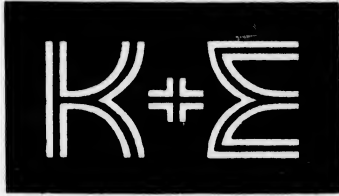


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GILL
GILL, JAMES:

The emigrant's guide to the South
African diamond fields.

London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston.
16 pp., map, 12mo. 1870.

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481(780)
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Price Sixpence

1/- 7/3

481(780)

6687

G 412

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BY JAMES GILL, M.A. CANTAB.

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CAPE COLONY

LONDON

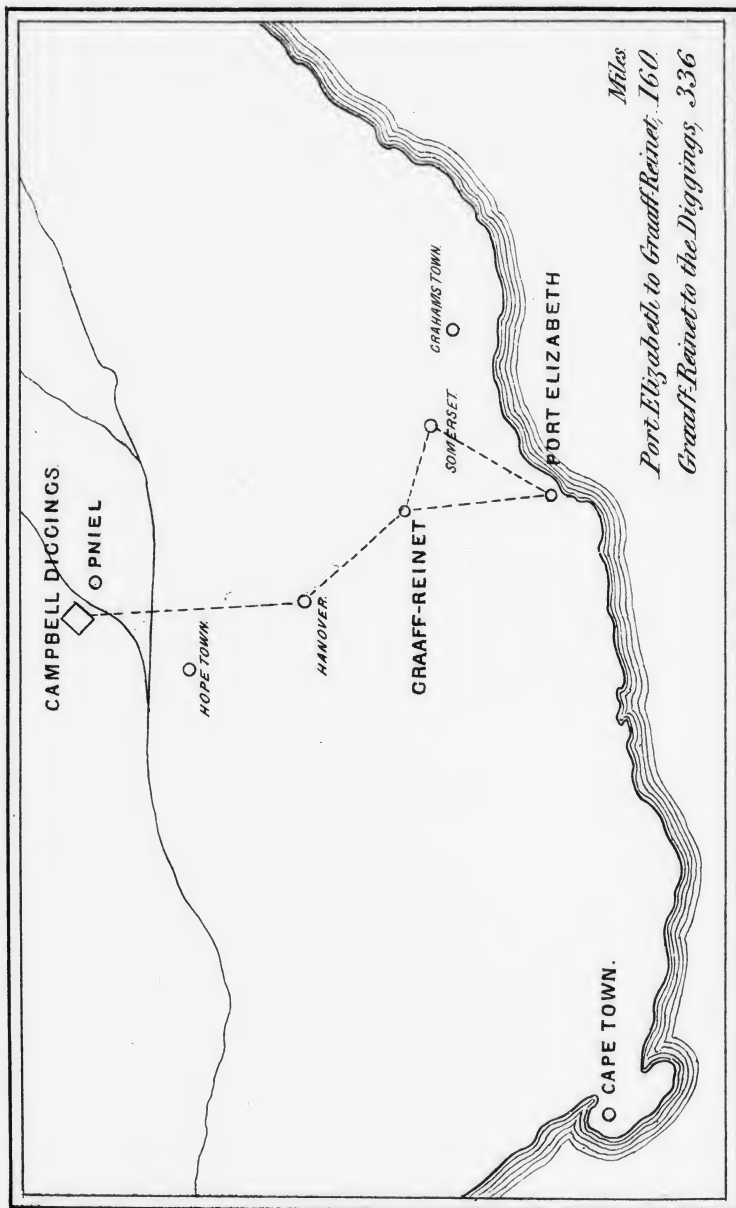
SAMPSON LOW, SON, AND MARSTON

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Spottiswoode & Co., Printers, New-street Square, London

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THE
SOUTH AFRICAN DIAMOND FIELDS.

N.B.—I pledge my good faith to the TRUTH or CREDIBILITY of all that is set down in the following pages. Even in the extracts from the letters of diggers, I have been careful to select only such as I myself accept, and can conscientiously offer to the reader. I am in no way connected with business, and have no stake in the country beyond a few vine sticks and a cabbage garden—probably an influx of emigrants will do me more harm than good in raising the price of provisions, &c. Therefore I hope my statements and recommendations may be exempt from suspicion.

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE
DIAMOND FIELDS.

