

Ned's Story – A Victorian Melodrama

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Introduction

This story is based on my online research at Sheffield City Library using The British Newspaper Archive. The wording of the story is Victorian being taken directly from 51 newspapers published throughout the UK between September 24, 1859, and January 7, 1860. The story is as accurate as the reports of that time. I have taken the liberty of changing some of the terminology that I consider is no longer acceptable when referring to a person of colour. I have added some events to the narrative to give an historical perspective to the story. I also researched the Handley family on the Pybus family history website.

Our story begins in the 22nd year of the reign of Queen Victoria.

In the Sheffield & Rotherham Independent article 'ALLEGED SLAVEHOLDING, NEAR SHEFFIELD – EXTRAORDINARY STORY.

Stating: "A gentleman, named Mr. Thomas Handley, has been residing in the village of Blackburn for some short period, and has numbered amongst his domestics a Zulu of very dark complexion, and about 20 years of age.

Last Sunday, August 28, 1859, the young African left his masters house, and one of those advertisements common in slaveholding America, but very unusual in free England, has since been put out, announcing that he has "left his home," describing his personal appearance, etc. and intimating that any person giving information of his whereabouts, will be remunerated.

Mr. Handley has also communicated with the Sheffield police requesting that they will inform him in case any information reaches them respecting the Zulu. The strange part of the story, however, remains to be told.

Yesterday, a statement was made to the chief constable that the runaway African is a slave, and that the attempt that is to be made to recover him is, in fact, a piece of "slave hunting" in the very heart of the country in which "slaves cannot breathe".

The statement is that Mr. Handley has for a number of years been residing in some part of Africa not under English dominion, and, like other Europeans there, has had his slaves.

That he has now re-visited England, for the purpose of purchasing cattle and other things, and has ventured upon the bold expedient of bringing one of his slaves with him, under the guise of a servant.

For the accuracy of this information, we are unable to vouch, but there are several circumstances in the case of a rather curious character.

It appears that the alleged slave-owner, who has evidently resided much abroad, is preparing to return to Africa, and it is remarkable that the Zulu should have absconded just at that particular period when, if not found within a few days must be left behind.

It also appears that, though the young Zulu has expressed no dissatisfaction with the treatment of his master, he has yet, since he ran away, evidenced the utmost determination not to return.

He is supposed to be hiding in some woods in the neighbourhood of Grimesthorpe, or in the direction of Wentworth, sustaining on blackberries and such other wild fruits as he can pick up, a mode of living which of itself indicates no small amount of determination not to return.

A few days ago, it seems that he was seized by two men in a wood near Grimesthorpe but offered so energetic a resistance that they were quite unable to detain him, and after being, one or both of them knocked down, were fain to let him go.

Supposing the Zulu to be a slave, he, of course, need not run away to obtain his freedom in this country, as the moment he touches English soil, "that moment he is free," but that is a fact of which he is more likely to be ignorant than informed.

It seems improbable that a slave-holder, especially an Englishman, would have the audacity to bring a slave to this country, and after he has absconded thus boldly endeavour to recover him; but in the absence of any expectation from Mr. Handley, we give the story as it is told."

It should be noted that slavery was abolished in England 25 years earlier on August 1, 1834. However, only slaves below the age of six were freed in the colonies.

Former slaves over the age of six were re-designated as “apprentices”, and their servitude was abolished in two stages.

The first set of apprenticeships came to an end on August 1, 1838. The final “apprenticeships” of slaves scheduled to cease August 1, 1840, just over five months after Queen Victoria married Albert.

How did Thomas Handley, a ‘resident of some part of Africa’, come to be living in the village of Blackburn?

In 1826, seven years after the birth of Queen Victoria, Thomas Handley was born in the hamlet of Blackburn, near the village of Kimberworth two miles from the Parish of Rotherham, in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

In 1839, the year after the Coronation of Queen Victoria, Martha Ann Pybus was born at *Grange House/Craig Mill*, near Stirling, Scotland.

On December 31, 1850, among the 60 passengers aboard the barque *Amazon* from London Martha Ann Pybus aged 11, accompanied by her widowed mother, arrived at Port Natal (renamed Durban) on the east coast of South Africa.

On June 6, 1855, Thomas Handley aged 29 then of Greytown, Natal and Martha Ann Pybus aged 16 were married.

In March 1859 Thomas Handley with wife Martha Ann, two sons Tom and Harry together with ‘Ned’ their Zulu servant, left Durban for Cape Town on the SV *L’Impératrice Eugénie* and then sailed on to England.

We next hear of Thomas Handley is in the article in *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* titled THE LOST AFRICAN.

This article stated: “We mentioned last week that a gentleman, named Handley, at present visiting his friends in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, had advertised for the recovery of a coloured servant who had wandered away from his home, and was supposed to be hiding in some of the neighbouring woods.

