will be filled no more. One was a young wife and mother, known well to the members of this congregation, when taking her part in days gone by in the Sunday School and in the Choir, who has been called in her youthful prime, from her sphere of useful activity on earth and the joys of her home, to come up higher, where sorrow and sighing are unknown, and the seed sown in this life will bear fruit for evermore. The other was a little one of the flock, who had but just begun to taste life's mingled cup of bliss and pain, and has been taken from the loving arms that held it here into the embrace of the Eternal Father. Doubtless for each of these, while still in life, fond prayers were offered that, if God so pleased, the precious one might be spared awhile. But the Father of spirits, their Father as well as ours, has seen good to order otherwise, and the heads of the mourners will be bowed to say “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away — blessed be the name of the Lord!” And in each case I have read the words which our Church orders to be read — “We give Thee hearty thanks most Merciful Father” — “we give Thee hearty thanks!” — the words of Christian faith and hope — words which we are taught to use because we ought to use

them, ay, though our hearts are breaking, if we really believe in the Wisdom and Goodness of God.

But so should it be with all our prayers in times of trouble, such, for instance, as this time of drought which in God's good providence has of late afflicted this land. Here too we should be ready to say "we meekly accept what Thou in Thy Wisdom and Goodness hast ordered; we yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father," for this result of Thy everworking laws, brought about through the natural ordinances which Thou has established. We are sure that it has been wisely and graciously meant for some good end. We do not wish this drought to be removed, except in Thine own good time and way, and when it has thoroughly worked Thy blessed Will, for ourselves and for others — Thy Will which is infinitely wiser and better than ours. We pray only that we may be able to go through our appointed trial in the spirit which becomes Thy children, in patience and trust and in love to one another, and to those poor heathens round us, who will suffer, if suffering there should be, as well as we, but who have not the assurance which we have, as Christians, that a Fatherly Love is ordering all.

Yes! if we truly believe in God, the living God, we must ascribe to Him Infinite Perfection, perfect Wisdom, perfect Love. And such a Being, perfect in Wisdom and perfect in Goodness, must needs will that which will best promote our truest welfare; and though the way may be dark, and we may not see the path by which He is taking us, yet He holds us with His Mighty Hand, and we shall come out into the light at last. Let us not rebel and say to our Heavenly Father, "O God! our will is at variance with Thy will: we do not like this trial, we do not like what Thou hast appointed for us: fulfil Thou *our* desire: let our will be done, not Thine, in this matter. What Thou knowest to be best for us, let not *that* happen: but change Thou Thy purpose at our request, yea, change Thy everlasting laws, and let something else happen, the thing which we desire." Would not such a prayer as this clearly show that we do not really believe that God is perfectly Wise and Good? Ah! yet we are but, the best of us, as "infants crying in the night," and God, our God, will not be angry when he hears our feeble cries, our foolish prayers. Nay, the Father of Spirits will bend with compassion over us when He sees how at times, it may be —

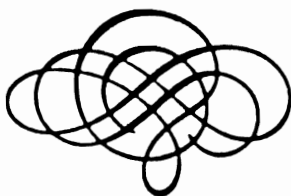
We falter where we firmly trod,
And falling with our weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,
We stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what we feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

(Tennyson, 'In Memoriam')

Yes! He hears when there is no voice of supplication, when only the heart is broken, and the spirit maketh intercession with groanings which are not uttered. But blessed are those who know the true use of prayer, as the means of obtaining spiritual help and strength! Whenever we ask for spiritual blessings, for a pure heart, for strength to do a difficult duty, for power to overcome temptation, for grace to become better and nobler than we are, then we ask Him not to work a miracle, not to break his own laws, but to keep them, to fulfil them; for it is a law of the spiritual world, as fixed

and sure as those of the natural, that whoever sincerely desires to become more holy, more brave, and true, and good, more what a child of God should be, and who uses prayer as a means which God has given us for growing more and more in His likeness, shall attain what he desires. The man who is irreligious or immoral may ask of God plentiful harvests and favourable seasons. But he who goes to God and says, "Father I am not worthy to be called Thy child: have mercy upon me and inspire Thou me with strength to become a better man than I am, more submissive to Thy will, more obedient to Thy Law, more faithful in my duty, more true to my own inner conviction of what becomes a child of Thine" — he who prays thus out of a full heart with all earnestness, it may even be with strong crying and tears when he looks back upon the path which lies behind him and sees what waste he has made of life's blessings, what wrong he has done, what woe he has caused, to himself and to others — gives thereby a proof that the spark of Divine Life has not been quenched in him, that his soul is still alive unto God, that the life of God is still within him, however it may have been at times oppressed, almost crushed out, with evil. What strength, what joy from above, is given in answer to such prayer! It changes not the nature of Him to whom the man prays: it changes the man himself; his soul is quickened, cleansed, and purified through such communion with God.

