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THE DUTCH COLONIST OF TO-DAY

“They (the American backwoodsmen of 1776) were relentless, revengeful, suspicious, knowing neither ruth nor pity; they were also upright, resolute, and fearless; loyal to their friends and devoted to their country.”—ROOSEVELT, “Winning of the West,” I., 133.

Traces of Holland in New York—Transvaal—British Guiana—
Contrast of Boer and Dutchman

IF any general proposition regarding colonies could be maintained, it would possibly be that colonial prosperity follows colonial liberty. Sometimes liberty in the colonies has preceded liberty in the mother-country. The advantage which Holland originally possessed (1600) over her Spanish and Portuguese rivals was largely due to greater commercial liberality. So long as she had no other rivals her relative superiority remained, but she clung to her system long after it had proved inferior to that of England.

Yet the traveller to-day marvels at the permanent impression left by the early Dutch upon colonies which have long ceased to be theirs. Even to-day the most substantial buildings in the Hudson River Valley are massive stone farm-houses recalling the government of the Dutch East India Company, which in 1621 occupied New York as a trading post. But

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the Dutchman of New York was no match for the Yankee from Connecticut and Massachusetts—no chartered company could hold its own against such competition. The Swedes who had planted colonies in Delaware and New Jersey shared the same fate. It was no act of government that killed these colonial efforts, for at that time New York presented but slight strategic importance either to the soldier or the trader. The Dutch and Swedish colonists remained and flourished, but their children preferred the English language, for purely practical reasons. Dutch dominion in North America is now recalled to the tourist only by such names as “Kaater’s Kill Clove;” “Spuyten Duyvil;” “Hoboken;” “Harlem,” etc.

At the Cape of Good Hope, Dutch occupation is at once suggested by the many massive quaint gables that adorn the residences of former proprietors from Amsterdam and The Hague. These buildings, of which, perhaps, that of the Constantia estate is the most interesting example, were eminently suited to English requirements, and the style has been perpetuated over a large portion of the Cape Colony. There is a grand yet cosy atmosphere about these estates; magnificent straight avenues of shade-trees; gardens surrounded by massive hedges, and a cultivation strangely minute when compared to the slovenly agriculture of the Transvaal.

If a stranger, without previous knowledge, were to inspect the Boer Republics from a balloon, he would conclude that he was in a land of American cow-boys, to judge from the architecture prevailing. The separation of the Boer from his mother-country is much

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more complete than the separation of the Cape Town Englishman from the Cape Town Dutchman. One might roughly draw an analogy by saying that the American from Boston has more in common with an Englishman than with a cow-boy of Arizona, or an old-time miner of California. The Bostonian has propagated on American soil the institutions and social forms of his English ancestors. But the same American, moving into the Far West, is compelled, for the sake of mere existence, to improvise a new society, new means of self-protection, and even new implements for his daily work. One generation of such life has produced in America a race of men speaking a slang of their own; familiar with Indian and Mexican peculiarities; holding a strange code of political if not of moral ethics; full of violent contrasts—bravery and bragging; profanity and piety; tenderness and cruelty; generous in hospitality, yet handling a revolver with fatal facility. Place the American frontiersman in a Boston drawing-room and you have a contrast no less startling than had you introduced a Chinaman. Introduce the conventional Englishman of education into the same drawing-room, and by comparison the difference is scarcely worth noting. The Bostonian and the man of London will have a thousand points of sympathetic contact in literature, art, municipal problems, social evolution, administrative reforms, international politics, and the endless chain of interests that bind together the great commercial cities of the world. The same Bostonian would listen with bulging eyes and distracted ears to his kinsman from the foot-hills of the Rocky Moun-

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tains. He would marvel at a jargon, part Spanish, part Indian, part American; an etymology and grammar of racy recklessness, and a range of ideas wholly outside of anything dreamed of in the academic routine of our venerable colleges.

The same contrast is afforded by a study of the actual Boer of Pretoria and the actual Dutchman of Amsterdam or even Cape Town. When Paul Kruger paid his first visit to the British Governor-General at the Cape, local rumor said that the single concession he made to European civilization was to remove his boots when invading the linen sheets of his host. This story is not necessarily true, but its currency in Cape Town indicates the local feeling regarding the relative civilization of the Transvaal Boer and the old country Dutch.