IT is now about two years since the news thrilled through the colony that a diamond had been picked up on the banks of the Orange River, had been tested in Cape Town, and valued at 500*l.* The diamond was purchased by Sir Philip Wodehouse, Governor of the Colony. Shortly after this another diamond was picked up in the same neighbourhood by a Kafir, sold to his master for a few hundred sheep and goats, and resold by him to a mercantile firm for 11,300*l.* This diamond—the ‘Star of South Africa,’ was sent to Europe to be cut and polished, and is said to have been purchased by the Prince of Wales for 25,000*l.*

Diamonds of greater or less value continued to be found, and for some months a ‘dropping fire’ was kept up of reports from the Free State of diamonds and other precious stones having been found. Still excitement and belief hung fire. The thing was too good to be true. The general despondence of the Colonial mind, paralysed by long commercial disasters,

the insufficiency and distrust of scientific investigation, and (I am ashamed to add) a conviction almost cowardly that no good thing could ever come out of S. Africa, had much to do with this. The slowness with which the great fact won its way to general belief was one of the strangest things connected with it.

Now all is changed. A few months back a real business-like search was commenced by a handful of enterprising farmers and others, who planted their tents and wagons on the banks of the Vaal River, and set to work with pick and spade, on a mound on the surface of which diamonds had been picked up. Their success may be measured by the fact that in about four months the number of people at the diggings has increased from 100 to about 5,000. Probably before this is in print that number will have been quadrupled.

The excitement in the colony has already reached fever-point. Every man that can get away from his farm or his business is gone or going. Men of all positions—the clerk, the shop-keeper, the lawyer, the farmer are there, many with their wives and families. What with the cry of ‘come’ from the diggings, and ‘go’ from the fair sex at home, the colony is likely to be before long emptied of its able-bodied population. Large gaps will be left in all handicrafts in the various towns of the colony, and those who may not care to press on to the diggings, or who may try their luck there and fail, will have many alternative resources to fall back upon. In passing I may observe that the climate of the Cape Colony is during nine months of the year magnificent—the winter-cold just keen enough to make a sharp walk enjoyable; the spring and autumn temperature so delicious that it is a luxury to breathe; but the summer months (December, January, Feb-

ruary) are a *little too warm*. Still the present writer has more than once hunted through a long summer's day, with his rifle on his shoulder, and felt none the worse for it.

To return to the diggings. As I am writing chiefly for my poorer countrymen at home, and should be glad to see them get a large share of the benefits of this marvellous discovery, I shall state plainly but emphatically my conviction, based upon evidence to myself complete and overwhelming—

1. That the S. African diamond fields in their richness, their promise, and their magnitude, surpass all other digging on record.

2. That there is abundance of ground for thousands of men to work, and that the present generation is not likely to see an exhaustion of the fields.

More than this I do not care to say for purposes of exhortation, but shall leave the diggers, in the subjoined extracts from letters to their friends, to tell their own tale. Were I disposed to excite a furore by relating all the marvellous stories that reach us here, I could soon fill a volume. To say that the hunt for diamonds is a lottery, is merely to put it on a level with all human pursuits; but that there ever was a lottery with so many and such rich prizes, and so few blanks, I do not believe. The last mail from the diggings brings accounts of several diamonds having been picked up by men well known or actually resident in this place, one of which was valued on the spot at 3,000*l.*, another at 5,000*l.*

There are many buyers on the ground, and money is abundant. They could tell a strange tale of the number of diamonds already shipped to Europe, of the amount of gold that has passed through their hands in the purchase thereof, and the fortunes made thereby.

GENERAL REMARKS.

A rough and ready form of government has been organised at the diggings, with one Mr. Parker as its chief, and a Vigilance Committee for executive. Every man taking a claim at the diggings is called upon to sign the Diggers' Rules, which are sub-joined.

Up to the present time peace and order have prevailed, and the only punishments inflicted on white men have been expulsion from the diggings and a ducking in the river.

The climate at the Camphill grounds requires a brief notice. During the summer months (December, January, February, March), it is fiercely hot, and diggers will have to lie by between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. and do their best to keep themselves cool. A wooden hut daubed with clay, with an overshadowing tree (there are noble trees on the Vaal river), is the best shelter. The winter nights are cold, and warm clothing and plenty of blankets will be required.

