

BOOM PAUL'S CAPITAL.

The Historic City of Pretoria the Boer Stronghold.

A Graphic Description of the Town and the Government—A Day in the Volksraad.

"H. V. F." is supplying the Toronto Globe with a series of letters on South Africa. It is, he says, a great relief to get away from the dusty and unattractive business streets of Johannesburg, the Uitlander center of this unhappy country, and pay a visit to old Pretoria, the seat of government of the South African Republic. There is a sharp descent in the 30 or 40 miles' journey, and Pretoria is several hundred feet nearer the sea level than the "Golden City," the pinnacle of South Africa. Consequently Pretoria is always a much warmer place—climatically—than Johannesburg. Entering Pretoria one sees some of the best scenery in South Africa. The slow-moving, narrow-gauge train picks its way between the immense hills that surround the little city, and along the line is a profusion of verdure that is a most welcome sight to the visitor from the parched and desolate looking area of the Witwatersrand. Pretoria, at this crisis in the history of the republic, is a most interesting spot, and everything bearing on the situation is full of significance. Hence, it is that the hills which encircle the capital attract the attention of the visitor; and when it is found that each of them is crowned with a well-equipped and up-to-date fort, one is reminded that this is the chief fortified city of the Transvaal. The situation of these forts is admirable from a military point of view, and in the event of Boer reverses there will be a stubborn stand made in this, the "last trench" of the little republic. But this is apart from my object, which is to deal briefly with the town itself, and give a short account of an afternoon spent in the chamber of the First Volksraad.

Pretoria is a peculiarly peaceful and comfortable looking city. Nestling among its towering hills, it is well sheltered from the terrible and dusty windstorms that sweep across the high veldt land above. There is an appearance of stability about the place that is totally lacking in the boom towns of South Africa. People come to Pretoria to remain and make their homes there, so that the place has an old and settled appearance; the inhabitants are sedate and easy-going in their manner, and there is never any discernible variation in the number of people on the streets nor in the amount of business being done. The Pretorians are of the early-to-bed variety, and very soon after night fall the streets are almost deserted. There are fine, broad and handsome buildings that would be a credit to any city, and the residential portion presents a very comfortable and homelike appearance. Standing on Church square, the junction of all the principal thoroughfares, one sees as fine an array of handsome buildings as are to be found in South Africa. Occupying one side of the square are the government buildings in which are the First and Second chambers of the Volksraad and departmental offices. This is a singularly fine structure, of a most substantial appearance, and presenting considerable claims to architectural beauty. Surmounting the dome is a "statue of liberty" of heroic proportions, and above the main entrance in gilded letters is the watchword and motto of the Transvaal, "Eendracht Maakt Magt" (right beats might).

On the other side of the square is the building containing the law courts, just now reaching completion, and which give promise of being a worthy vis-a-vis to the Volksraad. Hotels and other public buildings occupy the remainder of the quadrangle, and in the center is the Dutch Reformed church.

This latter building is scarcely in keeping, architecturally, with the splendid structures surrounding it, but it is not to remain; preparations are being made for its removal, and on the space it now occupies will be erected a statue of Paul Kruger, the aged and honored president of the state. When this is all completed, Church square, Pretoria, will present one of the most interesting sights the traveler can behold in the cities of South Africa.

One of the most interesting sights, naturally, in Pretoria, is the presidency, the home of Paul Kruger—the White House of the Transvaal Republic.

It is built in the low, spreading style peculiar to the bungalow like architecture of South African residences. There is the inevitable "stoep," or veranda, upon which the president may be seen almost every morning, smoking his great pipeful of Boer tobacco, and chatting with some of his confidants. On either side of the approach to the house, are two beautiful sculptured lions, couchant, the gift of the late Barney Barnato, who was always on excellent terms with the president. Armed sentries patrol the street in front of the house, and about the grounds are the sentry boxes of the soldiers of the guard. Directly opposite is the little Doppe church, where President Kruger worships and frequently preaches.

The chief aim of the visitor to Pretoria is to obtain a glimpse of President Kruger, and daily between the presidency and the raad number us spectators await the coming of the gaudy-looking state coach, in which his honor is conveyed about the city. It was my good fortune not only to see President Kruger seated in his favorite chair on the "stoep" of the presidency, but also to see him and hear him speak in the first chamber of his beloved Volksraad.

