



A BURNING KRAAL.

AFRICAN ARCHITECTURE.

BUILDING among the Zulu, Kaffir, and other tribes of Africa is peculiar. They have no idea of building anything square or oblong. Everything that they build, whether hut or fence, is round. They can't understand sharp corners in any structure of any kind whatever. It would be just as puzzling for an ordinary English settler to build a circular fence or house, as for a Kaffir or Zulu to build it any other way. They also use the very lightest material, and if you tell them of a house being built with stone they will laugh at you. They have no idea of a house such as is common with us—a house with sharp angles, steep roof, upper and lower stories, different apartments and the like.

They can't see how such a structure could be made to sustain its own weight. What they always build is a circular hut, and one never sees anything else among African tribes. This house, or hut, looks like a large beehive, and is made in this way: A circle is drawn on the ground of the size that the house is to be. Then poles, which bend easily, are stuck round it and bent over at the top and tied together. Over this framework, which is of the shape that the house is to be, reeds are placed as a covering, and tied together in parallel lines with "monkey rope." This "monkey rope" is a kind of creeper which grows at almost any length from tree to tree, and of almost any size, from a tiny string to a rope of cable size. It is so like rope in its different strands, woven together by nature, that many have been deceived by it. In a short time the round structure is completed, and looks very much like the houses which the Esquimaux build of ice and snow. Indeed, the two are of exactly the same structure, only one is held together by the frost

of winter, and the other by the frail materials of perpetual summer.

And the African, like the Esquimaux, pays no regard whatever, either to the escape of smoke or to ventilation. No chimneys are built and no windows; the only entrance being a small hole large enough only for a man to creep through, and even this is closed up sometimes by a lightly built door. The floor is generally made of some hard cement, which is kept smooth and highly polished.

As a protection against rain, a trench is dug round the dwelling so as to prevent the water gathering round the entrance and foundation. Sometimes, if a hut is large, the roof is supported inside by upright posts, and over these domestic articles and weapons of war are hung.

Of course these houses are very frail and easily knocked over. A stray elephant sometimes walks straight into them, mercilessly trampling upon men, women or children as the case may be; but still the African is willing to risk this and other dangers in return for possessing a mansion so easily constructed.

In common with all mankind, the Africans like to herd together in villages and towns. A collection of round huts, such as have been described, is called a kraal, and is also built in circular form. The site for the kraal is marked out by a large circle, round which a wall is built of poles and reeds. Inside this wall the huts are placed, and in the centre, in a sort of circular yard, are kept the cows, which are greatly prized. They are thus protected by a circular row of huts.

As these huts are very frail, and as fires are continually built in them, it often happens that they take fire, and when one of them begins to burn it generally happens that the whole kraal is consumed. However, as the occupants usually have very little furniture or belongings