This notification caused information to be conveyed to the police that the coloured servant was in fact a slave, and that knowing his master was about to return to Africa, he had absconded in order that he might not be carried back to slavery.

We are glad that it is now in our power entirely to remove this injurious supposition. The explanation of this case is this.

Mr. Handley is an inhabitant of the British colony of Natal, where, of course, slavery is as unlawful as in England itself. Some three years ago, in the contests that took place among the native tribes near the colony, there occurred a great massacre of the Zulus.

Of these unfortunate people a considerable number escaped from their enemies into our territory. The young man whom Mr. Handley has brought to England is one of the Zulu refugees. He had been in the service of a settler for two years, and when Mr. Handley was prepared for his voyage, he engaged the young man, with his master's consent, to come to England as an attendant on his young children on shipboard.

He came with a promise from Mr. Handley that he should be taken back again to the colony. The young Zulu proved very careful and affectionate to the children during the voyage. He has not learned to talk English intelligibly but mixes together the language of his native and his adopted country in such a way that he can hold but little intercourse with anybody.

While in England he has become low and melancholy, impressed with a fear that he should not see Africa again. About a fortnight ago, he wandered away into the woods, and though he has been heard of in various directions, and has been anxiously sort for, he has not been found.

There is too great reason to fear that he may perish of cold and hunger. He was last seen in the woods lying between Killamarsh, Barlborough, and Eckington.

It appears that at one place he ventured out and bought some bread, as he had a few pence in his pocket. At another place he begged bread. But having been abused and beaten by some persons, and had dogs set upon him by others, it is apprehended he has been so much alarmed as to hide himself as closely as possible, so that there is great danger that the privations he endures may terminate his existence.

Mr. Handley has shown great anxiety to rescue him from this miserable fate and will gladly reimburse any person who will supply the young man's wants and treat him kindly till he can be restored to his employer.

The African is perfectly harmless and inoffensive, so that no person need feel any fear for him, and it will be a real act of humanity to the poor creature to allay his alarm and give him food and shelter till he can be properly provided for.

We hope this explanation will not only remove any mistaken idea which may have been derived from our last paragraph, but that it will induce persons to interest themselves in saving the poor man from perishing by cold and hunger.”

A further development of the story was reported, in The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent in an article with the title Extraordinary Case of Sheep Slaughtering.

This article stated: “On Wednesday evening, as Mr. George Hellewell, farmer of Hackenthorpe, was proceeding on his way to Beighton, a little after seven o’clock, in passing a field of Mr. John Jubb’s, his dog was startled by a noise, and on Mr. Hellewell looking over the gate to ascertain the cause, he observed a man kneeling down with a sheep in his grasp.

Mr. Hellewell called out to him, and he replied by muttering something perfectly unintelligible. He approached the place where Mr. Hellewell stood, and was found to be a coloured man, without shoes, and armed with a large knife.

Mr. Hellewell tried by motions to persuade the man to go with him. In this endeavour, however, he was unsuccessful, the offender returning to his booty; and Mr. Hellewell deemed it prudent to pursue his cause, not considering it safe to encounter so wild looking a character armed with a knife.

Mr. Hellewell immediately went to Drake House, and informed Mr. Jubb of the circumstances. On repairing to the field in question, it was discovered that one out of the flock of 20 lambs, which were reported safe at six o’clock the same evening, was missing.

A search was then made for the thief, but without success. The police were made acquainted with the facts, and on Thursday morning before daybreak, officers and some hundreds of people from the village surrounded and scoured an adjoining wood, called Hanging Lea.

The wood covers 60 acres and was thoroughly searched. A fire was found to have been made in the woods during the night, the embers of which were still hot, and the ground was strewn with fragments of the lamb. The head and skin, with the bones of the forequarters, were found, but the rest of the carcass was missing.

The skins of roasted potatoes lay about. Sticks had been stuck in the ground on each side of the fire, on which a cross stick had been rested, and appears to have been used in roasting some portion of the flesh. There was also a place among the grass close by on which a person had been lying.

The depredator is believed to have been the unfortunate runaway African, respecting whom several notices have appeared in our column. A correspondent informs us that the matter has attracted the attention of the Anti-slavery Society, and a telegram has been received requesting the police to try to take him, and when taken appraise the Secretary of the fact.

It is very desirable that the matter should be taken up with the authorities. As it is not surprising that while the poor fellow rambles at large he should help himself to means of satisfying his hunger, and he may even be guilty of some more dangerous crime.”

The Anti-Slavery Society still believed that the lost African was a slave as reported in the following article in the Herts Guardian, the East Suffolk Mercury and The Wells Journal of Saturday, October 15, 1859.

