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BANTU CUSTOMS AND LEGENDS.

THE legends that are common among South African tribes are very numerous, and bear a close resemblance to one another as told by tribes as far apart as the Cape Peninsula and the valley of the Zambezi.

Of those I have heard among the tribes of the South many have already appeared in Colonial and English publications. The late Dr. Bleek, Mr. Theal, and Bishop Callaway collected and published in detail a number of stories, sayings, and legends, some of which have come to be well known.

While living among the Giakas, Pondos, Basutos, and Tembus, I never made a habit of writing down legends in detail, except when such seemed to illustrate some particular custom or habit which I observed, and even then made merely incidental references for purposes of illustration. Such jottings were not intended for publication, and, as I made no references to the sources from which I obtained them, I have only my own recollection to guide me as to what I heard from natives, or may have read in Colonial newspaper paragraphs or periodical articles, and so may not be able, in all cases, to acknowledge my indebtedness to others.

Quite a number of legends are tinged with European ideas to such a degree that it is difficult to discover the original under the more recent crust. "Satana", or the evil spirit, of whom they had no conception, and no word in their language to express the idea conveyed, before they first met with Europeans, is now one of the most prominent figures in story, and those in which he appears are "adapted", and the new blended into the old so skilfully

that one marvels at so much ingenuity in a land that has no literature, nor even a written language. Of such legends the original form is lost, and can only be recovered by means of comparison with those of inner Africa, of which many are substantially identical with those of the South.

I am not able to give many legends, absolutely new, in the words of the natives themselves, for the reason stated, but the substance of the few that can be embodied in the compass of a single article I have heard confirmed in a variety of ways, chiefly by reference and allusion, in speaking of other matters, and thus showing familiarity with what the story-tellers relate with all the embellishments which their art can suggest.

The manner in which the tribes we term Bantu, for want of a more descriptive name, became divided into so many independent septs, and at the same time absorbed the peoples they conquered, with hardly a trace of their nationality remaining, is clearly shown by their law of succession. Whole tribes of Hottentots have been absorbed, and not a trace of their identity remains, except place names, and a few words of doubtful meaning. In one case only, that of the Gqunaqua tribe, did the Hottentot customs and language survive. There, too, the personal characteristics of the conquered persisted for generations, and only within the last hundred years have they gradually reverted to type, and become once more thoroughly Bantu.

To begin with the law of inheritance. A chief's wives have each their own rank and station assigned to them by law and custom. Frequently the youngest is the chief wife, and for this reason: as a man advances in life his influence and power grow, and he can then make more favourable alliances than at an earlier period when his chances are doubtful; and so it happens that an old chief of sixty often marries the daughter of a powerful neighbour, and promotes her to the position of chief wife, whose son is his heir. Of the others, one is what

is called "the right-hand wife". Her son has, as soon as he becomes of age, a considerable portion of the government assigned to him by immemorial custom, and this he retains while the heir is a minor. This elder brother has many opportunities of increasing his influence, and becoming a powerful or even dangerous rival to his younger brother, so it happens that there are numberless legends, chiefly of the marvellous order, but partly true no doubt, of the perfidy of the right-hand wife's son, and the sufferings and ultimate triumph of the true heir.

"Long ago, before our people were scattered", says the chronicler, "a chief living far north had many wives and children. He was a great warrior, and very rich in cattle. After returning from a great war he married the daughter of a powerful chief living where the sun sets, and made her his chief wife. She had one son, who was his heir. His right-hand wife said to her eldest son, 'Your brother is your father's heir. He is a child, and does not know anything. You are a man, and I bore you when your father was young; I was then his favourite wife, but he now despises me, and has not been to my hut for many moons. You are his son, and your brother, the son of that child, will make you his dog. I hate her and I hate her son, who is robbing you, my son, who eat the fruit of my garden, and for whom I grind corn and make beer. Why should my son be the dog of her son?'"

