

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TAAL.

Cape Dutch, or the Taal, as it is now usually designated, is a simplified form of the Netherlands, or Hollander language.

The settlement of the Dutch at the Cape towards the latter part of the seventeenth century, naturally led to the superior language of the civilised European superseding the native dialects. Not, however, in its pure original form; for the language of the Hollander was far too difficult for the Hottentot to master. It was, therefore, simplified in such a manner, as to speedily become a medium of conversation between master and servant, and was generally accepted as a means of intercourse. From this evolved the language, if it can be so called, that is generally spoken between Cape Town and Fort Salisbury.

The settlement of the Huguenots in South Africa after their expulsion from France, and the progress these settlers made at the time, would lead one to suppose that many traces of the French language would be found in the Taal. Such, however, is not the case, and although various causes have been assigned for this, it is asserted by the best

authorities that the French settlers, obeying an order of the Dutch East India Company, adopted the Dutch language to such effect, that nearly all traces of their own speedily disappeared.

The influence of Luther seems to have followed the Dutch settlers and pervaded their language. The Holy Writ has been the vocabulary of the Afrikander, whenever the limited dialect failed. It is generally acknowledged that none can be more apt in Scriptural quotation than the Afrikander, when occasion arises.

There are, however, two forms of Cape Dutch. The one generally taught in schools, and used in public institutions, is capable of being very expressive, and has a larger scope than generally acknowledged. The other is the common vernacular; the *patois* which is in general use, and which the Anglo-Afrikander must acquire to be understood in all parts of this vast country.

It is used by all South Africans in order to express their wants, feelings, and answers, in the shortest possible way, and though the vocabulary is very limited, it is capable of being very expressive.

English words are rapidly finding their way into the Taal, but where so many nationalities are engaged in business, and where the Kaffir and other

native races have to be controlled by one language, it is safe to assert that the Taal will continue to be the dialect of all South Africans.

An era of great prosperity seems to be dawning for South Africa, and for many years to come the commercial world will follow the Anglo-Afrikander—and who is to tell whether in the course of years, the fusion of races may not produce a South African language?