The only things that I should recommend emigrants to bring with them, as being dear or not easily procurable here, are a small filter, a rifle, and a revolver. There is very little fear of any one disturbing the diggers, as they are more than a match for any power in S. Africa; still it is as well to be prepared.

Of the appliances used for washing, sifting, &c., I say nothing, as before this pamphlet is in circulation, they will probably be out of date. But long-toms, cradles, &c., and the materials for making them can all be bought in the colony, and all diggers recommend that the materials should be taken to the ground and made up there.

ROUTE &c.

The emigrant has a choice of three starting points: Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and D'Urban (Natal).

The Cape Town route is too long, the distance to the fields being 800 miles, and I know nothing to recommend it.

Those who have friends in Natal will probably choose that route; and as a little friendly assistance and guidance are of the greatest service in a new country, I would say nothing to deter them.

But a glance at the map will shew that the shortest and most direct route is from Port Elizabeth via Graaff Reinet.

I would advise the emigrant then to land at Port Elizabeth, make the best of his way to Graaff Reinet, *taking nothing with him but a change of clothes* and the articles recommended above. The officers of the ship which brings him will give better advice than I can do as to accommodation, &c. in Port Elizabeth. A passenger cart plies between Port Elizabeth and Somerset (fare 3*l.*). The post cart will take him on to Graaff Reinet for 30*s.* About 50*lb.* of luggage allowed in either case. This is a pleasant and expeditious route, and the journey over the Zumberg mountains, the scenery of which is magnificent, will at once put him in love with the country.

If there should be any difficulty about the Somerset passenger cart (the service will probably be increased before long), let him get cart and horses and come by the direct route to Graaff Reinet. The journey by either of these routes occupies at the most three days. Wagon travelling is horribly tedious, and the possible mishaps from oxen dying, detention by flooded rivers, &c. are many. But before investing in cart and horses, take some one into your counsel, who knows the country. As a general rule, don't rely too much on your own wits; they may be keen enough for northern climes, but they will require an extra sharpening on this side of the equator.

And now to those who wish to go to work in real business-like fashion, I would say—Form a party of six (it takes six hands to work a claim properly), club together 250*l.* as your working capital, and take with you the following outfit and appliances, the approximate prices of which at Graaff Reinet I give:—

	£	s.	d.
Wagon—unfinished, but fit to travel . . .	60	0	0
Do. finished	100	0	0
Oxen (10) from £36 to	50	0	0
Scotch cart and horse	30	0	0
Three blankets per man, at 9 <i>s.</i>	8	2	0
Six picks, at 7 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>	2	5	0
Six spades, at 8 <i>s.</i>	2	8	0
Three months' supply of {	Coffee, 9 <i>d.</i> per lb. by the bag.		
	Sugar, 5 <i>d.</i> " "		
	Rice, 4 <i>d.</i> " "		
	Flour, 3 <i>d.</i> " "		

For Sieves &c.

Sheet iron, 7*s.* 6*d.* per sheet.

Planks, 4*d.* per foot.

Wood screws (for hut), 1*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* per gross.

Clothing of all kinds is very cheap in Graaff Reinet. Moses himself would be astonished at the prices for which a man may be rigged out here for the ball-room or the diggings.

There are many stores in Graaff Reinet kept by Englishmen, and one house at least, S. E. Wimble & Co., where everything that may be required at the diggings or elsewhere, from a wagon to a packet of needles, may be obtained.

And now having given such information as I hope will enable people at home to judge of the prospect before them, I have only to say in conclusion to the strong, stout-hearted, sober, and industrious, 'Come,' and with all my heart I wish them God speed.

J. G.

Extracts from Newspapers, Letters, &c.

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE VAAL RIVER DIAMOND FIELDS.

Alluvial Claims.

1st. Every man to be allowed twenty feet square. No party claims to exceed six in number, whose sole claim must be taken in conjunction.

2nd. The boundary of each claim to be distinctly marked, and such marks at all times to be kept free from rubbish.

3rd. All claims to have free access at all times for the removal of wash-dirt over any other claims that may be at work.

4th. No claims to be allowed to throw their rubbish upon their neighbours' claim without permission.