Let no man therefore say "If I cannot change the mind of God by my prayer, it is useless to pray, and I need not, will not, pray at all." There are prayers which are altogether useless, like those of which St. James writes, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." But prayer indeed helps, if we say as Jesus did, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done!" Prayer helps if we seek thereby to draw near to God, if our only desire is to have closer fellowship with God. Such prayer indeed helps if we practise it habitually, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," now in the time of our health and strength and happiness, as well as in the time of our tribulation. For then, when the dark days come, and the years draw nigh in which we shall say we have no pleasure in them — when deep afflictions overwhelm us, and earthly joys are failing us, and life itself is passing away — we shall still be able to draw near to the presence of God as all along we have been wont to do, and shall find in Him a tender, compassionate Father, and be cheered with the light of His countenance. He will pour fresh life into our souls while our outward man is perishing and our inward man is being renewed from day to day. And the rich experience of our past life will teach us to sum up all our desires by saying in that dread hour, with more entire surrender of our whole being than ever, "Father, Thy Will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven!"



Ekukanyeni in 1857

From the *Natal Journal* I, no. 2, Apr. 1857

. . . The central and principal station of the Mission work of the Church of England in this Diocese, is at Ekukanyeni, about five or six miles from Maritzburg, and (to use the colonial mode of measuring distances) within an easy ride of thirty-five or forty minutes from it. Its name, which was given to it by those who first took possession of the land on which it stands for missionary purposes, signifies "Light", or "in the Light". And we may as well inform our English friends that the word, though rather long, as most Kafir words are, is one easily pronounced by giving all the consonants their ordinary English sounds, and sounding the vowels as in French, with an accent on each of the e's.

The land, on which this Station stands, was granted to the Bishop of Natal for Mission purposes, by the late Lieutenant Governor Pine. Maritzburg itself lies in a kind of basin of large extent, surrounded on all sides by lofty hills; so that, before getting clear of the City in any direction, (except along the banks of the Umsundusi), it is necessary to climb a long ascent, the toil of surmounting which, however, is amply rewarded by the magnificent views which open upon the eye, as one rises higher and higher above the level of the town

The ground here, instead of being parched and bare at this season, as in the rest of South Africa, is everywhere fresh and verdant; and the appearance, consequently, as one mounts up from Maritzburg, of this multitude of green hills, reaching away into the far distance, and swelling, one behind another, like the billows of the sea, shaded with innumerable dimpling hollows, or spotted over with the mimosa, or other bushwood, is indescribably beautiful, more especially when the horizontal rays of the rising or setting sun add splendour to the scene. Below, at his feet, the traveller will discern the little City itself, looking bright and cheerful in the sunlight, with its pretty white houses, interspersed with the foliage of seringas and gum trees; and on its further course he will trace the shining course of the Umsunduzi (or Little Bushman's River) as it hastens along the plain, towards the east, to join the Umgeni, at some point far away in the Inanda location.

The hill, upon which the Mission Station stands, is one of the lowest of those which bound the Maritzburg basin. The road from the City, which leads to it, passes, for about half-a-mile, through a swampy flat . . . But, for the sake of our English readers, let us suppose a friend — (and many such find it a pleasant ride, on a fine afternoon, from the City to the Station, where, we need hardly say, any visitors from town or country, who might

wish to inspect the school and mission operations, would receive at any time a hearty welcome) — to start from Maritzburg for a visit to Ekukanyeni. The City itself is rectangular in form, lying N.E. and S.W. He will leave it at its eastern corner. Ten minutes' ride on level ground, along the town common, will bring him to Vanderplank's Bridge, of rather primitive construction, which crosses a little brook, occasionally swelled by rains to a considerable stream — (some of its waters, indeed, at all times wash over the road at this place) — and has on its right, at some little distance, by a clump of trees, the mill, for which a portion of the stream is turned off at this point, and the town slaughter-houses. After crossing another little spruit, he will mount a slight ascent, and come upon a good piece of cantering ground, over which the road passes, with a very gradual descent, for three-quarters of a mile, till it crosses another stream, (that by which the waters of the marsh are drained), by a bridge still ruder than the former, consisting, in fact, of a few stout stems of branches, laid side by side, and covered with soil and grass. Over this there pass daily several heavy wagons, bringing firewood from Mr Marten's farm, (which is just beyond the Mission land), and drawn by ten or twelve oxen