Mr. Chamerovzow, Secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society, calls the attention of the public to a case of what he deems “salve-hunting in England.” The alleged slave-hunter issued the following advertisement:

“Left his home, a Zulu boy, named Ned, about twenty years of age, almost black, and black woolly hair, wore (when he left home), dark trousers, blue checked smock cap, and had with him a dark grey blanket. Had no shoes on. Is about five feet eight inches in height and stoutly built.

Was seen on Monday evening near Grimesthorpe, going towards Sheffield. Any person giving such information at the police office, Sheffield, as may lead to his recovery, will be remunerated for his troubles. – Thomas Handley, Blackburn, Sheffield, Friday, Sept. 2, 1859.”

A Sheffield correspondent of Mr. Chamerovzow writes: “I have been unable to ascertain whether the Zulu has been caught, although I have made every inquiry. I believe he has, as the advertisement ceased to appear six days ago. About the same period Handley made two or three night journeys to London, returning very early on each succeeding day.

My impression is that he has got the man stowed away somewhere in London. This is confirmed by the fact, to which I beg to direct your attention, that Handley's wife and two children left here this morning to sail from London to somewhere in Africa, Natal, immediately and Handley stated last night that when he sent his wife off, he would return to prosecute his suite against me. No doubt the Zulu will be found with them. He never returned here if he had been captured. In advertisement the Sheffield Police-office is mentioned. This is wholly without authority. The chief constable gave no jurisdiction to use their name, he so told me when I called."

Thursday, November 24, 1859

English naturalist Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*,

Monday, November 28, 1859

The Sheffield Daily Telegraph – The Runaway Negro, "Ned"

The proceedings of a Zulu lad in this neighbourhood have recently attracted a good deal of attention.

The surmise that he was in the neighbourhood of Sheffield proved correct. He was seen wandering about the in the locality, and was several times given chase to, but for weeks he eluded all attempts to secure him, and in the meantime Mr. Handley left England on his return to Natal.

Ned was ultimately secured in the outskirts of Sheffield, having a day or two previously killed a sheep belonging to a neighbouring farmer, and provided for himself a secret retreat in an adjoining wood.

Having been thus disturbed in his Robinson Crusoe style of life, Ned was taken before the Derbyshire magistrate at Eckington, on a charge of sheep-slaughtering. Under the circumstances the case was not pressed against him.

A good deal of sympathy was excited on behalf of the lad, more especially as a report gained ground that he had left Mr. Handley through fear of being given up to slavery on his return home. Under such circumstances a sum of money was subscribed on his behalf.

After being remanded for a few days T. Need, Esq., one of the justices on the Eckington bench, paid the expense of Ned's removal to London in charge of Superintendent Chawner, of Eckington, where he was placed under the care of British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and he was then placed in the

strangers' home in London, and ultimately to be shipped off to his own country his master having left the country and returned to the Cape.

Ned remained in the strangers' home in London a week or two, and the next intelligence we have of him is contained in the following letter, addressed to T. Need, Esq., J.P., Killamarsh, near Eckington:-

"27, New Broad-street, London, 21st Nov., 1859.

"Sir, I am obliged by your note, and am sure that the committee will appreciate your kindness in relieving them of the expense attended upon the capture of 'Ned'.

I regret to inform you that notwithstanding all the precautions that were taken consistently with not placing him under bodily restraint to keep him at the 'home,' he has, after two disappearances, again made off; and in spite of the activity of inquirers of the police and others, has not for days now been heard of.

He is quite wild, and the best thing that could be done with him would be to get him conveyed to Natal, and placed under the care of Mr. Whepstone, the protector of the aborigines.

"I am, sir, yours very respectfully,

"L.A. Chamerovzow"

Ned is next accounted for in the following paragraph, which appeared in Friday's *Telegraph*: -

Capture of a Wild Zulu in Highgate Woods – At the Highgate police court on Wednesday the following case was brought before the sitting magistrate.

There is every reason to believe that the Zulu is the identical 'Ned' who has recently figured in this neighbourhood, and who the other day made his escape from the Strangers' Home in London.

As reported in Friday's *Telegraph*:- A Zulu, who was in a very wild state, and who could not speak one word of English, was charged before the sitting magistrates, Mr. Falkener and Mr. Bodkin, on Wednesday week, under the following circumstances:-

On Sunday night information was received at the Highgate police-station that a black man was in Highgate Woods, where he had made a cave, and was roasting a sheep.

Sergeants Aylett, 15 S, Daniels, 38 S, and Martin, 20 S, with a large body of constables, searched the woods, when they found the greater part of a sheep,

and some of it had been roasted. Upon further search a scythe was found, with which he had slaughtered the sheep, in a field adjoining.