From that day the elder brother began, in Kaffir phrase, 'to steal the people's hearts'. He went among them with a sorrowful and dejected air. He refused to take part in any national festivity or amusement, and even refused to speak to many of his old favourites and companions. When asked what was the matter, he always replied: "My heart is sore, I am going on a long journey, I am no chief, I have no people. These are all my brother's people we see. When he is old I shall be despised. I am a wanderer." People pitied one who had been so much among them, and whose

administration had been popular, and did their best to comfort him, assuring him of their continued goodwill ; but he only replied : " Bring me an assegai." In this way they brought him a large number of assegais, but no one could tell what he was going to do with them. They were piled up in his house, and no one used any of them. At last he called together all the young men who had been his companions in youth, and gave each a number of assegais. They next prepared food for many days, and all left and travelled a long distance till they found a strange people who were very rich. The chief of that people received the strangers and treated them hospitably, showing them all his wealth, and giving them everything they needed for their journey. They stayed with him to rest, " for", said they, " the way we travel is long, and we must eat and rest." One morning they rose very early, " while the stars were still bright", killed the men who guarded the chief's great place, and " carried away all his daughters and as many cattle as they could find in that country." They returned with a drove of cattle " like the grass", *i.e.*, that could not be counted, and each had a beautiful princess whom he made his wife.

Their next step was to build a large village near the stream where the chief had his hunting ground, and which he " lent" to them because he was old and could no longer " throw a spear at a tiger". When the old man died there were two chiefs, but the young heir said, " There is only one chief in my father's country," and told his brother he must give back what had been lent to him by his father and go his way. When this was refused, the heir raised an army and made war upon his brother, who fled, after all his cattle were captured, and lived in a cave of a distant mountain with his companions. A crocodile came to the cave and spoke to the fugitive, saying, " Hail, chief!"

He replied, " I am no chief, I am an empty-handed wanderer. I came here to die with my friends."

"Hoe a garden and put pumpkin seed in it," said the crocodile, and departed.

They hoed a garden in a green spot among the rocks and sowed pumpkin seed. His younger brother sent men to steal the pumpkins, which were so large that two men could not carry one except with difficulty. On their return they put the largest pumpkin in the chief's hut. When all were asleep a leopard came out of the pumpkin and devoured those who slept there. The elder brother having heard of this returned to his people and became a great chief. He never killed a crocodile, and his descendants do "as their father taught them", hold the animal sacred.

Persecuted chiefs were not always so fortunate, and the reverse of this legend, told in a dozen different forms, with a lion, tiger, or baboon substituted for the crocodile, does frequent duty by the hut-fire when the hours hang heavy, and the darkness helps to make belief in the supernatural stronger than it can be, even in Africa, during daylight. A chief is driven away by a successful revolt and wanders in the mountains scheming how he is to regain his former position. Outlaws and ruffians gather round him, and when on the eve of success he goes out, "when the moon is bright", to "confer with the spirits of his fathers". He sees a "Hili" or an "Incanti", and next morning his companions find his body lying on the bare earth, face downwards, and "quite shrivelled up". They disperse in terror, and never revisit that spot again. As for the chief, his spirit wanders for ever "calling for his people".

Stories illustrative of the wisdom of former chiefs are common. One, which is surrounded with quite a halo of romance, bears a curiously close resemblance to the Bible narrative of King Solomon's decision in the case of the mothers who disputed about the possession of the living child. In its principal incidents the Kaffir legend is almost identical with the Israelitish, only that it is embellished by the history and future exploits of the infant whose life was

saved by "the wisdom of the father of the people". He became a mighty man of valour, and when the old chief grew blind he waited upon him as his companion and principal councillor. Finally he rose to be a great man, and founded a dynasty of chiefs and warriors whose descendants are "great men among the people far north" to this day.

The elephant is a sacred animal with most Africans, and is greatly revered by all. There is a legend floating among the coast natives, and well known to the hillmen of Basutoland, that, were elephants exterminated, forest-trees would cease to grow. These huge animals feed largely on leaves and tender branches of trees, hence the supposed connection between them and forest timber. Nor is proof of the tradition wanting, if anyone desires to have it. There are large tracts of treeless grasslands in South Africa. The people who dwelt on these, "long ago", killed the elephants, and all the trees of their country died.

To the Bathlapin the crocodile is sacred, and by all it is revered, but rather under the form of fear than affection. I have often thought that the river "calling" of South Africa, where there are no crocodiles, is the survival of an ancient recollection of the time when the ancestors of the present Kaffirs dwelt on the margin of rivers infested by these murderous brutes, and where they often saw their women drawn underneath when going to the river to fetch water.