If it bears the weight of a loaded wagon, it will, no doubt, bear that of himself and his horse. And, in point of fact, it stands, and will stand, until the next flood comes, which will, very probably, sweep it bodily away. Such was the case in the flood of last April, when the whole of this marsh, for two miles or more in length, and half-a-mile in width, was a wide sheet of water, and the Mission Station was for some days inaccessible from Maritzburg, except by a boat, or by swimming. Happily, such bridges, as they are easily destroyed, so they are easily and economically replaced by new ones

A few minutes' ride, after leaving the bridge behind him, will bring our traveller to another small stream, which separates the town common lands from the Mission ground. Hitherto the road has been almost level all the way from the City for three miles or more, and the last mile or so between low elevations on each side, which completely prevent him from getting a view of the surrounding country. But now begins a long steep ascent Indeed, in slippery weather, it has more than once happened, that the Mission cart or wagon has been stopped at the foot of this ascent, and been unable to mount the hill, on its return from town at night, with stores from the house, or linen from the laundry. In such cases it has been left for hours, perhaps the whole night, in the midst of pitiless rain, till additional help could be brought to it

Our traveller is now on Mission ground. After climbing this long ascent of half-a-mile, he will reach a ridge, peering above which, as he rises, the first object, that strikes his eye, will be the white cross on the roof of the Mission Chapel. A few steps further, and the whole magnificent scene will burst upon him, the more striking from its being so suddenly presented, and not even suspected by a stranger, as he has travelled along the dull and dreary bottom. For now he will come face to face with the glorious Table Mountain, which rises before him in massive grandeur, at a distance of seven or eight miles, with a multitude of lower hills and kloofs, in wild disorder, filling up the space between, their universal covering of green

speckled, as usual, with dark spots of bush, and tinged at this season (the end of summer) with the brown or ruddy hue of the ripening grass. Our Table Mountain resembles much in form that at the Cape, but differs from it materially in one respect, that its sides, to within a yard or two of the summit, where the red rock appears, are clothed all over with vegetation. At one point, towards the northern end, a large triangular patch of green, which slopes up the mountain-side, gradually narrowing upwards, indicates the only path by which an access can be gained, without much difficulty, to the summit. The top of the mountain is, in point of fact, a large farm of five or six thousand acres, well watered, and abounding with game; and both on its left and right, at some little distance, are elevations of a similar character, which have evidently once been joined to it, but appear to have been torn asunder by some violent convulsion, at the time the Umgeni forced its way between them

Our visitor has only as yet caught a glimpse of the Mission buildings. But, as he advances, the road soon brings them into full view before him, at the distance of half-a-mile, on the crest of another ridge, running parallel to that on which he now stands. He will perceive the Mission House, with its two low gable-ends, over one of which is hung the Mission bell, which summons the little flock, morning and evening, to daily worship, and marks the intervals of rest and labour. Close to it, on his left, he will mark with pleasure the Mission Chapel, a wooden structure — with thatched roof, Gothic porch, lantern, and gable, these latter all of wood, and painted white — the construction of which does great credit to the taste and skill of Mr Ryder, the mechanical superintendent of the Station. The appearance of the building is, indeed, sufficiently ecclesiastical; but alas! its uses, as we shall presently be obliged to confess, are just now of a very miscellaneous character. About half-a-mile further to the right, he will notice the farm buildings, smithy, & c., and about sixty acres of enclosed and cultivated land, containing crops of mealies, oat-forage, potatoes, cotton, china-grass, and sesamum. We have also gathered in this season an excellent crop of wheat, good forage, and splendid potatoes. Mealies, of course, do well, subject only to the colonial “contingency” of being trampled down now and then by an inroad of cattle