By daylight the inhabitants of Highgate had got the information, and a large number of people went into the wood. After a long time the man was seen by several of the constables, when he immediately darted into a thick part of the wood, but so nimble were his movements, that he was more like a wild monkey than a man, and it was difficult to get him.

About ten the following morning the man was secured by police-constables Bishop, 384 S and Ridley, 124 S and after a hard struggle he was taken to the station. In addition to having stolen the sheep, the prisoner had also taken a quantity of articles of clothing. The prisoner, while before the magistrate, behaved in a very wild manner, and was remanded for further inquiries. The court was crowded to excess.”

The London Daily Telegraph on Friday called attention to the case in a leading article; in Saturday's issue of the same journal, we find the following interesting letter from Mr. Bergtheil, member of the Council of Natal. From this narrative it will be seen that there is no ground for the slavery theory. Ned's excuse for leaving his master was a dread of again going on board ship, the voyage here having been exceedingly distasteful to him.

To the editor of "The Daily Telegraph."

Sir, In conformity with the suggestion contained in a leading article in the columns of yesterday, the magisterial authorities instructed a sergeant of police to wait upon me this morning, with a view of ascertaining any particulars with which I might be acquainted relative to the unfortunate Zulu recently discovered in so primitive a condition near Highgate.

As the most practical method of investigation, I decided upon accompanying the officer to the house of detention in Clerkenwell, where the Zulu is lodged. Upon entering his room, and conversing with him for a short time, I found him to be a Zulu, who escaped from a sanguinary massacre that took place in 1856, between the two sons of Panda.

It might be worthwhile stating, for the information of those not well acquainted with the country, that the Zulu territory is separated from the English colony of Natal by the river Tugalla.

Since Natal has become an English dependency these people, from time to time, flee their native districts to save their lives, and avail themselves of the protection afforded by the English flag.

This protection is always granted in the most liberal spirit, enabling them to squat on plots of ground specially reserved for their benefit; and whenever they are found to be without father and mother, or too young to take care of themselves, they are apprenticed by the government, under certain protective and restrictive laws, to such Europeans as it is expected will take care of them.

One of the fugitives, named Net, the Zulu in question, was apprenticed to Mr. Handley, a highly respectable storekeeper of Greytown, district of Umviti, Natal, about the above-mentioned time, and has, I believe, ever since been residing with him, and finally agreed to accompany him and his family to England, and take charge of his children.

I remember seeing Net the day before he embarked at the seaport town of Durban, highly pleased with the prospect of seeing Europe and all the much talked of wonders of the old world; he told me this morning that he suffered fearfully from sea-sickness, and so vivid was the impression made upon his mind by the malady that he declared he would for no consideration ever again venture on board a ship.

It seems that when he ascertained from Mr. Handley that he was about returning to Natal, his fear of the voyage was so great that he abandoned his service without a single penny in his possession, without declaring his intention of leaving, or affording any trace of his whereabouts.

According to the account which he gave me I am led to suppose that he started from Mr. Handley's residence, at Blackburn, and wandered about in various parts of the country, begging for food wherever he had the opportunity; at last – as he describes – the people seemed to fear and run away from him, and he was compelled, by sheer hunger, to appropriate to himself a sheep, which he killed and roasted by a fire he had made in the open air, and for which he was subsequently taken into custody and committed for trial, Mr. Handley, in the meantime departed for Natal: and the Society for the Protection of Slaves interfered for the rescue of the Zulu, and for his conveyance from Sheffield to London, where he was placed in a house of refuge.

He is aware that some three pounds and eleven shillings were collected for him either in Eckington or here – I could not exactly understand which – and he says

that Mr. Handley owes him eleven pounds for wages; however, as he left his master without him being aware of it, he naturally received no money from him, and according to his own account, the smaller sum was taken from him by the Umlungas, or white people, who must have been either the police or the officials of the Society for the Protection of Slaves.

Once more, however, Net managed to escape – this time from the house of refuge – and he was ultimately secured at Highgate after as your readers are aware, occasioning much fright to the inhabitants, and indulging in the same predatory crime for which he was arraigned in Sheffield.

When I first entered his cell this morning, although he appeared to recognise me, he seemed terrified, and pretended not to understand the questions I addressed to him; but after recalling to his mind where I had originally seen him, telling him that I knew his master, explaining to him who I was, also that I knew Mr. Stephenson, secretary to native affairs in Natal, and that if he required assistance I would properly represent his case, a broad grin stole over his countenance, and he freely answered all my the quires I subsequently put to him.

He told me that he did not complain of the treatment he had received from his former master, and that he had run away from the house of refuge, not because he had not enough to eat and drink, but because all the people who came to see him talked about his being put on board ship, and sent back across the sea to Natal.

