NATIVE AFFAIRS IN SOUTH AFRICA¹

WE have received the Cape Native Affairs Blue Book for 1907, which is at once more comprehensive and more condensed than its predecessors. Instead of being confined to those Districts in which there is a large native population resident, *i.e.*, the Transkeian Territories, British Bechuanaland, and part of the Eastern Province of Cape Colony, with the town locations of Kimberley, Ndabeni, and Port Elizabeth—it embraces the whole colony; and the reports of the various magistrates and inspectors are no longer printed in full, but summarised under the several headings dealt with. Consequently, in spite of its wider scope, the Blue Book consists of but 55 pages, as against 89 last year.

The subjects of the Reports are "Public Health," "Food Supply," "Pasturage and Stock," "Labour Supply," "Collection of Taxes," "Crime," "Liquor Laws," and "General," to which, in the Transkeian Territories, are added "Appeal Courts" and "Individual Tenure of Land," and, in the Cape Colony proper, "The Location Act."

It is disappointing (as we have remarked on a previous occasion) to find no clear statement as to the numbers of the native population. The figures are given for the Transkeian Territories, viz., Bantu 843,917, and other races 9,147, with 17,959 Europeans; but for Bechuanaland and the remainder of Cape Colony we only have the number of natives living on private locations, and of those who obtained passes to proceed to various centres in search of work between January 1st and December 31st, 1907. Of these it appears

¹ (1) Cape of Good Hope. Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1907. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of H.E. the Governor. [G24-1908].

(2) Southern Rhodesia. Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, Matabeleland, for the year ended 31st December, 1907. Presented to the Legislative Council, 1908. [A8-1908].

that there were 38,598 for Cape Colony, and 14,887 for Bechuanaland. The number of passes issued for the Transkeian Territory during the same period is 63,149, or about one in fourteen of the native population.

The tables for Cape Colony and Bechuanaland show that of centres within the Colony itself, Kimberley absorbs the largest number. 4,106 Cape natives are found to have taken out passes for the Kimberley mines, and 12,390 natives of Bechuanaland; 6,000 of the latter coming from the one district of Taungs. From the Transkeian Territories 5,653 went to Kimberley. It is not specified how many of these were working on the mines, but as only 379 Cape natives and no Bechuanas took out passes for "other employ," it is safe to assume that a similar state of things obtained in the Transkei. By far the greatest number of Transkei natives seeking work away from home (33,416) went to the Transvaal; the O.R. Colony took 5,331, and Natal 2,611. From Cape Colony 1,058 went to the mines in Natal, chiefly from Sterkspruit in the Queenstown Division, while only 5 individuals sought other employment in that colony. No Bechuanas went to Natal in any capacity, while 220 took out passes for the Orange River Colony, and 1,682 for the Transvaal, of whom by far the greater number (1,595) went to the Witwatersrand mines, and of these 1,537 came from the Mafeking district. The number of Cape natives employed there during the same period was 11,909.

It would seem, however, as if these figures were by no means exhaustive, as the Inspector of Native Locations, Indwe (Wodehouse), says: "In addition to the number of natives to whom passes were issued here when they were leaving in search of work, 17,968 natives entrained from Indwe, travelling with through passes to their destination." The same authority refers in this connection to the Labour Agent Act No. 9 of 1899, and expresses his opinion that the Act does not make sufficient provision for dealing with the runners employed by the Labour Agents. "Unless a good class of runner is employed, the natives recruited for labour purposes are entirely in the hands of their unscrupulous brothers, who, to gain their commission, are not at all par-

ticular as to the methods they adopt in recruiting, with the result that continual complaints ensue. . . . At present, to bring an actual charge against the doubtful runner is a matter of great difficulty. Of course, every care is taken by the officials concerned to discriminate when issuing these permits, but I fear from my experience of them that the absence of actual crime is no guarantee of good character. It is recognised amongst Labour Agents that the greater scamp a runner is, the better runner he makes, from the very fact of his smartness and cunning."

This admission seems to point to something very unsatisfactory in the method of labour recruiting. This, whether carried on by Government or by private persons, is always open to grave abuses. The only satisfactory system is the voluntary engagement of workers in the open market; where this is impracticable, the right way of organising the labour supply has yet to be evolved.

We may add to this the remarks made by the Civil Commissioner of Victoria East: "During the last four months the District has been flooded with Labour Agents and their runners. Greater care should be exercised in granting licences to runners. . . . It is the runner who so often leads the natives astray as to the wages and privileges he will receive at the mines, and in my opinion it would be better for all concerned were the contracts to be signed in the district where the native is domiciled. On several occasions here, when the Inspector of Natives has explained to the natives engaged the conditions of the contract, they have declined to go, as the conditions stated to them by the runners were very different to those explained to them by the Inspector."