Our cotton field thrived well last season, and the plants, though of the finest and most delicate kind (Sea Island), have generally survived the winter cold. At the beginning of this season they sprouted vigorously; but, from some cause, have not thriven since in all parts of the field. It is most probable that frosts of this region, so much more elevated and colder than the Bay, have really interfered with their growth; so that we must exchange the Sea Island for a coarser kind of cotton, which, after all is said to be in the long run more profitable in the market. The China-grass, a sort of flax, does very well indeed, and is likely, some day, to be an article of export. The Sesamum Indicum, called by the natives *udonca*, is a valuable plant, resembling at first sight in its appearance, when in flower, a rather small variety of the English Foxglove. The seed is very small, and grows in small pods, a large number of seeds, from 1 500 to 2 000, upon one stalk: and these, when pressed, yield an excellent oil. This seed forms a considerable article of export from India. And, (according to a report from Kew

Gardens, which appeared lately in the Natal papers), the sort we have under cultivation, which is the white variety, has the highest mercantile value. The seed, from which our Mission crop is grown, was obtained from Panda. The plant, however, is found indigenous in some places along the coast of this district; and the natives are aware of the oily nature of its seeds, and are accustomed to use the oil as a delicacy mixed with their *isijingi*, or mealie porridge

It is very desirable to make a trial at the Station of any such article of commerce, as is likely to reward the labour of the natives, by way of example and encouragement to them to do the same.

But we have left our visitor looking at the Mission buildings from the opposite hill. Let him now follow the long descending path, which leads him down across a wide tract of grass into the hollow, which, with its little brook, separates the ridge he has now left from that of the Mission House. He will sink at last out of sight of the latter, but discover on his right, taken off lower down from the tract of grass which he is crossing, another enclosure of forty acres, with a small dwelling, and outhouses attached, which has hitherto been occupied by the family of an excellent farmer, who died suddenly in the service of the Mission about two years ago Crossing now the little stream, which flows along the bottom, by a substantial causeway, which serves as a dam to form a mill-pool to his left, and looking down the little current to the right, he will see the mill itself, built strongly of stone, with a powerful overshot wheel, which already grinds all the wheat and mealies for the eighty or ninety people, white and black, great and small, living upon the station, but will shortly be applied, as we hope, to yet more profitable uses. Near the mill stands an extensive brick-shed, where a brick machine is now employed in preparing for the erection of the Bishop's house, for which a special sum was raised among friends in England at the original foundation of the See.

The whole of the above is the work of little more than two years. At the time the Bishop left Natal, on his return to England in April, 1854, the land had only just been granted by the Government; and no building or cultivation of any kind, not even a Kafir hut or mealie ground, could be found upon the whole extent of it. Since then the Kafirs have been gradually gathering around the Station, requesting leave to settle upon it. And at this moment there are eight or nine kraals within sight of the windows of the Mission House, or only hidden among the kloofs.

A short canter up a stiff bit of hill will now bring our friend to the Mission premises, where, if he arrives out of school hours, he will probably see a number of little black forms, in their blue-striped linen dresses, worn with flannel underneath, but with naked legs and bare heads, as the children of the kraal, engaged in their various childish pursuits; . . . or perhaps the whole party of seniors may be out on the grass hard by, with their teachers, white and black, engaged at a game of cricket — “might have been”, we should rather say, than “may be”, for alas! their cricket balls, sent out some time ago from England, are all expended. They were never of much value; and the work of a grand field-day last Christmas, when the white boys of the Church School at Maritzburg gave battle to the black boys of Ekukanyeni, and both beat and were beaten, completely finished up our stock for the present.

But, having now brought our visitor to the doors, we must introduce him to the special work of this Institution. Our readers are aware that about a year ago (on Feb. 1st, 1856) *nineteen* young Kafir children were brought by their friends to Ekukanyeni, and delivered formally up into the hands of the Bishop for education, by the chiefs, Ngoza and Zatshuke. At the instance of Sir George Grey, and, indeed, on his express promise, made at the time of the review at the Table Mountain, it was intended originally to have founded a station among Ngoza's people, in the neighbourhood of his principal kraal. Upon examination, however, it was found that the country, in which this Station would have been placed, was so broken and precipitous, and utterly impracticable for agricultural purposes, that the idea was abandoned in favour of one, which would eventually be of far greater importance, both to Ngoza himself, and to the colony, if only the people could be induced to think so — namely, that of collecting their boys, by a voluntary act on their part, for separate continuous education, apart from the heathen kraal. Mr Shepstone determined to make the experiment, and sounded the principal men upon the subject. They appeared convinced by his arguments; and, after various discussions and debates with their people, Ngoza and Zatshuke announced their intention to accept the proposal made to them, and bring their own children at all events, and, they hoped, several others, to the station at Ekukanyeni — “for (said Ngoza) I should like to be the last fool of my race”