5th. Should any dispute arise between two or more parties respecting their claim, such dispute shall be settled by the arbitration of four assessors, appointed by the parties in dispute, and a referee to be called in by the assessors, if necessary, whose decision shall be final.

6th. Should any party or parties mark off more ground than allowed by these rules, any other person shall have the option of taking the surplus ground from any side of such claim he may think proper.

River Claims.

7th. Each man to be allowed fifty feet frontage along the bed of the river, the same to be distinctly marked at low water mark.

Prospecting Claims.

8th. Any person discovering a new run or patch of diamonds shall, upon reporting the same to a committee appointed, be entitled to four ordinary claims; and such report to be posted up in a conspicuous place on the present diggings, stating the locality; and should he fail in reporting, and another person finds payable ground in the same locality, the

first person reporting shall be entitled to the prospecting claim.

9th. No party shall be allowed to remain absent from his claim more than three successive working days, unless in case of sickness, work in conjunction with his claim as washing &c., or pressing business, when a notice must be posted up on his claim, stating the time of his absence; after which time the claim shall be considered as abandoned.

10th. No man shall be allowed more than one claim at the same time.

11th. Any person against whom it shall be proved as having picked up a diamond upon a claim belonging to another, and not restoring it to the owner of such claim immediately, shall be considered as a thief, and expelled the diggings.

12th. No heap of dirt upon any abandoned claim shall be considered as private property, unless it can be shown to a committee that some accident, such as rain, breakage of wagon, &c., has prevented the washing or sieving of such heap of dirt.

13th. That no party or parties shall be allowed more than five diggers to work their claim.

P. D. J. VANDERBYL, *Chairman.*

(*From Correspondent of E. P. HERALD.*)

Klip Drift Diamond Fields:
July 11, 1870.

Having lately taken a good survey of the Klip Drift diamond fields, and the manner of working them, I now think myself capable of giving you a very good idea of the prospects and operations I some time ago promised you I would.

All up here at present are hard-working men, and deserve to be rewarded for their labour—working hard and in good spirits—in truth, the sight alone is well worth seeing to a man who has never been in a mining country before. Here you have doctors, attorneys, shopkeepers, agents, Boers, mechanics, and every calling with pick and shovel in hand, working like good fellows; here you see men who never did a hard day's work in their lives, either rocking cradles or loading and

unloading carts, as if they had been brought up to the greatest hard labour. I must say South Africa has redeemed itself, and it is not to be said she is asleep, as before break of day one hears the riding of ground, the rumbling of carts and wagons to the river for washing, and as soon as the sun gives any light, all the workers are at work, either with cradle or riding on the precious earth. It is really a grand sight to see all hands at work up and down the river as far as the eye can stretch, and at night the sight is still grander, if one views the camp fires of hundreds of toilers from Mount Pleasant.

Mount Pleasant, I must remark, is the residence of S. Parker, Esq., the justly nominated commandant. The present population is about 500, may be 600, with an immense daily increase. Provisions and mining tools are in good supply—no demand, early provision having been made by those who had 'faith.' There are two butchers, two bakers, and also blacksmiths' shops, boarding houses, and drinking saloons.

In reference to the dispute of the ownership of the diamond regions, I think the diggers are very honourable, and fair in their action with those who have caused the same. They justly observe that they have no objection to be subject to any government, provided that government clearly proves its claim to the soil; and they are not unwilling to pay what is generally called in English mining colonies 'a mining license,' say £1 a-year, but if not proved they will hold occupation, peaceably or by force. There is a general muster every Saturday afternoon; last Saturday 500 men answered the roll-call, all armed with 6-shooters and rifles—and as there is a photographer here I will send you a nice photo. of the 'Army of the Diggers.'

(From another Correspondent.)

Diamond Fields: *July 9, 1870.*

I am now at the diamond fields, and am doing a first-rate business. It is like a small London up here, almost, diamonds are being found wholesale, and the wagons with diggers are coming in at the rate of about one hundred per diem. Merchandise of every description can be obtained here pretty

cheap. If you wish you can put the outlines of this in your paper. Diamonds are found every day and all day, valued at from £10 to £3,000, for which there are any amount of purchasers on the ground.

P.S.—You might also put in your paper that all letters for the diamond fields must be addressed:—‘Diamond Fields, *viâ* Jacobsdal, Orange Free State.’

