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KAFIR SOCIALISM

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KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN OF INDIVIDUALISM

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
STUDY OF THE NATIVE PROBLEM

BY
DUDLEY KIDD

AUTHOR OF
"THE ESSENTIAL KAFIR," "SAVAGE CHILDHOOD," &C.



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PREFACE

RACIAL questions, democratic ideals, and the problems of Socialism are in the air. The world is filling up fast, and aggregates, whether of nations, races or classes, are now being sifted drastically by the process of natural selection. Aristocracies, majorities, and minorities, whether of races or classes, seem to have entered on the acute stage of their probation. No matter where we turn, whether to South Africa with its Boer and Native problems, to America with its Negro and Japanese difficulties, to Russia with its nightmare, to India and Egypt with their agitations for self-government, to the Balkans with its tangle, to the Congo with its struggles and tragedies amid primæval forests, to Australia with its fear of Kanakas and Japanese, to Mohammedans with their aspirations for Pan-Islamism, to Asia in its awakening, or to Europe with its rising tide of Democracy and Socialism, we are face to face with the struggle for existence that is taking place between groups of men that are fighting for very life. In the case of races and classes, just as in the case of individuals, those that are the most efficient in their adaptation to environment, and not those that simply give expression to the loftiest sentiment, will survive and dominate all rivals; while the weak and inefficient will go to the wall.

We shall be occupied in these pages with but a single

race ; though the future of the Kafir, and our duty to him, will take us into several fields of thought. The present volume deals with but one aspect of the Native Problem, namely, the conflict of Western conceptions of Individualism with the ingrained Socialism of the Kafir. This aspect of the problem is isolated for several reasons.

In the first place, no treatment of all the aspects of the Native Problem can hope to be altogether satisfactory unless it takes the form of a symposium in which experts in native thought, economics, politics, education, and missions combine to present the various aspects of this many-sided problem. There seems to be no person who possesses all the qualities necessary for such a work.

In the second place, so far as I know—and I think I have read every book that has been written on the subject—the very existence of the above-mentioned aspect of the problem has not even been recognised by any previous writer.

In the third place, the conflict of European Individualism with Kafir Socialism constitutes the very heart of the problem. No one has written more wisely about the Native Problem than Mr. Colquhoun ; and yet he not only failed to recognise the existence of this conflict of Socialism and Individualism, but has actually stated that the socialistic ideal is a conception that cannot possibly take hold of the Kafir. I shall quote presently the actual words used by Mr. Colquhoun ; and hope to prove that, so far from being alien to native thought, Socialistic ideals affect almost every conception of the Kafirs, giving colour and form even to their ideas about such widely different things as justice and witchcraft.

There is a further and final reason for not attempting a

complete discussion of the Native Problem. It is a most unsuitable time to make such an attempt, because the present Liberal Government, by reserving the affairs of the Kafirs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony for its own special care, and by interfering in the native affairs of Natal, is virtually stifling discussion; for what colonist cares to waste his time in presenting a reasoned statement of his views concerning a thousand details of administration when he has every reason for feeling certain that the Party that meditates interference in the domestic affairs of South Africa will be guided, not by facts and sound sense, but by the uninformed sentiment of "moral experts"?

For the above reasons—and assured that Home interference is the transient whim of a political clique rather than the settled will of the people—I have decided to make this volume simply an introduction to, and not a detailed study of, the Native Problem. The native point of view, which I have sought to explain, is of great importance, though it is not the only point of view. Unless we clearly understand native conceptions and ideals, we shall but reckon without our host.

In South Africa we are all aware that we are building up our commercial, industrial, political and social structure at the foot of a volcano; but like all Pompeians, we have become so accustomed to the manifold dangers of the situation that we do not worry very much about our Vesuvius. Every now and then we feel some very disquieting and ominous rumblings beneath our feet, and occasionally see a flash of fire and a puff of smoke, and feel a few ashes falling on our heads; but the anxiety soon wears off; officials assure us that the natives are quiet again; and

every one goes about his work as though there were no danger brewing. The problem is so many-sided and complicated that most of us are content to postpone all serious consideration of the subject. We talk about the natives in vague terms, for most of us know but little about the inscrutable Kafirs. There are comparatively few people who have any first-hand and intimate knowledge of the *kraal-life* of the natives; and so most of us are content to accept the many floating, commonplace statements that abound in our towns and villages. Opinion takes the place of knowledge, and we are apt to adopt a sort of nonchalant optimism based on our national reputation of muddling through most of our difficulties. The law-abiding nature of the Kafir tends to confirm us in the delusion that the natives are reconciled to a rule which we know to be just and fair.