The Inspector of Native Locations, Sterkspruit (District of Herschel), says:—

"The Herschel raw native is purely a peasant, and will only work on mines, &c., when compelled by necessity or his desire to earn money quickly. These people have one of the finest districts in the Colony, where they live and are taken care of practically free of charge, and it is not to be expected that they will leave their happy homesteads where they have food, frolic, and freedom for a life of drudgery,

dull routine, and duty, unless compelled to do so. The educated native goes out to work in towns, &c., and earns good money, which he spends almost faster than he earns it. This District should be made more self-supporting than it is, and until this is brought about we cannot hope for any regular or large supply of labour to farmers or mines from Herschel."

The utterance of this extremely alliterative official irresistibly suggests a few criticisms. What is meant by "being taken care of practically free of charge"? Does the writer mean to convey that the population is wholly or partly supported by Government? This, as a matter of fact, is nowhere the case. Their being "purely peasants" would surely seem to imply that they can support themselves by the produce of their gardens and herds, and have no need to seek work away from home. But the best hope for the future of the natives and (except on a very short-sighted and partial view) of the Colony as a whole is that they should, in the main, be a peasant population. It cannot be for the ultimate good of the country that the greater number of its people should be crowded into mines or factories, reproducing the unhealthy conditions (physical and moral) of European towns. It by no means follows that the present condition is incapable of improvement and development; but that is not to be brought about by divorcing the native from the land. The concluding sentence gives the key to the whole paragraph, but it is not explained how the district is not at present self-supporting, or how its being made so would render more labour available for the needs of the farmers and mine-owners. To the uninitiated it would seem as if it were precisely because the people are self-supporting that they do not go out to work on farms and mines. No doubt, with a little thought, explanations can be found by those behind the scenes, but the matter is certainly not clear as it stands.

As to crime, the reports confirm the impression produced by previous Blue Books that the natives are an extremely law-abiding people. Most of the magistrates state that they have few, if any, serious cases to deal with. The Civil Commissioner of King William's Town says: "When it is con-

sidered that the native population of this Division is approximately 95,000, the crime returns must be considered as comparatively insignificant. It must be conceded the natives are a law-abiding people, and tractable if fairly and sympathetically treated." At Queenstown, while "the Native Reserves have been, as usual, singularly free from crime, it is pleasing to note that the condition of things in the Queenstown Municipal Location has improved." This location gave considerable trouble in the previous year (see Mr. L. M. Harison's last report, quoted in this JOURNAL for January last, p. 177), owing to the making and selling of native beer. Where there is any exceptional amount of crime it appears to be chiefly caused by drink, and it would seem that this evil is on the decrease. The following summaries of the only reports which can be called unfavourable by no means warrant a pessimistic conclusion.

"HERBERT. There has been considerably more crime than in previous years. Most of the cases were from Sevonello diggings, where the natives got drunk on Saturday afternoons and committed assaults, &c. These were mostly diggers' boys. The Location natives have been quiet and law-abiding, under very trying and irritating circumstances."

"Special Magistrate, Tamacha" (a subdivision of the King William's Town District): "There has been a slight increase of crime compared with the previous three years. The returns for 1905 showed 124 convictions; for 1906, 97; and for 1907, 143. The bulk of the cases consist of common assaults, and very few serious crimes have been committed. Stock thefts figure as 12 in the return, which is remarkable, taking into account the large native population."

"A.R.M., Middledrift: During the earlier portion of the year I had to deal with several serious assault cases; severe penalties were inflicted, and latterly no further cases of that class of crime have come before this Court. There is now a small detachment of Cape Mounted Riflemen stationed here. This is very necessary in such a large Native District, where there is ample scope for their services as police."

"VICTORIA EAST. There has been an increase in the

number of civil and criminal cases tried in this Court during 1907; it is difficult to give a reason for this. . . . The increase in civil cases is probably due to the natives being better off last year than in previous years."

One sentence is sufficient to dispose of the criminal statistics of Bechuanaland:—

"Crime of a serious nature has been markedly absent from Mafeking, Taung, and Vryburg, and the Inspector of Locations, Kuruman, has only to record three cases of stock-theft and five of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm."

On the whole, and taking into consideration the number of inhabitants, much the same may be said of the Transkeian Territories. Most of the reports are in substance very much alike. In Kentani: "Although there has been an increase in the actual number of criminal cases tried during the year, still, serious offences are conspicuous by their absence, and the only case removed to Circuit in the twelve months was one in which a European policeman in the execution of his duty wounded a native, and he was discharged. One cannot but marvel at the fact that the protection of life and property in so large a district is so successfully secured with the aid of a few miserably paid headmen, assisted by some half a dozen native constables, and yet the explanation is very simple, and may be summed up in the word, 'Liquor is prohibited.' Remove the restrictions, and a very different story would soon be told."

In Libode there have been several murders, and in Umzimkulu (33,500 inhabitants) eight preliminary examinations for the same crime were taken during the year. No facts are adduced which throw any light on the reasons for this, comparatively speaking, very high percentage, nor is it said whether any of the cases arose out of witchcraft, as did the very serious one reported from Lusikisiki, for which the men were, at the time of writing, still awaiting trial. But, in general, whenever there is an outcrop of manslaughter cases, it is almost invariably found to be due to good harvests and a plentiful supply of native beer. There are then many feasts, and much brawling follows, and thus broken heads.