ONE OF 43 CARATS PICKED UP.

(*From the COLESBERG HERALD.*)

Pniel Diamond Fields: *July* 28th.

Thirty-three diamonds were picked up on the other side yesterday, and all of them of good size.

Friday, 29th.

Again I have to report the picking up of diamonds on both sides. To-day Messrs. Heppell and Harley got one of 4 carats, in the shape of a triangle. W. Bailey & Co. got one to-day, their first day's work. Mr. Green got two to-day, and other parties were also successful.

Saturday, 30th.

W. Bailey & Co. got two diamonds to-day, and Mr. Green one. Over the river the day has been spent in electing a new committee, and Mr. Parker has been elected President.

Mr. Babe's long-tom and cradle appears to me to be the most complicated and troublesome affair on the field. This, of course, is only my opinion, and others may think differently; but fancy a 'babe' rocking its own cradle—the effort must be laborious.

Monday, *August* 1st.

Diamonds continue to turn up trumps. On the other side 14 that I know of have been found. On this side several have been picked up, but I fancy many are kept dark on account of the one-fourth to be paid to the missionary society. It would be much better if the charge was reduced to, say one-sixth. Then all would act honestly, and all diamonds found would be reported. Mr. F. Rawstorne got two small ones to-day. W. Bailey & Co. got another, and H. van Blerk and G. Alexander two more small ones. D. Koen and J. van Blerk found a very

small one to-day. W. Bailey & Co. have found three diamonds in four days: a very lucky commencement, and I hope they will go on and win. T. B. Kisch is still unsuccessful, at least he says so; however, if Mr. Kisch has been up to the present unlucky, I hope he will now commence, and if he would stick to one spot instead of changing about so often, he must and would succeed.

We have fresh arrivals every day, and have now, I think, as many on this side as they have on the other. It is a wonderful sight to see so many wagons and tents accumulated together. There is no town in the Cape colony that presents a more busy appearance than does the diggings. It is in fact a city—a large city, although of tents and booths. In the evening the clouds of smoke ascending from the number of fires darken the atmosphere for miles round, and give one to imagine what smoky London is like.

ITEMS OF NEWS FROM THE DIAMOND FIELDS TO
AUGUST 4, 1870.

(*From a Correspondent.*)

Hopetown: *August 11th*, 1870.

The number of white persons at the diamond fields—men, women, and children—may be fairly estimated at about four thousand souls. They are pretty equally distributed on each side of the Vaal River. Possibly, the majority may have pitched their tents upon the Pniel side of the stream.

Commandant Parker was elected President of the new Republic on Saturday, July 30th, and an Executive Council was chosen, about one-third of whom are supposed to have Free State sympathies. The President gave a ball the same evening. President Pretorius, of the Transvaal, arrived at the diggings on Monday, August 1st, and was received by President Parker. On Wednesday he signed the rules and took out a claim, which he is now engaged in working. He is accompanied by Mr. Procs. The feeling of the English portion of the diggers is strongly in favour of annexation to the Transvaal, should their liberties and free working of the diamondiferous territory be conceded them.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOLDFIELDS.

On Tuesday last some excitement was caused by the publication of the following telegram, dated Port Elizabeth, Aug. 15 :—

‘By letter received last Friday from the Tatin news has been obtained of the result of the quartz-crushing. Although the machinery is very deficient in power, the yield has been of extraordinary richness. Two ounces per ton was the lowest amount obtained, and the Australian diggers are reported to be astonished at the richness of the quartz.

From Natal, we learn that a formal compact has been entered into between N'Bengule, king of Matabele, and his chief men, and Mr. Levert, as agent of the London and Limpopo Company, whereby the latter is granted the sole possession of and the right to mine in the Tatin district. N'Bengule pledges himself to protect the grantees against all intruders. The rights of professional hunters, however, are retained. At a meeting of the Tatin settlers, Mr. Levert declared the country would be open to all lawful miners who would consent to abide by the Company's rules and regulations, and take proper leases.'—*Argus*.

LATEST TELEGRAMS.

LATEST DIAMOND NEWS.

*A Diamond worth 27,000*l.* said to be picked up.*

GREAT EXCITEMENT IN THE FREE STATE AND TRANSVAAL.
BLOEMFONTEIN ALMOST DESERTED.