I assured him that I would not allow him to go against his will if he behaved honestly and was willing to work; and has soon as I made this known to him, he showed as much emotion as I have ever seen evidenced by any of these natives, exclaiming, “If only the white people would take me and give me work, I do not care what wages I get!” I asked him if he would come and work for me, and he replied, with a huge grin, in the affirmative, providing that I would not take him on board a ship.

The position of Net at this present moment is decidedly anomalous, and one which he is utterly at a loss to understand. I give you here, as near a possible, what I think to be the Zulu’s views and sentiments on the quandary in which circumstances and the police have placed him.

He determined at all risks never to go to sea again; he runs away from his master and steals a sheep. He is as well aware as any European that he as herein

committed two wrongs – firstly by taking French leave; and secondly by seizing what he knows was not his own.

The reason he gives for following the latter course is that he was desperately hungry, and that if he had stolen meat ready killed it would have brought him into communication with white men.

When his crime is discovered he is horrified at finding himself chased by a number of “umlungas” in uniform, who he supposed to be soldiers, but who of course was members of our efficient civil force; and after violent hands have been laid upon him, and he is in momentary expectation of receiving a severe punishment, he is placed in what he describes as exceedingly comfortable quarters, is well fed, and at last conveyed to a railway carriage, free of expense to London.

Arrived here he is further petted, and money is collected for him but, to his surprise, he finds that it does not come into his possession, and that everybody, as at previous times, talks about him going – and seems generally in a conspiracy to send him – again across the sea.

What, however, astonishes him especially, that no further word is mentioned concerning his crime. Meanwhile he complains, despite the hospitable manner in which he is treated, that no white man will take him into his house, although he has, time after time, said that he will do any kind of work at nominal wages; finally, he begins to believe that he will be forcibly placed on board ship, and carried off to sea.

Therefore, Ned once more takes to his heels as soon as he gets the opportunity, preferring the wilds of Highgate stead to the best luxuries to be obtained on board ship.

I have promised to appear before the magistrate on Monday morning next, when the Zulu is to be brought up a second time, it is my opinion that he ought to receive some nominal punishment for his crime, such as gentle exercise on the treadmill for a few days so that he may understand he must not break the law with impunity, and that crime is noticed here the same as in his own country – which in fact any amount of imprisonment will fail to impress upon his mind seeing that he told me he considered his cell a pattern of comfort, and his board the most liberal thing possible.

This done, my long experience of the Zulu character warrants me in stating that he will make an admirable and faithful servant, perfectly honest in every particular and I have no hesitation in assuring anybody who will aid him that he is wholly inoffensive and trustworthy.

Had I an establishment in this country I would immediately take him into my service, either in my house or wherever I could find occupation for a strong, vigorous, and well-meaning man.

I think it would be of great service if, through your column it could be ascertained where the Zulus are who were exhibited here some six years ago. Could one of them be taken to Net, he would in short time make his entire position known to him and restore the confidence in Europeans which he seems entirely to have lost.

Apologising for intruding so far upon your space, but believing this subject to be one of public interest, I have the honour to be, yours obediently,
JOHN BERGTHELL- Member of the Legislative Council of Natal – London, Nov. 25, 1859.

Friday, December 2, 1859

The Central Criminal Court case was held against 'Ned' for sheep stealing.

Saturday, December 3, 1859

The Sheffield Daily Telegraph – The Zulu "Ned"

The following correspondence appeared in the *London Daily Telegraph* of yesterday: -

"To the editor. – Sir, – When I suggested to the magistrate, before the Highgate petty sessions, Nov 28, summarily to convict the Zulu, I gave as an additional reason that I had obtained a situation for him in a family that had resided for a length of time at Natal, and are acquainted with the language and customs of this man; and who, most likely, would be unwilling to receive him after his being in Newgate for a length of time.

To give additional weight to my argument I handed to the magistrate several letters addressed to me on the subject, one of which I now enclose. I think the opinion expressed by the Rev. Archdeacon Mackenzie (the gentleman just appointed bishop to take charge of the mission of Central Africa) ought to have some weight with the magistrate.

Sir, I am simply taking up the case of this Zulu because he is a man without means, without a friend, unable to speak our language, and – worst of all – unaccustomed to our habits.

He is, therefore, perfectly helpless, and I do not intend to desert him at this stage, but will, assisted by some friends, make a representation to the sitting judge in his favour – a course also recommended by one of the magistrates. Trusting to your powerful aid in this subject, I am, sir, yours, etc,
Bergtheil, Member of the Legislative Council of Natal – London, November 30.

“Dear Bergtheil, – I have just read your letter in to-day’s *Daily Telegraph*. I saw “Ned” on Thursday, and so far as my knowledge goes, can quite corroborate the account you have given as obtained from his own lips.

Like you, I should have been most glad to have taken him into my own service, and did consider whether I could do so; but, like you, having no establishment in this country, and actually running from place to place nearly every day, I could not take care of him.

