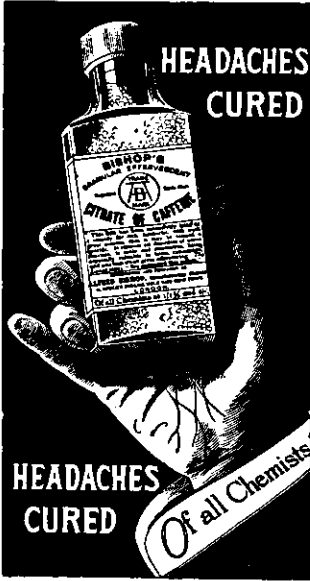


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KIMBERLEY.

In the light of present events in South Africa, Kimberley presents other and more tragic claims to the interest and remembrance of the world than those arising from the fame of its diamond mines. The strategic importance of the city, its investment and threatened capture by the Boer forces, and the presence within of their arch-enemy, Cecil Rhodes, conspire to lend a peculiarly dramatic colour to a situation the outcome of which is awaited with universal interest.

The arid and treeless wilderness—once known as Colesberg Kopje—upon which Kimberley is located, was formerly in possession of the Griquas, people of a mixed Dutch and Kaffir origin, and it was not until 1867 that the existence within its borders of the boundless wealth which has since made it famous, was suspected.

In that year, it is said, a Boer, Schalk Van Niekirk by name, secured from a youthful Kaffir a peculiar-looking stone with which he was playing. On becoming aware of its commercial value he disposed of it to an Irishman named O'Reilly, for five hundred pounds. Thus encouraged, Van Niekirk invested four hundred pounds in purchasing another and larger stone from a guileless Kaffir warrior, and immediately sold it at Capetown for ten thousand pounds.

Then the murder was out. The diamond deposits became known. Adventures flocked to Colesberg by thousands, and two years after Van Niekirk's "deal" came the opening of the mines, and the rapid building of a city in their vicinity. The city was named Kimberley, in honour of the then colonial secretary.

The methods pursued at first in digging diamonds were rude and primitive, and the diggers had to contend against many disadvantages—especially against a depreciation in prices due to excessive haste in making sales.

All that is a thing of the past, however. The digging—no longer a matter of individual enterprise—is done by machinery, and overproduction is controlled by a consolidation of interests.

At the outbreak of hostilities, the Kimberley mines were furnishing

ninety per cent. of the world's output of diamonds. The authoritative writer of a standard work upon this subject estimates that, thus far, nine and a half tons, or forty million carats, have been extracted from the mines at Kimberley—the value of this product, in the rough, being three hundred million dollars, and in the finished state, twice that amount.

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