

CHAPTER II.

A BACKWARD GLANCE.

AS far back as 1836 we find the Dutch burghers of the Cape becoming dissatisfied with the government. Indeed, in that year took place what is known as the "Great Trek," and to this may be traced the foundation of the Transvaal and Free State.

The first party of emigrants, ninety-eight persons in all, was under the leadership of Louis Trichardt and Johannes Rensburg. After suffering untold hardships, the little band, reduced to twenty-five souls, reached Natal. A second party, commanded by Hendrick Potgieter, and numbering one hundred and fifty men, women and children, and including three Kruger families, left their homes in the Tarka and Colesberg districts and made their way to a tract of land lying between the Vet and Walsh rivers, ceded to them by Makwana. Their encampment was somewhere near Winburg. Subsequently large bands migrated from colonial centres. In 1837 Piet Retief, at the head of a large party, arrived in the camp, and soon afterwards was appointed Commandant-General. The population numbered over 1,100.

The principal cause of the Great Trek may be said to be the emancipation of the slaves. In a manifesto, put forth by Piet Retief before emigration, he complains, not without reason, that the remuneration offered by the government as compensation to the farmer for the loss of his slaves was in no way adequate; and that so much red tape stood in the way, that by the time the farmer received his money it covered very little of his loss. Complaint was also made that the government was far