As the result of this attitude towards the subject, the ground is simply littered with half-truths, and with antiquated though inveterate prejudices. The Kafir that the average white man knows is the semi-civilised barbarian who has suffered from the degenerative influences of civilisation in our centres of industry, on our farms, or in domestic service. The visitor to South Africa picks up some specious and delusive myths about such Kafirs, and if he should write a book, he can scarcely resist the temptation to give the most picturesque of these half-truths a fresh lease of life, a wider currency, and an additional distortion due to his imperfect understanding of a strange and alien race. From the nature of the case, it is impossible even for the globe-trotting Member of Parliament to get to the heart of a racial problem in a visit, the brevity of which

makes it impossible for the out-of-the-way Kafir kraals to be visited. Yet the writer feels bound to spatchcock into his book a chapter dealing with the subject. It is no cause for wonder that Home criticism should so often be wide of the mark, and that the most ludicrous suggestions should from time to time appear in the Press, or should be proposed in the House of Commons.

In addition to these sources of information, we have some valuable Blue Books—studies in the anatomy of the subject—that only few people seem to read until the contents are boiled down into magazine articles. There are also among the annual crop of South African books some volumes in which the writers manage to find space for a short chapter on the Native Problem. Though writers who are experts in economics or sport, or some kindred subject, naturally view the Native Problem through their own special key-hole, the result is interesting and not without value; for it is of great importance to know the bearing of such a side-issue as the Rand Labour-Supply on the Native Problem, even though the writer may assure us that this side-issue is not only the heart but the whole of the problem. The Kafirs say that no elephant ever felt its own trunk to be a burden, and we may therefore safely take some discount off the opinion of the man with but one idea.

But it is not only the mine-owner who is in danger of ignoring the native in his insistence of the importance of some side-issue of the problem: the philanthropist, the person who asks hysterical questions in the House of Commons, and the members of the Aborigines Protection Society are just as much in danger of forgetting the actual Kafir owing to their concentration on their own hobby.

It is fatally easy to set up in the mind some unreal image of an oppressed and voiceless black man, who is too gentle and peaceable, and withal too guileless, to provoke hostilities except under the most provoking oppression of some wicked white men. This mental image affords a splendid occasion for giving expression to those most pleasurable and luxurious of all emotions, indignation and pity. A meeting is held, and there is set up an emotional storm in many a tea-cup; the actual savage is lost sight of, and the "brutality" of the colonist and the humanity of the people at home are apt to become the twin-centres of what the Kafirs call a crab's dance. The question then ceases to be the *native*, and becomes the *white*, problem. Under the influence of prejudice or passion, the native, who is the subject of the contention, is lost sight of; and the real war is waged round such problems as the moral character of the colonist, the nature of the British Constitution, or the abstract idea of Justice, for every one thinks he knows all about these things. The Kafir becomes the ostensible subject of debate in which people exploit their special and peculiar obsessions. The argument becomes practically independent of the actual Kafir of the kraal, and would not be modified much if the aborigines of South Africa were Siamese, Red Indians or even Martians. Every conceivable side-interest, prejudice, and false analogy is discussed by these people, whom Carlyle would call Professors of Things in General, and who entirely ignore the real wishes of the Kafir.

The Native Problem is the problem of the native. This is so obvious when once stated that one would be ashamed to say it unless it were so constantly forgotten. Before we

can understand the bearings of the Native Problem we must study native customs and thought. We shall never get any nearer a solution of the problem by concentrating our attention on the relative values of Home and Colonial sentiment and ethical sense, or on political panaceas for imaginary and non-existent needs, for it is the Kafir, and not our emotion, that is the determining factor in the problem.

I have not dealt with the subject of the religious aspect of Missions, though missionaries have done so much to exploit individualism amongst the Kafirs. There is not space available for the treatment of the subject. I fear to say too little or too much, and feel that any inadequate statement would but raise many undesirable misunderstandings. That aspect of the subject must therefore be reserved for a future volume.

I am not without hope that the picture of the "savage" that I present may do something to undermine the distorted mental image that is ordinarily awakened by that word. Many a race has opprobriously called another race, that it did not understand, barbarian or savage; even though that despised race was in some directions the more advanced of the two. The Kafir, contrary to ordinary belief, has the most extraordinarily well-developed spirit of altruism and *camaraderie*, which is very rarely equalled amongst Western nations. Ethnologists are slowly forcing us to admit that the savage is not so savage as has been supposed.

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