I quite agree with you as to the propriety of him being punished in a way he will feel to be a punishment for his thefts. What you propose would, I have no doubt, be the best thing for him.

I shall write to one person, who might possibly be willing to engage him as a servant, the father of Alick Maclean, of Natal, Hugh Maclean, Esq., 14 Upper Westbourne Terrace, Hyde Park. I should be glad to hear from you if anything is done for him which may not appear in public reports. I should have been glad to have come to the police-court on Monday, if I could have been in town.

“Are you likely to be long in England? You know that I am now preparing to go to the centre of Africa. I do not expect to get away till the middle or end of 1860. – Yours, etc,”

F. MACKENZIE – Nov. 26.

Sunday, December 4, 1859
Reynolds’s Newspaper – ANTICS OF A WILD ZULU

Monday being appointed at Highgate sessions for the examination of the Zulu who was discovered in almost a wild state of nature in a wood in the

neighbourhood of Highgate, in the act of roasting a sheep that he had stolen, the court was greatly crowded by persons anxious to hear the evidence, and a large number of persons were unable to obtain admission.

The prisoner was brought into court from the House of Detention, under the charge of Mr. Inspector Willoughby, and placed at the bar, charged under the name of "Ned," a Zulu, for having, in the parish of Hornsey, in the county of Middlesex, killed a sheep, the property of George Fletcher, and for feloniously stealing and taking away the carcass thereof, the said carcass being of the value of £2 10s. The Hon. J. Bergtheil, member of the Legislative Council of Natal, attended the court as interpreter.

The first witness called was Mr. William Simmons, of Wood-lane, Highgate, who said; I am a farmer, and on the night of the 20th inst., at eleven o'clock, I was passing through Church-yard, Bottom-wood. I saw a light and went towards it. I found that there was a large fire burning. I there saw the prisoner, or someone very much like him, lying on the ground with his feet towards the fire. There was something white lying near him.

When he saw me, he immediately rose up, and held up something like a stick, and, as it appeared to me, in a threatening manner. I said "Halloa," and he then went away.

I then stopped at the place a little time. I then went away and obtained the assistance of the police, and in a short time returned with William Martin, 316 S, and some other police-constables, to the place where I had seen the prisoner.

We examined the place, and found a woman's gown, a scythe, and a leg and a shoulder of mutton roasted.

There were also some other pieces of mutton cooked. The scythe and gown produced are my property. The prisoner did not strike me, but he was near enough to have done so had he chosen.

Alfred Aylett, police-sergeant, No. 15 S, said; on the morning of the 21st instant, at about six o'clock, I went to the place pointed out by the last witness, in Churchyard, Bottom-wood.

I went in company with other police-constables. I went in consequence of information I had received. I called in a butcher, who examined the skin of the sheep, who found marks on the flesh corresponding with those on the skin, and

he was quite sure that the carcase belonged to the skin, and that the sheep had been recently slaughtered.

He found at some distance from the carcase a portion of the offal, and also the head.

I compared the head with the neck, and I found that it exactly fitted. I also compared it with the cut as it would be given by the scythe, and it also corresponded with that. The blade of the scythe was marked with blood. (The scythe was produced, and there were marks of blood thereon.)

John Bishop, police-constable 384 A, said, from information he received he went to the wood, for the purpose of taking the prisoner into custody.

The prisoner jumped up and ran away, trying to make his escape. After a long chase, in which the prisoner leaped about with the upmost agility, he was at length captured and taken to the stationhouse.

He went tolerably quiet, and really used no more resistance than a person would do under ordinary circumstances to avoid being taken to the stationhouse.

Sergeant Aylett here said he found four striped or checked shirts, some of which were marked with fat, and others with blood.

The Hon. J. Bergtheil suggested to the court that if it should be the opinion that the case was made out, the prisoner should be summarily convicted rather than be sent to prison to be associated with criminals, which might tend to bad effects rather than otherwise.

Mr. Warner, the chairman, on the part of his colleagues said it was their opinion that this was a case which ought to be sent for trial, and they accordingly committed the prisoner to Newgate, to which place, in the cause of the afternoon, he was removed in a cab.

The following document was handed to the magistrates in reference to this case:

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“2, New Broad-street, E.C., Nov. 23, 1859.

“Mr. Sergeant Aylett, – Sir, – I do not think it will be necessary for me to attend at the police court on Monday, in the case of the Zulu “Ned.”

I have taken a great deal of trouble about him, and still feel interested in his fate; and could he be kept in custody, should, doubtless, find an opportunity of

sending him back to Natal, and placing him under the care of Mr. Shepstone, the protector of aborigines there, as I am sure he will never do any good in this country, owing to his wild habits and utter impatience of personal restraint.