Iron is the sacred object among the Baralongs. They are expert workers in metal, which they still smelt from its native ore by the most primitive methods ever devised by man. The process is as follows :—They select a hollow stone of considerable size, and chisel out a narrow groove, along which the molten metal may flow. A hole is next bored, generally underneath, to admit the clay nozzle of a primitive bellows. The furnace is now complete, and the ore, mixed with charcoal, is piled up in a conical heap on

the stone. This is covered over with a mixture of clay and fresh cow-dung to prevent the escape of heat. The molten metal flows along the groove into moulds, which are invariably of the same shape as the article to be manufactured. The iron after this is worked cold, or but rarely heated. A stone serves as an anvil, and a rude lump of metal or stone axe for hammer. The article receives its final touches by being ground smooth and neat with a stone, in lieu of a file.

This art was to them, in former days, a source of wealth, influence, and power, and the legend is, that when people did not know the value of the stones found in their brooks, a "wise man" saw a vision: The spirit of his chief stood beside him and said, "Gather stones and burn them to make spears." The sage thought it was a dream, and that the chief was hungry, so he sacrificed an ox. But the vision returned, and the chief looked sorrowful. He stood a long time, and at last said, "My son, why do you not obey your father? Go to the river; gather stones, and make a hot fire. After that, you will see iron with your eyes." The sage was greatly frightened, and feared some calamity, but dared not refuse. When he had made a hot fire, iron came out of it, and then he knew the chief had taken pity on his children. He told his son the secret before he died, but he was a vain coxcomb, and, wishing to show his own wisdom, made iron in the presence of strangers, and so the secret of the art was lost to his tribe; but they have always continued to regard iron as sacred above all other things.

The Bechuanas were once told by the "Great Spirit" that their dead were all to rise and be a great army, but he somehow changed his mind, and decided that, like other men, defunct Bechuanas must never "look upon the sun again". The chameleon and lizard were the respective messengers in this case, as they were in more important circumstances after man was first made, so it happens that, among the Bechuanas, there is a vindictive feeling against

lizards, as there is among the Coast-tribes against puff-adders. A Coast-man will not kill a puff-adder if he can catch it alive. He likes to torment it, and this he does by passing a string through its jaws to close its mouth, and then suspend it on a branch to wriggle out the remainder of its life as a kind of grim punishment for the injuries it inflicts.

South Africans are fatalists, and what is to be must be. There is no such thing as death from natural causes, except in extreme old age, when "the breath goes away". All others die from foul play, the work of wizards and witches; the "calling" of the river, of seeing an *incanti*. These evils may be avoided for a time, but sooner or later fate overtakes the victim, and there can be no respite then. Such protection as can be had is got from charms, but there is always the danger of the evil worker being able to circumvent the doctor, and defeat the guardian spirit. This latter is generally the spirit of one's father, hence the Kaffir who escapes from danger says, "The soul of my father saved me." This guardianship may be represented by living creatures or objects. The guardian spirit of a Kaffir chief is an ox, but any animal may be such, as a baboon, a bird, especially those deemed sacred, or even a snake. This spirit is especially watchful when one is on a journey, and it is wonderful the feats of travelling that can be done by creatures in these circumstances. A baboon, which was the messenger of evil in this case, in Giakaland, travelled forty or fifty miles in an hour, and no one doubted the fact except the European magistrate who tried the culprit, and refused to release a rank impostor and rogue, because the whole evil was done by someone else's familiar.

A very wise man, a kind of African prophet, had once upon a time to make a long journey. He had to ford large and deep rivers, and traverse wide deserts. His friends urged him to carry a supply of food with him, and take a few personal attendants for his comfort and safety.

This he refused to do, and left alone, saying: "I shall not die; I hear him speaking." As he journeyed, a beautiful creature came and laid down food beside him every night. In his sleep it spoke to him. It said he was not to fear lions or serpents, and that all the people he met would be his friends; that one day he would become a great chief, and rule a numerous and warlike people. This creature never left the sage till he returned home; and when he told his story, all the people said he had seen the gods, and that he would now be their chief. By his wisdom he taught them many new arts, and made laws "which are still observed by all black people".

