



AFRICAN BLACKSMITHS.

South Africa—the Rev. W. M. Cameron, his examining chaplain and Canon of the Cathedral Church; the Rev. W. Greenstock, Canon of Maritzburg, and his successor in the Mission of Springvale; and the Rev. T. B. Jenkinson, also late of the Springvale Mission; while the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was represented by the Secretary, the Rev. H. W. Tucker.

SOMETHING ABOUT KAFFIRS.

SPRINGVALE, in the Diocese of Maritzburg (says the *Mission Field*), is one of the oldest Missions in South Africa. It was founded thirty-four years ago by Dr. Callaway, long before he became the first Bishop of St. John's. Thirty-four years is in some ways a long time; but it is only a short time in the life of a nation. It is a very short time for changing national habits and customs, for changing national religion, for casting out ancient superstitions and savagery from a nation, and for developing in a new land Christian habits of trusting faith.

However, it is wonderful what has been done. The native Christians in South Africa do cast off their old superstitions. How simple and foolish these are is shown in an account which is given us by the Rev. H. T. A. Thompson, who is now the Missionary at Bishop Callaway's old station of Springvale. The natives have always made use of "mealies" (maize) and Kaffir corn as almost their only vegetable food. At first they are in the husk, that is to say in capsules, each of which contains large quantities of the grain. Now, as Mr. Thompson says, it is a great pity that they should not have other vegetables. If there is a bad season for mealies there is nothing else for the people, and they suffer from famine. Besides, it is better for them to have some other useful vegetables, and not to live on one kind only. There was a scarcity of mealies last year, and it had a good effect upon the natives in one way, for it almost compelled them to plant other kinds of food, such

as beans and potatoes. Their "witch-doctors" discourage the cultivation of European eatables, as tending towards the adoption of European customs and habits, a thing to be much deplored in their eyes. Not very far from the Mission of Springvale a native, who had worked a great deal for Europeans, on his return home cultivated a vegetable garden of his own with considerable success. After a while a child of his fell sick and died. Of course he went to inquire of a witch-doctor the reason of his child's sickness and death. The doctor met his inquiry with another: "How could he expect his children or himself to prosper when he was leaving the customs of his forefathers and adopting those of an alien race? That garden was the sole cause of his misfortune. He could not expect the spirits of his ancestors to look upon him with favor when he was no longer walking in the paths in which they used to walk." So the unfortunate man went home and rooted up his cabbages and onions, etc., and has from that time confined himself to the ordinary native diet.

If the natives will not even use European vegetables, how difficult it must be for them to receive the English religion, and yet how wonderful is the progress that the missionaries are able to make! For instance, in this same letter, Mr. Thompson describes a mission tour which he took with a native clergyman, the Rev. D. Mzamo, and a boy to lead the pack-horse. They started on a Saturday for the Umkunya hill, about sixteen miles from Springvale. "We took with us," he writes, "a patrol tent, our blankets, a waterproof and hut, cooking-pots, enamelled iron cups and plates, etc., and enough food for a week. We pitched our tent that afternoon by the house of a Christian native, living under the hill, and in the vicinity of a fair number of kraals. After a little while one or two of the men came to see us, and we sent word by them to the natives living round about that we were going to hold service on the morrow, and invited them to come and hear what we had to say. An old brass cow-bell was obtained from a neighboring kraal and polished up, and on Sunday morning it was rung vigorously from the top of the hill under which we were encamped, to gather the people together. We held service in the house of the Christian native, a building of wattle and daub, about fifteen feet long and about ten broad, and divided into two partitions. Into this building some seventy people, young and old, managed to squeeze themselves. As almost all the people were heathens, our service was necessarily of a very simple kind, being chiefly sermon. We began with a hymn, then said a few prayers, and read a selected lesson, on which the reader—the native deacon—commented, then another hymn. After this second hymn I preached about half an hour, and after I had finished preaching the native deacon went through the heads of the sermon again, asking the people questions on it, and inviting them to ask questions. We finished with another hymn and a prayer. The people