At the Cape I recall with infinite gratitude a Dutch Colonial Dame—a charming widow—whose house was a rendezvous for the most interesting social elements, English no less than Dutch. She showed me a house full of rare Dutch tiles and porcelain ware, delicate wood-carvings, and a few well-chosen studies by Dutch masters. She spoke French, German, and English as well as she did Dutch, and in her company it seemed that I was in the house of an Amsterdam merchant prince, rather than 6,000 miles away among people who glory in the name of Boer. Her service was performed by tidily uniformed servants; her table appointments left nothing to be desired.

From the drawing-room of this lady to that of the Governor-General was a step that did not perceptibly change one's social surroundings. The important in-

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habitants of Cape Town, whether English or Dutch by extraction, viewed social and even political obligations from very much the same point of view. There was a general consensus of opinion that on the whole the English Government was about the best that the colony could wish and that, while there was plenty of occasion for grumbling in local matters, all were practically united on the broad question of the flag that was to dominate.

The Boer of Cape Town looked upon the Boer of the Transvaal as a species of anachronistic cow-boy, who had his rough virtues, but must perforce yield to the advancing tide of railway progress. The idea that South Africa should ever become a Dutch community under Transvaal leadership was no more seriously entertained in 1896, in Cape Town, than in America that the government should pass under the yoke of Mormonism.

In the parlors of Cape Town, Paul Kruger is an anomaly no less strange than the Arizona "cow-puncher" in a Beacon Street Club. Paul Kruger represents the Boer who has spent his life in an ox-wagon; to whom civilization has appeared mainly as a constraint upon liberty. Circumstances have forced him now to live under a roof, and to conform somewhat to the habits of white men in other parts of the world, but all this he does with manifest reluctance and to the smallest possible extent.

When I first had the honor of visiting this strange man, he had outside of his house an encampment of mounted burghers by way of military escort; at the same time there was not even a black girl to open his

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front door. His house was not merely conspicuous by its shabbiness, but much more so by the evidence of neglect on the part of its occupiers. It looked to me as though the President wished for private reasons to advertise his indifference to civilized habits, in the same way that some representatives of labor think it well to roll up their shirt-sleeves before mounting the platform.

Paul Kruger at the head of the Transvaal in 1896 was as strange a sight as Mr. Richard Croker would be as President of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Holland has left a deep impression at Cape Town, but her footprints can be scarcely recognized in the alleged Republic beyond the Vaal River.

In South America the Dutch had once a grand colonial opportunity in what is now British Guiana, a colony which to-day, in spite of the low price of sugar, forms an important element of the English Colonial Empire. Demerara is a clean and busy town, cut up by straight canals full of splendid water-lilies, some of them so big that a baby could float away on one. Even to-day, though the Dutch language is no longer heard, Dutch law prevails, and also Dutch tidiness and Dutch love for flower-gardens and canals. Under British auspices and freedom British Guiana has made progress, but Dutch Guiana next door has not proved so successful, in spite of the fact that both colonies have practically the same soil and climate.*

* In 1890 British Guiana exported to the extent of more than \$12,000,000, while the exports of Dutch Guiana amounted to less than \$2,000,000. The revenues of the British colony for 1890 were almost \$3,000,000, while in the neighboring Dutch colony they were but \$617,000.

English has practically driven out the Dutch language, even in Dutch Guiana.

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While at Demerara, the present Auditor General, Mr. Darnell Davis, expressed himself as quite satisfied with Guiana as a place in which to bring up white children, and he pointed to many instances in support of his statement. He himself is a good illustration of the fact that even in the tropics the white man may develop high literary activity.

The poverty of Dutch Guiana consisted not in the fact that the English flag supplanted that of Holland, but that English energy, common-sense, and good government took the place of an administration conceived in the spirit of monopoly.

In the Far East to-day the Dutch have a magnificent empire, but administrative short-sightedness has done much to limit their development of her islands there.

The years most fortunate for Java were those during the Napoleonic wars, when an English Governor reformed her colonial administration in the spirit of greater commercial liberty. This was the famous Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore.

When the English surrendered Java in 1816, even the Dutch Government realized that it could not return wholly to the antiquated system of exclusion that had characterized the previous administration, and an effort was made at something in the nature of a compromise. Reforms were tolerated which would have seemed revolutionary in the seventeenth century, but which in our own seem strangely inadequate. Slavery was nominally forbidden, but a species of servitude existed which amounted pretty much to the same thing. The whole island was over-governed, and the

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administration encouraged thê exploiting of the colony for the white official, with scant regard for the colonist, whether white, yellow, or brown. Java presents to-day a magnificent picture of superficially successful colonization.