One tribe, at least, who are descended from this worthy, have a unique manner of salutation. They fill their mouths with water, and squirm it into the eyes and faces of those they wish to honour, and then hug them in the most violent manner. Then their doctors and great men have an inordinate conceit of themselves, and this they carry into their relations with persons whom they very well know value their pretensions at their true worth. One Masellulie sent a messenger, during a thunderstorm, to the Rev. Mr. Edwards, to say he hoped the latter would not be offended, "because your cow has been killed by lightning which I have made". The lightning-bird is mythical; but powerful magicians like Masellulie have had specimens of the genus as their familiar, and took aerial flights mounted on the thunder-car. Lightning being the bird's excrement, the medicine administered by the doctor purged it violently; hence his power to manufacture the subtle fluid. One old Pondo doctor of my own time knew, in his younger days, and may even have been a pupil of one who could traverse the limpid air, and scatter bolts at pleasure.

These doctors have unlimited power over men's lives and property. Among the tribes farther inland, trial by ordeal is commonly practised by them. This may consist of a poison-bowl, when the dose is graduated according to

the purpose it is intended to serve. If the victim is to be got rid of, he dies ; if not, then the dose is such as to give him a severe shaking and a big fright. Another method is plunging the hands into boiling fat. If the hands are scalded, the person is guilty ; if not, he is innocent. How it is they manage this trick—for trick it is—I do not know, unless it is that they are acquainted with certain of the effervescing substances by which they can cause molten fat to bubble as if boiling when at a comparatively low temperature. But an African doctor is not easily taken aback under any circumstances. When he orders a hunter to char the eye of his first elephant to cinders, and broil the point of his trunk as a dainty morsel, after which he will have full power over the life of any pachyderm, and he, on the following day, either loses his quarry or is tossed into the branches of an overhanging tree, the man of science calmly tells him that a particle of the eye was not reduced to ashes, or that the morsel cooked was not entirely eaten by him, and that he has only his own carelessness to thank for his misadventure.

Nor is he without a say regarding smaller game. If young men go hunting privately as distinguished from an organised hunt by the chief, and eat any portion of the product of the chase before laying it down at the feet of the elders who remain at home, they will either die or be turned into jackals or other beasts of prey. This is an effectual check on the dishonesty of the savage gamekeeper who might feel tempted to purloin a hare or pheasant-cock.

There is very frequently a kind of honourable rivalry between the doctor and the missionary. The former represents ancient conservatism ; the latter, innovation, revolution, and complete change of all established social customs. When the preacher, Bible in hand, arrives at a chief's village, the meeting-place is generally the shaded side of the cattle-kraal or fold on the greensward. Inside the fold a small fire is kindled while the people assemble. At

this fire a few persons sit, during the service, apparently listening to what is going on. To them the novice pays no attention, thinking their interest is centred on the cooking of some article of food. The man of experience, who has studied customs and habits, knows that this small group, on the outskirts of the crowd, consists of the village-doctor and his attendants, and that they are engaged in burning charms "to drive away the spirit of the book", so that it may not enter into those who, out of courtesy, come to hear what the missionary has to say.

Often has the missionary spoken of life, destiny, and immortality, with a fire smouldering near at hand. I seldom let my audience know that I understand the custom, or that I observed what was going on, but one fellow-countryman, a novice in the country, to whom I explained it, had his "spirit stirred within him" when he saw the people "given to idolatry", and burst out on them and all their practices. At the close I encouraged a discussion, and felt more convinced than ever I did before, that vituperation can under no circumstances serve instead of argument. They reasoned with him in this manner: "You live among our people; we circumcise our young men; this stinks in your nose. We kill our cattle in sacrifice to our ancestors; you say it is God we must worship. On what river had he his kraal? Where are his people? You say the spirit lives, but does not care for sacrifice. Does the father forget his own child? Should not the children obey? You have your customs; we do not like them. We have ours; you do not like them. Why does the master scold, as we are both the same? Is not the land enough to grow corn for all?"