Through the courtesy of the Johannesburg press correspondents I was favored with a seat in the press gallery during the afternoon session of the raad and had a splendid view of the proceedings. The chamber of the First Volksraad is a handsome one, and thoroughly modern and up-to-date in its appearance. It is not large, there being only some 26 members to accommodate. The seats are ranged in circular form about the dais of Mr. Chairman, on the right of whom sits the president, while directly in front the clerk of the chamber has his desk; and then come the richly upholstered seats of honorable members. The parties are not grouped together in different parts of the house, and the most progressive member rubs shoulders daily with his conservative fellow-member in the next chair. The ceiling and walls of the room are tastefully decorated, and all about are hung oil paintings of the old warrior politicians of the Transvaal. These include excellent portraits of the president and General Joubert. Around the walls of the chamber are the seats provided for the burger visitors to the raad; and there were several grizzled and time-worn old veterans in occupation of them.

The raad opened without any visible ceremony, and the order of the day was proceeded with. The amended franchise law was the subject under consideration, and it was not difficult to see that there was a great deal of strong feeling on the matter. Knowledge of the Dutch language was not necessary to follow the increasing excitement and passion of each speaker as the debate proceeded. Stoffet Tosen, the most uncompromising of the retrogressives, had spoken in a violent and defiant strain, and interruptions were numerous and not particularly courteous, when President Kruger thumped his mighty hand on the desk in front of him, and, rising, commenced to speak.

Immediately there was silence. The appearance of the president when speaking is almost animated, and he is certainly the disciple of gesture. There are vigor and authority, and the certainty of acceptance of his arguments, shown in every word uttered by him in the Volksraad. Increasing age has taken from him much of the old-time energy of his style of speaking, but he is still the strong, masterful and dominating orator of the Boers. In a ten-minute speech, which the reporters must have had difficulty in following, he silenced or swept away all opposition, and the next clause of the franchise law was proceeded with. He then sank back, apparently exhausted, in his great chair. It was in a sense a pathetic sight, that of the old president sitting in a crouching attitude in his chair, his hearing failing, his sight almost gone, heavily spectacled, with hands to ears, following with difficulty but with great attention the proceedings in the chamber.

To the right of the president sat the members of the executive council, the most noteworthy and interesting of whom were General Joubert, the vice-president of the Republic, and Mr. Schalk Burger. General Joubert is one of the men most honored of the burghers. He has endeared himself to them by his courage, sagacity and self-sacrifice in all their campaigns against whites and blacks for many years. But he is also a grey-bearded old man, and the thought occurred to one that the old Boer sharpshooters who played such havoc with General Colley at Majuba Hill are today very old men, and the younger generation have yet to show whether or not they are worthy sons of their sires.

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SMILELETS.

[By Othmar.]

Burning kisses always go with sparks. George is trying a porous plaster, and has become very much attached to it.

A Klondike woman shakes a man's grief, doubles his joys and trebles his expenses.

Familiarity outside breeds contempt; in here contempt for cleanliness breeds "crumbs."

"Devils food" cakes is a mysterious mixture that often makes devils of those who eat it.

It is reported that a man is down with the smallpox. If it is true he is to be pitted.

Some women up here swear like men while others are so pious that they will not even darn socks.

Many cook books have been sent to this country, but not one of them tells how to keep a cook.

If we had to pay for all the advice we get there would either be more money in circulation or less advice.

Did you ever notice that the little dog in the lead barks the loudest, but it is the big dog that gets the bone.

I know of a grass widow in this city who is very much like a grasshopper, as she will jump at the first chance.

Have you noticed that the man who is willing to do you a favor is the one who is never in a position to do it.

This world is full of trouble to men. Sampson missed it in having his hair cut short, and Absalom in having it cut long.

Some people on the hill back of town are high livers, because they cannot afford to pay the high rents down in the city.

If you are going to make a Christmas present to one of your lady friends, leave the tag on. It will save her a trip down town.

Some people here who owe debts would be in an awful fix if their debtors were as troublesome with bills as the mosquitoes are.

Calling things by their right name is correct usually; but never call a spade a spade when clubs are trumps, if you are playing euchre.

The weather in this country may be very severe, but it is never so cold that a woman cannot gossip out the back door with her neighbor.

Love that little tickling sensation in the heart that cannot be scratched—is almost unknown in this country. Here it is for nuggets.

It is said that the sun never sets on British possessions, but this must be a mistake, as a disturbance has been "hatched" in South Africa.

There are some people who never had a dollar at home, but who have been

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successful up here and will complain if the mansion in the skies hasn't the latest improvements.

Some Dawson church members clasp their hands so tight in church that they cannot get them apart until after the contribution box has passed.

Tom Chisholm says that the Dawson plumber is like those of all other cities—his work may not be perfectly satisfactory, but he always fills the bill.

At a private meeting one evening lately, I heard a man bragging that he had no vices, and it occurred to me that such people seldom have many virtues.

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