. . . a long and anxious delay occurred, after the chiefs had pledged their word to us: and again, and again, the day was changed for the arrival of the first batch of children. At last, however, on Feb. 1st, our hopes were realized, and our native school became a fact. The day before, the two chiefs had arrived at the Station, with a large body of followers, men, women and children. And, seen from a distance, as they wound their way slowly along the hills, some of the men carrying their little ones, and others leading them by the hand, as they “trudged unwillingly to school”, with many a longing backward look upon the snug warm hut, which was their home, upon the pleasant mealie-grounds, and the wide cattle-ranges, and the comfortable idle life they had hitherto been leading, and which they were now about to exchange for the dreaded secrets of the white man's house, and still more for that mysterious process of education, to which their father's will had now consigned them, in opposition generally, as they knew, to the wishes of their mothers, and in disregard of their fears — the whole party had certainly very much the appearance of a troop of slaves. The women followed, or went beside their young ones, carrying presents of sweet cane (*imfi*), or other school comforts for their use.

In the course of the afternoon, a council was held, at which the nineteen boys were formally surrendered to us, and were taken out at once to be washed and clothed in their little dresses, as the first step to civilization: for they came to us, most of them, naked as they were born, and none of them had ever yet known more of what can properly be called clothing, than a corner of their mother's blanket thrown over them at night. Meanwhile, many speeches were made upon the occasion by the two chiefs and their indunas, which showed that, what they then did, they did deliberately, because they had confidence in those into whose hands they entrusted their

children, and believed that the sacrifice, which they now made in parting with them, would be repaid in their permanent welfare.

The next day the parting kiss was given by the parents, with every sign of fond affection, which, indeed, they manifest whenever they come to see them: the friends took their leave, and the little ones looked with tearful eyes on their departure. We say "little ones", for the great majority of these children were not above seven or eight years old, and some younger, when they came to us. They were now left alone with strangers, and these all white people, except that we had secured two native men, of Ngoza's and Zatshuke's tribe, and one old woman, well known to the two chiefs, to wait upon the children for a time, and break the sudden change from savage to civilized life. These black attendants, however, being mere wild heathens themselves, were a great nuisance to us after a while, and we were glad to get rid of them, as were the boys also, when once they began to feel at home.

The Rev. Mr Fearne resided for the first three months, as clerical superintendent of the Institution, having been summoned hastily from his duties at Richmond upon this sudden emergency, to lend help in the first establishment of the school. And a great debt is due to Mr and Mrs Fearne for their kind parental attention to the domestic comforts, and personal health and happiness of the boys, by which so much was done towards making them contented with their new circumstances, though everything, at first, was strange around them. Messrs Baugh and Pigg were the boys' first teachers; and Mr Baugh still continues to superintend their education. For some weeks little more could be done than to break in the children gradually to habits of order, and accustom them to the restraints of civilized life. Indeed a great part of the day was spent at first in mere amusement, and English games of all kinds were taught them, as also many simple chants and rounds, to take the place of their discordant Kafir songs. By these means their minds were kept in salutary exercise; and they were able to show cheerful faces to their friends, who came continually to visit them, bringing their little home-presents of *imfi* or *amasi* (sour milk), and doubtless watching for any signs of ill-usage. They began to feel the kindness of their new friends; and meanwhile their school-hours were imperceptibly lengthened, and their school-work increased, till now we have the regular colonial allowance of school-time, namely, five hours a day, with a half-holiday on Saturday, — but no vacations at Mid-summer or Christmas. For our boys are given up to us for five years' schooling: and, except in case of sickness, are not likely, we trust, to return to their kraals in the interval. They number now, as we have said, *thirty-three*, of whom all but two refugee children, lately admitted, are the sons of head men of their tribes, either chiefs or indunas, and are likely therefore, in after life, to exert more than ordinary influence among the Kafirs of this District. We call this, among ourselves, our Kafir Harrow, in token of remembrance of the close connection which the Bishop of Natal had formerly with one of our great English Schools, and also of the warm interest which the boys of the English Harrow have taken, and practically expressed, for the success of the Natal Missions. And we do not despair of seeing the numbers of Kafir youths, who are being educated at this Institution, increased before long to be more worthy of comparison with those of her English patron.