There is a class of legends which I used to regard as purely mythical, or, rather, the invention of interested doctors, but which, in view of recent discoveries in connection with that uncanny science known as Hypnotism, I am inclined to think may have had a basis of truth, however much that may have been distorted. In fact, most popular legends have their origin, however remotely, in some

objective fact. Those referred to relate to the power said to be possessed by certain wizards on the one hand, and magicians or doctors on the other, of sending people to sleep, or into a trance, and then tormenting, and even mutilating them, without their experiencing any sensations of pain. One man I heard of, but who was dead a good many years, was said to possess this power, and persons were mentioned who had been the victims of his evil influence and machinations. Into the truth of the specific statements I did not inquire at the time, but one story, a fair sample of those told, ran thus: A young woman against whom he had a grudge met him in the fields. He spoke to her, and after a little she fell asleep. When she awoke and returned home it was discovered that her ears were slit, and that she had been mutilated in various ways. She said she had no consciousness of pain, and did not know she had been injured till she saw blood on her person.

Other and more improbable legends abound, which attribute to wizards not only the power of hypnotising their victims, but of conveying them from place to place with incredible swiftness, or sending them for weeks or even months into the mountains and forests to eat grass like oxen, as happened to the famous Babylonian monarch, and finally reducing them to be their own slaves or drudges, after the manner of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Whether there can be any truth in such legends culled from among a barbarous people, those learned in the "uncanny arts" must be left to determine.

As in nature there is but a step from birds to butterflies, so in Africa there is but a step from magic to music, and the feats of Orpheus are nothing compared to the doings of bards and singers of a long forgotten past in the Dark Continent. Of extant musical instruments there are very few, and these are not of particularly complex construction. A dried elephant's ear makes a very serviceable drum; two hard bits of stick or bone a suitable accompaniment

to a song or a domestic dance. The great bull-hide drum of heathen revelry is very simple in its construction. A hide, while wet, is firmly stretched between stakes securely fixed in the ground. This, as it dries in the sun, contracts violently, so that when ready for use it is pulled tighter than any drum of European manufacture. When beaten with suitable sticks its sound is both loud and penetrating; simply ear-splitting. On festive occasions relays of women beat it, without intermission, from dusk to dawn, giving the dancers their time, and making the neighbouring forests resound again. This is the popular musical instrument at large gatherings. It is to the African what his beloved bagpipes is to the Scottish Celt.

Next in popularity comes a variety of the so-called Jewish harp. On this skilful performers can play airs to be rivalled only by an Irishman with the penny-whistle at a great horse-fair in the Western Counties. I have, on still nights, sat for hours under the verandah listening to the playing of a Kaffir neighbour, who, in the still moonlight, used to sit outside his hut practising on his instrument and composing new airs, and often felt delighted with his performances. He, in turn, got some benefit from the mission. I have known him crouch outside the compound fence listening to the piano, and now and then try snatches of the music played on his own modest instrument. He picked up quite a number of Scotch airs and Highland pibrochs, and could reproduce them correctly. I am afraid, when he went on his travels, he palmed a few of them on his countrymen as his own composition.

Another instrument, played chiefly by women, consists of a bow and bow-string. To the latter is attached a small calabash, perforated in a peculiar manner, and which acts as sounding-board. The string is twanged with the fingers of the right hand, while the left regulates the length of the vibration. The music is not of much account, but the time is perfect, and for their domestic amusements nothing could be better adapted.

There is an instrument common among the inland tribes, but of which I never saw a specimen in the South, constructed somewhat on the principle of the piano. It consists of a strong wooden framework; into this eight slips of wood are fixed, which, when struck in rapid succession, sound a perfect octave. Skilful players can, with a small drumstick, perform quite a number of airs with surprising accuracy, and all in perfect time. But of all African musical instruments the most horribly maddening to European ears is the reed. This resembles nothing that I have ever heard except the "drones" of the bagpipes when an indifferent player is getting his instrument into tune. This is saying a good deal; I might say more, but, being a Scotchman, dare not with impunity.

I had many friends among the musicians, but never, unfortunately, wrote down any of their legends. After entertaining one with their strains they, one and all, would begin: "The master sees I am a child. Our people have forgotten music. Long ago every warrior could play skilfully, and a man never went on a journey but he carried his instrument with him. The great players could bring the beasts of the forest out of the bush to listen, and even the birds would fly round and round them. Since the white man came and took our country, our hearts are heavy, men do not sing. When we have a meeting, if young men fight it is the tronk [gaol]; the tronk is killing us. No. The master sees I am a child, and can touch this as our children throw the spear and the bunguza."

"What was it the ancestors could do which you cannot do?"