I can only earnestly appeal on his behalf to the sitting magistrate before whom he will be examined, to deal summarily with the case, and as leniently as the law permits and as the circumstances of the case will allow.

A short imprisonment, for the sake of keeping him safe until means can be found to send him to Natal, would satisfy justice, and be in accordance with humanity. It should be known that he is already at large on remand, on a similar charge.

“He is a Zulu, who some four years ago escaped the wholesale massacre of his tribe, many thousands of whom, in the course of a civil war with the sons of the Zulu King Panda, were driven into the British settlement of Natal.

‘Ned’ took service in the family of a highly respectable merchant at Pietermaritzburg, the capital of the colony of Natal, and remained with him some time.

He then appears to have gone into that of Mr. Handley, who, I am informed, is a respectable trader in Natal, and who, some months ago, brought him to England as a servant in charge of his two children, and took up his residence at Blackburn near Sheffield.

‘Ned’ ran away into the woods on hearing Mr. Handley was about to return to Natal, and from the end of August last to the end of October lived a wild life. At length he killed a lamb, and, after some trouble was apprehended.

At my suggestion, he was very kindly sent to London in charge of Mr. Superintendent Chawner, of Eckington, and I placed him under the kind care of Colonel Hughes, at the Strangers’ Home, in the West India Dock-road.

He ran away twice from there but returned. The third time was about a week ago. What he has been doing we shall probably learn.

I should inform you that a gentleman of the name of Brady, a surveyor, residing at Rotherham, near Sheffield, being under the impression that ‘Ned’ was a slave, wrote to me about him, and I took the necessary steps to prevent Mr. Handley from taking him away against his will.

‘Ned,’ however, claims 11/- from Mr. Handley as wages, which is sufficient evidence of his having been a servant, not to mention that the laws of the colony would render it most dangerous for an English subject to hold a slave. I do know what can be done with him better than to send him back to Natal.

He is quite uncivilized; and though he says he wants to stay in this country and work, it is clear to me that he would never live under the restraints of civilised life but would take the first opportunity of again making for the woods and resuming in England the life of a Zulu.

Mr. Need, the magistrate who committed him to my care under the circumstances I have mentioned, concurs in my views as to what is best to be done with him.

I received £3 11s 1d from Superintendent Chawner, out of which there will be some deductions for his expenses at the Home. This sum was collected for ‘Ned’ at the police-court, I believe.

“I shall be glad to furnish you with any further information in my power, and if it is thought that this letter read before the magistrate would have any effect in mitigation of punishment, you are at liberty to make that use of it. – I am, sir, yours, etc.

“L. A. Chamerovzow.”

Monday, December 5, 1859

The Sheffield Daily Telegraph – THE ZULU (From the London Daily Telegraph)

We are glad to find that the grand Jury, in the case of the Zulu who was recently committed to Newgate on a charge of sheep stealing, yesterday ignored the bill, and that consequently he was discharged from custody.

We felt, at the time of the examination, that the magistrates at Highgate took a wrong view of the case in committing him for trial, a course for which there was no sufficient ground.

We are still more gratified to perceive that the sheriffs have taken up the case of the poor fellow, with a view to his being in some way provided for or sent back to his own country – a step which, in his destitute and unenlightened condition, is absolutely necessary as regards both himself and others.

The following letter bears additional testimony to that already published to the simple, harmless qualities of this untutored child of nature: -

Rotherham, Nov. 1859 – TO THE EDITOR OF “THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.”

Sir,- Thinking it may be of some benefit to the poor fellow “Ned” to state that I know of him, I beg to say that, when he arrived at the little village of Blackburn with his master and family, I, with my husband and sister, were occupying for a week or two the best rooms of the inn at which they stayed.

We received them in lieu of the mistress, who had gone to market. Ned’s first performance, after assisting with the luggage, was to clean his master’s boots, at teatime a large basin of tea was placed at the end of the kitchen dresser for him, into which he put his mouth and drank from it like a horse.

In the evening, he prepared the baths and carried them into the bedroom, where he undressed and washed the children – one a boy about two years old, and the other a baby of about eleven months, just weaned; he then hushed them to sleep, put them to bed, and then stayed with them till they were quite settled.

During the following days he nursed the children constantly, displaying tenderness and care of a mother towards them – exceedingly patient with the little ones in his first scrambling up the staircase, surrounding him with his arms to prevent accident, and lifting him to the bottom time after time to let him scramble up again as long as he would.

I have often taken him from Ned for a little while to afford a change to both, and he would watch to take the child from me immediately I became weary. I have met him in the passages leading to the bedrooms, passing with noiseless steps, when I’ve had no notion of anyone being there, with the baby nestled in his arms, hushing it to sleep as gently as possible.