This, however, we will be bold to say, that a more pleasant, well-conducted set of boys, it would not be easy to find than these thirty-three Kafir lads at Ekukanyeni. Nor, during the whole time that they have been with us, have we had occasion to punish for one serious offence, such as lying, stealing, or ill-using one another. We *do* punish them, when necessary; and a pretty severe chastisement was not long ago administered to one of them, who was not willing to lead the oxen at the plough one morning — it being part of our system to practise the boys gradually in ploughing, and the other processes of agriculture. The lad ran away from the black ploughman, was caught at last, and beaten for a warning to others. One petty case of pilfering is all that has yet come under our notice among so many children; but that was not of such a nature as to call for severe treatment.

For some time after the boys' arrival, much inconvenience was felt for want of sleeping accommodation. Indeed, we fear their health suffered at first from the way in which they were crowded at night — the nineteen boys, with their four Kafir adult attendants, being crammed into one room, which had afterwards to be *enlarged*, to make a decent kitchen to the Mission House. We were glad, indeed, that *only* nineteen came at first. With as much speed as possible, a large building was erected (of wood, to save time) for their reception; and this is the Chapel above mentioned, which now serves them for the compound purposes of school-room, eating-room, bedroom, play-room, and Chapel, where the children and adult Kafirs of the Institution meet for morning and evening prayer, and a crowd of friends or strangers from the neighbouring kraals, within a distance of three or four miles, gather for Divine Service on Sunday afternoon. We use a small Prayer Book, which has been prepared for the Natal Church Missions, consisting of portions of the English Liturgy translated, namely, the Morning and Evening Prayers to the end of the third Collect, the Litany, all the Collects and Commandments, a selection of prose Psalms, and twenty or thirty Kafir hymns, translated from the Hymn Book in use in the English Churches in this Diocese With all these, both words and tunes, the boys are quite familiar, and they chant the Te Deum in Kafir with great propriety. But we sadly want a new substantial Chapel of brick or stone, (either of which can be easily procured upon the Station), which may be kept for sacred purposes. The present building, indeed, cannot be expected to last more than a few years: and, even for sleeping purposes, it will soon become inadequate, if we receive any large additions to our present numbers. It is a curious sight to look in at night upon them, and see how they are dispersed all about the Chapel, upon the ground, or on the forms, or under them, each wrapped in his little blanket

As their sleeping accommodation is not extravagantly luxurious, neither (we may as well add) is their daily fare. Their food consists of mealie meal exclusively, except a basin of soup on Wednesdays, and on Sundays a piece of bread and beef, and a cup of coffee. But we have added greatly to the dignity of the elder boys by supplying them with a brush and comb, with which their woolly hair is carefully parted; and we have added also greatly to the enjoyment of all, by inserting a pocket in their little coats, and greatly to their own improvement, and to the comfort of their teachers, by connecting the pocket with a real English pocket handkerchief. Our English friends will

remember that a *Kafir* pocket handkerchief is a curved piece of bone, such as we have seen freely used to wipe (that is, scrape) the faces of Kafir ladies, when overpowered with heat on a summer afternoon.

As to their progress in their studies, a few words will suffice. They can all *read* in Kafir to some extent; and, when Ngoza heard his two little boys make out correctly in the Gospels a passage they had never seen before, he could only exclaim, "It is frightful!" But eight or nine can read *well* any passage of a Kafir book at first sight, and five or six are getting on with English reading. They can most of them *write* more or less; but the first class very nicely, in a clear, bold, running hand, which any one can read. The elder boys can write and spell correctly from *dictation*. But they can do more. A little while ago we thought of trying them to write upon their slates, out of their own head, whatever thoughts came uppermost. We were much pleased, and, indeed, surprised, at the result, so far beyond what we expected

We may add, finally, that the elder boys receive daily lessons in drawing from Mrs Colenso, and are making very pleasing progress in that art. And arrangements are also made at the Station for teaching them the work of a carpenter and blacksmith, as well as the farmer, as soon as they have made good their ground in their school-work, and have bodily strength enough for the purpose