"The master asks a foolish question to-day. He sits here and smokes when I play. If he heard my father he could not sit, he would dance."

"Was your father a great musician?"

"Yes, to me; but the old men when he was young would say he was a child. He could not play like them."

"Do you know who made the first instrument like that?"

"No; no one can tell. The spirits taught men long ago. They are angry with their children, and show them nothing now. It was not man who made this [playing a few bars]; and it is because the spirits do not speak to singers that one cannot play. The children are forgetting."

So the conversation would meander on with much sadness and some truth; for it is a fact that the old life is passing away, and the new has not yet taken hold of the popular imagination. Before we parted it was generally asserted that the spirits would one day speak, and restore the old order, when men would once more learn to sing as do the gods.

Their lyrics are mostly in praise of ancestors, warriors, cattle, the seasons and crops, rain, sunshine, domestic virtue and valour. These the bards sing, adding a verse or altering a phrase to suit the occasion. I have heard old and well-known verses so transformed as to be almost past recognition, and that impromptu. These ditties the bards sing and set to music; and there is every reason to believe that their music has the authority of thousands of years. The dancing-steps of to-day are those depicted, as performed by slaves, in wall-paintings of ancient Egypt, and there seems no doubt that, then as now, they were danced to the same musical notes, played on instruments identical in form and melody to those of the present time.

There is one species of dance popular among Bushmen, never indulged in by Bantu, to which some slight reference may be made. It is called "Porrah", or Devil-dance, and in the performance of which they work themselves into a state of perfect frenzy, continuing till they fall down in a kind of epileptic stupor. Of this they are relieved by being pricked with sharp thorns or large pins. The dance may be performed singly or by a number capering in concert, and is always accompanied by smoking a weed known as *dara*, which is really a species of hemp. When the pipe is ready they sit down in a circle and each takes a single pull. As the pipe goes round, first one and then another,

and another, fall down into a kind of stupor which they describe as an ecstasy of joy. The weed is a deadly poison, and its continued use soon ends both dancing and joy. Bantu tribes smoke it, but not in connection with their dances. Few Europeans would care to make exhaustive experiments with it, and the results of tentative trials are not worth recording.

When men gather round the hut-fire in the evening, the story-teller is always in requisition. He may relate his own exploits, his deeds of daring, his loves, his thefts, and feats of strength or endurance, and from these wander into a region of fable and legend to wile the weary hours away. With some, story-telling is reduced to one of the fine arts, I had almost said, exact sciences.

I once had a camp-follower who was an adept at relating incidents, in which he himself was made to figure as one of the principal actors. I remember his relating a story which is largely legendary, founded upon events which happened five generations before he was born, and winding up by asking, with an air of innocent veracity: "Did the master never hear I was one of Guluwe's companions?"

The story was this: Guluwe was a renowned hunter and warrior. He and two companions killed an eland while hunting in the Amatole forests, and as they proceeded to clean the beast, they found themselves surrounded by an army of Bushmen. Between the Bushmen and the Bantu there was mortal enmity: war to the knife. Guluwe promised his captors a large quantity of *dara* if they spared his life, and offered to send his companions for the coveted weed. To this they agreed. Guluwe, knowing their treachery, directed his companions not to return.

The following day the Bushmen all slept, being overcome with their feasting on the flesh of the eland, while waiting for the messengers. The prisoner watched his opportunity, and slew them one by one till he came to their captain, whom he awoke, and said, "Guluwe's two

of yesterday have come", hence the popular Kaffir phrase for one who never returns, "like Guluwe's two of yesterday".

My friend told me the "story of the wonderful horns" as a local tale of East Griqualand. Mr. Theal had it as a Gaika legend among the people near Lovedale, and Dr. Hahn heard a version of it in Damaraland. The story runs as I heard it—in Mr. Theal's version the animal is a domestic ox—something to this effect: A very beautiful antelope came grazing near a village where a boy was herding cattle. It spoke to the boy, and asked him to mount on its back. The boy did so, and then the creature galloped swiftly over the plain, till the boy's home was far out of sight.