When he first began to be unsettled he had had some high words with his mistress, and he told the mistress of the house, whilst tears ran down his face, “Mr. Handley, had a bad heart; that his first master gave him 6s. per month, and Mr. Handley was to give him 10s. to come to England to nurse Tom and Harry, but he had not given him anything.”

Very he went to change some portions of his dress, rejecting his white blanket, and throwing his grey one round him, he darted out of the house and escaped into the woods.

He wondered about in this neighbourhood many weeks, molesting no one, till the severe frosts came, when he slaughtered the lamb.

His master told me that the prominent features of his character were honesty and inoffensiveness.

Hoping you will give publicity to as much of this as you may think will be to the purpose. I am, sir, yours, etc.

M.E.B.

Thursday, December 8, 1859

The Falkirk Herald – The Runaway Negro from Yorkshire

The proceedings of a young Zulu, known by the name of “Ned,” have recently attracted a good deal of attention in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, and after his capture near that place and removal to London, having again made his escape and taken to the woods, the interest in the vicinity of the metropolis has been equally exciting.

He first came to this country three or four weeks ago, with a Mr. Handley, who resided in Blackburn, near Sheffield, he having brought him as a servant from Natal. On preparing to return to the colony,

Ned decamped, and after living in the woods, in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, for a period of four or five weeks, he was at last captured and taken before the Eckington magistrates on a charge of sheep-slaughtering.

Under the circumstances the case was not pressed against him, and public sympathy being excited on his behalf, a subscription was got up for him, and T. Need, Esq., one of the justices on the Eckington bench, paid the expense of Ned’s removal to London, where he was placed under the care of British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, his master having left the country and returned to the Cape.

Notwithstanding that the society adopted every precaution to keep him at home until he would settle down to a civilised life, he, after one or two disappearances, again made off, and, about a week afterwards, was captured in Highgate woods, but not before he again had slaughtered a sheep.

He was taken before the sitting Magistrates, and the charge gone into against him; but not being able to speak the English language, he was remanded until farther inquiries could be made about him.

The newspaper report of his capture at Highgate attracted the attention of Mr. Bergthiel, member of the Council of Natal, and that gentleman called at the Clerkenwell House of Detention, and entered into conversation with the poor fellow.

He at once recognised him as “Ned,” a Zulu, whom he had seen in Natal, living with Mr. Handley, at Greytown, and whom he also remembered embarking with that gentleman for England at the seaport town of Durban.

During the conversation, “Ned” told him the reason why he ran away from his master, viz., that in consequence of the voyage having made him sea-sick he did not like to venture to return home again, and so he had taken to the woods.

He made allusion to his capture near Sheffield and stated he had killed sheep because he was compelled by sheer hunger, and he also expressed surprise that he had not been punished for it, as in his own country.

His great dread was of having to be sent over the sea again and he told Mr. Bergthiel that he would become the servant to any man if he would not send him on a ship again. He is still in custody, and now that he had been found by a friend who can converse with him, it is to be hoped that he will settle down in the country to which he has been so unpleasantly transported.

The sad end to this story appeared on Tuesday, January 3, 1860
In The Morning Advertiser – Fatal Accident to the Zulu

It will be remembered that a few weeks ago a man of colour was appended in a wood near Highgate, who was charged before the magistrate at the Highgate Petty Sessions with stealing and slaughtering a sheep, and who was convicted of the charge.

He was sent for trial to the Central Criminal Court, where, on the presentation of the bill before the grand jury it was ignored, when he was taken under the protection of a gentleman highly connected with Natal.

He had not been long when he left the roof of his protector. For a few days nothing was heard of him, and as he had on former occasions after leaving the house returned, it was expected that he would do so.

He, however, did not return, but in a few days after a sergeant of police of the S division, sent a cap to the residence of his patron, upon which being seen by the housekeeper, she said it was “Ned’s” cap.

The consequence was, that upon an inquiry being made by her where the cap was found on the buffer of a luggage train at Rugby station.

It further appeared that an inquest had been taken by Mr. Brent, deputy to Mr. Wakley, upon the remains of a man of colour, which were found on the railway, near Harrow.

The particulars at the inquiry showed that on the line the remains of a man of colour were found, which were placed in a wheelbarrow (without the head, which had not been found).

A verdict was returned of “Found dead.” The deceased, who was a fine-looking young man, it is said, is the brother of a prince, who in his native country is fighting against an army raised by the slave merchants for the subjugation of his countrymen to sell them as slaves.

The End

Abraham Lincoln’s election as President in November 1860 signalled the formation of the Confederate States of America. Shortly after in 1861 the American Civil War began. The 13th amendment to the constitution of the USA abolishing slavery was passed by the Senate in April 1864 and by the House of Representatives in January 1865 three months before the end of the American Civil War.