King Williamstown:

Tuesday, 23rd August, 1870.

Diamond news by last night's post sensational.

Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom being deserted. Five thousand now at the fields.

Finds,—from forty to forty-five daily, as far as can be ascertained. Many, however, keep dark.

Friend denies that statements are exaggerated.

Unger, diamond merchant, says that the size of the finds, and the area of the fields, are matter of the greatest wonder, surpassing in these respects all hitherto discovered regions.

Letter received in King Williamstown, from Mr. H. J. Halse, of Aliwal, mentions having received a letter from Mr. Sheppard, at Smithfield, stating that a clergyman had arrived

per post-cart from the fields, and reports that another large diamond had been discovered, for which the possessor was offered and refused 9,000*l.* cash. Estimated value 27,000*l.*

I am so awfully tired. We have just finished our first day's work, and my hands are very shaky and painful, they are both very much blistered. I think it is about the hardest day's work that I have ever done. You would be very much surprised to see what a number of people we have here—lots of the fair sex, many of the people having their families with them. The whole of the country about the river is dug out. You know the gravel quarries behind the hospital; well, the hills here look very similar to that. We have first to dig the gravel on the hill and cart it to the river, where we wash it in cradles (like those we have in the store); the stones, pebbles, &c., are left behind, all the earth having been washed away; the pebbles are then placed on a table and examined, to see if there are any diamonds among them. You can distinguish them at once; they look like a piece of white glass among the stones. Most people seem to have been successful; if you ask them if they have been lucky, they generally reply by putting their hands in their pockets and pulling out two or three diamonds. One man pulled out twenty-one. They are quite careless, carrying them loose in their trowsers pockets. It took us seventeen days to get up here. I can tell you we were very tired, and glad to get up here. When you write mind you enclose as much as you can in one envelope, because we have to pay *one shilling* for each we receive, irrespective of size or weight.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

Mr. L. Baumann arrived direct from the fields yesterday, and brings the most enthusiastic accounts of them, as well as a number of diamonds. He states his belief, after personal intercourse with the diggers, that many more gems are found than are reported, and confirms the statement that Messrs. Unger and Hond assert that these are beyond compare the richest diamond fields that have ever been discovered! The price of land in the Free State has already risen considerably, and is still expected to rise rapidly. We hope to publish further particulars on Wednesday.

August 27, 1870.

(From *The Friend*.)

The Pniel Diggings are proving a most wonderful success. No less than 75 diamonds have in one week (the last week) been registered by the committee, on which the truly astonishing amount of 1,000*l.* stg. has been paid to the missionary. A thousand pounds in one week, without toil or trouble. Truly the lines of these missionaries have at length fallen to them in pleasant places. The 1,000*l.* is supposed to represent the fourth of the one week's findings, but it is an admitted fact that very many of the diamonds found are never heard of, or seen, except by the finder himself. The rule adopted is, that the finder shall take his diamonds to the committee to be weighed and registered, i.e., entered in a book to be kept for that purpose, and that he shall thereafter be at liberty to dispose of the same as he thinks proper. The Pniel Diggings are decidedly far more promising than the original ones on the opposite side of the river. One Waldek has sunk a hole to the depth of 10 feet through the diamondiferous soil without getting to the bottom of it, and even at that depth has obtained diamonds; while at the first *kopje*, at the original diggings, of which so much has been written, the soil in no case extended to a depth of more than 2 to 4 feet. Numbers of diamonds are daily found within the Pniel lands.

Whilst the population of the Pniel side is sober, steady, and has Free State sympathies, that over the water is hard-working, energetic, pleasure-loving, and English. Its Executive Committee is now busy planning the erection of a large music hall, and the purchase of a grand piano is under discussion. The billiard-room is not yet completed. The punishment of crime is rough and ready. White men are put across the river. Blacks are flogged. In no place has the present writer seen the sons of Ham more cheerful, active, and contented.

No one should sacrifice 200*l.* a year to work at the diamond fields. No one should work for a shorter period than three months. As a rule, married men had better keep away. Expensive outfits are to be avoided. It is a question whether a large tub of water, and a good assortment of sieves worked upon the claim itself, be not preferable to the troublesome and expensive paraphernalia of Scotch carts, oxen, long-toms, cradles, and pumps, so generally adopted.