Towards afternoon he felt hungry, and began to cry. He could not get off the creature's back, and concluded he was lost. He did his best to stop the animal, and at last struck one of its horns with a wand he had in his hand. Food came out of the horn, and he began to eat. It comforted him, so that he ceased to cry. At last he fell asleep, and when he awoke the sun was set. The antelope still galloped on, but now it was very fatigued and made hardly any progress. At last it lay down to die, but, before it expired, it spoke to the boy and asked him to take the horns and keep them all his life. This he did. When it was quite dark, he spoke to the horns, and a blanket came out of them, so he slept comfortably in the blanket. Whatever he fancied came out of the horns.

At last he came to a village where there was a girl he loved. She refused to marry him. He spoke to the horns, and they brought the girl to where he slept. He married her, and when he spoke to the horns, the ground was hoed for seed, and the pots were filled with beer. That boy became a great man, all by means of the wonderful horns.

Nearly allied to this is the story of the bird that made

milk. It has often been told, and the following version differs in no essential from those that have already been published by Mr. Theal. It is as follows: A man and his wife went to hoe a garden; they hoed all day. At night a bird came and said, "Garden, be mixed again." Next day the garden was all as if it had not been touched. They worked that day, and the result was the same. The third day the man watched all night in the garden, and caught the bird. He took it home and it made milk. He was very poor, and his children began to grow fat eating the milk. The neighbours wondered how they were so fat, when their father was so poor. One day, when he was away, other children asked them. They replied, "We eat the milk father's bird makes."

"Let us see the bird," said they. The children showed them the bird in its cage.

"Will he make milk for us?" was the next question.

"Father's bird make milk for our companions?"

"Yes," said the bird, "if you set me at the fireplace."

They set it at the fireplace, and it made milk.

"Father's bird make more milk for us?"

"Yes, if you bring me to the door."

They brought it to the door, and then it flew away, and was never more seen. The man and his wife were now as poor as ever, having lost the wonderful bird that made the milk.

The Damara legend of the origin of men and animals is told with as many variations among the Bantu as there are tribes. One version is as follows: When men and animals came out of a tree as from the womb of nature, all around was darkness black as midnight. A man kindled a fire, and then all the animals scattered and fled. This is why animals still fear fire, and why men kindle it to scare them away at night. The animals fear man only because he knows how to make fire, and but for this none of them would run away from him.

To the same category as the above belongs the legend of the hoop-snake. This creature, when pursuing its prey downhill, puts its tail in its mouth and rolls away, like a child's hoop, with incredible velocity. Hardy story-tellers have seen the creature skipping along "faster than a horse could gallop".

Snakes, however, do not have it all their own way, for there was once upon a time a doctor, who, when called to exercise his art at any place, could summon all the reptiles in the neighbourhood to appear before him, and then set them to fight one another for the purpose of mutual extermination. Less successful than St. Patrick, he has left a plentiful crop behind him for his successors to practise upon.

There are legends connected with all the wild creatures found in the country. The crocodile "has no tongue", nothing but jaws and teeth; and this is how leviathan is condemned to go tongueless: When it and the iguana, a species of land lizard measuring three to four feet when full grown, and with a long forked tongue, were made, two tongues were made and placed at a distance from them. They were then told to run a race, and the first to arrive was to have both. The iguana won, and his larger and more savage rival had to be content "with a stump in its throat".

Baboons are the emblems of treachery; "'tis the foot of a baboon," being the universal proverb for unfair dealing. Still, baboons are supposed to protect females from lions and other beasts of prey; and a legend is told of a woman who was lost in a forest; night came, and lions roared. Then the baboons gathered round her and protected her, bringing her to a place of safety where they provided an ample supply of milk and corn for her use. She lived a long time with her strange companions, her friends supposing her dead. She was at last restored to her home, but, having learned the language of the baboons, she went often to talk to them in the forest at night. At

last she died, and the baboons barked and howled, mourning for her for many days.

To see an "incanti" is certain death; so, too, to see a "hili". At the same time stories inconsistent with such general truths are common, especially regarding the latter, who is very malevolent, but withal an amorous swain. One at least fell among thieves in the prosecution of his loves. Hence the common proverb, "You will feel what Hili experienced." On one occasion he carried on an intrigue with a woman he had caused to fall in love with him. Her husband suspected that she was visited by a hili, but for a long time he could find out nothing to confirm his suspicions. At last he pretended to go on a long journey, but returned in the middle of the night with a number of friends. They quietly fastened all the dogs at the door of the hut, and after that he went in and kindled a light. As he anticipated, a hili was there. The neighbours beat him, the dogs bit him, until at last he was not able to move away from the house. They then tied him on the woman's back and sent her away to wander with ghosts and river-spirits for ever. Hili often milks the cows when no one is watching them, and plays other tricks, in which he never can be detected.

While we were living at Duff, a man was found dead one morning close by the river's bank, not far from the mission. It was clearly a case of suicide by poisoning, but our native neighbours regarded it as a case of having seen an incanti, and no one would approach the spot for months. The pools were bewitched, haunted, bedevilled. This circumstance led to my being told several legends regarding our friend the incanti. I preserved none of them in a complete form, but the following notes will indicate their nature. An incanti once lived in a river near a chief's house. One day his son saw it, and he died. He sent the magicians and an army to the river. They pelted it with stones; the magicians cursed it; the women even cursed it. Next day the chief's bravest

general saw it, and he died. The chief called his magicians and said: "How is this? Did I not send you to the river to drive away the incanti?" They said, "Yes." He then told them that the general was dead, and shut them up in a house till they died. No one would go to the river. Then a doctor came from a far people on a visit, and, when he heard it, he said, "Show me where the incanti is." On being shown, he made medicine, and put it in the river where the incanti dwelt. Then there was a great noise and darkness, and no one ever saw that incanti again. The doctor married the chief's daughter and was a great man among that people. Several other legends illustrating the cunning of the incanti were told at the same time, but the above is a fair specimen of village talk after such an event as a sudden death or suicide.

To show how rapidly historical events become legendary among Africans, one has but to turn to the events of the early wars of the present century, and in regard to which much authentic history has been written.

I had often heard the phrase, "Like the coming of Nkele", before I understood its meaning, applied to anything long delayed, or which the speaker believed never would happen. Now Nkele—the left-handed—or more properly Makana, was perhaps the most remarkable man that Kaffirland has produced. In a land where the ruling caste is regarded as a sacred order, he rose from the ranks by sheer force of character and sterling merit to be the leader of one of the most powerful combinations that ever opposed the English in their progress eastwards from the Cape. During the early years of the second decade of the century he was the foremost man in Africa. He led his men against English troops supported by artillery, and only when the flower of his force were mown down did he retire from the conflict. When all was lost he voluntarily surrendered himself to the English commander, as he could thereby secure more favourable terms for his countrymen. He was tried, and sent as a prisoner of State to Robben Island in Table

Bay. In attempting to escape the boat was swamped and Makana was drowned. Meantime his countrymen regarded him as invulnerable and immortal, and refused to believe that he was dead. All through the wars between 1835 and 1851 they looked for his reappearance to lead them to victory, and to this day many of them will solemnly assert that Makana is not dead. The injunctions he laid upon his countrymen nearly a century ago are obeyed as if they were the words of a god: Before his time none except chiefs and their immediate relatives were buried. Makana ordered his troops to bury their fallen comrades as having perished in their country's cause. This led to sepulture becoming common. Now it is universal.

To thousands he is still the living man, or demi-god, and they relate legends of persons who saw him, and on whom he laid fresh injunctions not ten years ago. His personal effects and ornaments are, or at least were a short while ago, preserved waiting his coming, and men born decades after his death were ready, at an hour's notice, to throw off their allegiance to native chief or English Government, and follow his standard to victory or to death. From one point of view such devotion is very beautiful; from another it illustrates the vast distance there is between Western civilisation and African barbarism.

Such are a few of the legends current among a people whose ways were to me very familiar, and who often in the most unexpected manner remind one of the friends of his youth in the legends of ancient Greece and Rome. Whether any of them took their rise from a common origin it is impossible even to guess, but if not, then it is clear that man's habits of thought do not differ so largely as at first sight appears, and that from certain primitive ideas, common to the human race, grew the ancient civilisations of East and West, as well as the more modern developments of our own times.

That I am not able to give the legends in more minute detail is owing to the reason already stated. No one can

be more sensible than I am of the inadequate conception this paper gives of a subject of engrossing interest. Should I ever have to return once more to Africa, it will be something more than the mere conventional pleasure to collect and arrange legends and sayings that are fast passing into an oblivion from which they can never be recovered again to the world.

JAMES MACDONALD.