The report of the Elliotdale Resident Magistrate involves

some interesting economic considerations: "There is very little serious crime in this District. The number of criminal cases last year was 188—an increase of 47 over the previous year. Compared with the population, this is a very low percentage. The bulk of the cases may be classed as misdemeanours—35 were for contravention of Forest Act. These are merely the detected offenders, but a large number of undetected cases occur almost daily, as there are not sufficient forest officials to supervise the remnants of the forests left. The native is a vandal so far as bush and forests are concerned, and would sweep every vestige of bush and tree off the face of the country if not prevented. They know that the soil in the valley where bush grows is much richer than other parts, and cut down and burn every tree for the purpose of sowing a few mealies. . . . It is a great mistake to allow natives to cultivate in or near the edge of forests, for, notwithstanding all the vigilance of the forest officials, the gardens slowly but surely eat into them, and their extinction is only a matter of a short time, and this process is in operation in every district where natives reside. The only remedy is in much increased supervision. There is only one European forester in the District, and it is obviously impossible for him to exercise the necessary supervision, although he is a zealous, hard-working official." It is obviously unfair to blame the natives for these misdemeanours. If it is decided that forest land shall not be encroached upon, the authorities should erect beacons and forbid cultivation beyond the line so marked out. The order would then be obeyed, as Government orders always are when the natives fully understand them.

With regard to the administration of the Liquor Laws, there seems to be a general consensus of opinion that total prohibition is the only remedy, and that the present exemption of native registered voters is productive of much mischief. The qualification for the franchise is the possession of property worth at least £50, or the earning of wages over a certain minimum. This does not necessarily imply either honesty or intelligence, and it is, unfortunately, the case that some native voters either take advantage of their position to

make illicit profits, or are made use of by clever and unscrupulous persons as a means of procuring liquor for distribution to others. This is illustrated by the fact that between December 1st, 1907, and January 9th, 1908, permits for the removal of liquor from Lady Grey to the Division of Herschel were issued to seven registered voters, the permits covering a total of 688 bottles, which must have been intended for clandestine sale. Prohibition, where enforced, seems to be working an improvement, but the Special Magistrate, Tamacha, takes a somewhat gloomy view: "The drink habit is undoubtedly fastening itself upon the natives and leading to the gradual demoralisation of the people. The restrictions on the sale of liquor in this district have worked well, and produced excellent results, but the full measure of its [*sic*] advantage will never be achieved until all native districts are brought under restriction. Total prohibition is, I think, the true remedy for dealing with this evil, and personally I think that it is not so impracticable as is generally supposed."

The want of uniformity in the regulations of different districts is another very fruitful source of evil: "Restrictions on the sale of liquor to natives are in force in Fort Beaufort, but not in the adjoining Districts of Adelaide and Victoria East. This makes the matter an utter farce, for natives can procure as much brandy as they desire to carry away in the Districts mentioned, and it is not an unusual sight to see them at Alice with saddlebags stuffed full of bottles presumably containing liquor of some description. The Lovedale Institution is within the boundaries of the Alice Municipality, and there are about 100 native pupils from all parts of South Africa being educated there, and they frequently have occasion to visit or pass through the town of Alice, and in doing so they unfortunately cannot escape seeing the two native canteens, which usually are crowded with men. Some of the pupils come from such areas as Basutoland and Transkei, where the natives are taught to observe very stringent liquor laws; it must therefore be a surprise to them to see how easily drink can be obtained in a thickly populated area like Victoria East. The impression will, unfortunately, remain in their minds after they have returned to their homes.

For this reason alone it seems to me that the necessity for restrictions at Victoria East is greater than anywhere else." This lack of uniformity in different districts of the same colony is not only bad in itself, but most confusing to the poor natives, who find they are punished for doing in one place what is legal in another.

The definition of the term "Native" also leads to difficulties in administering the law in districts containing a large mixed population. At Port Nolloth, *e.g.*, "the restrictions imposed on the sale of liquor to natives are probably more severe than in any other place in the Colony proper, but owing to the difficulty of deciding among these mixed races who are 'Natives,' and to the fact that the so-called 'Bastards' can obtain what they like, the restrictions do not have the effect they are intended to have."

The Assistant Resident Magistrate at Middledrift (King William's Town) is of opinion that "experience proves that the native is constitutionally incapable of being a moderate drinker, and, unless under control, will drink to excess." As to Queenstown District, the Inspector of Native Locations, Kamastone, says: "The restrictions imposed by the Queenstown Licensing Court on the sale of liquor to natives continue to have a beneficial result"; and at Whittlesea, the nearest place to the Location where intoxicating drink can be obtained, "there is little or no drunkenness among the natives, and not a single charge has been preferred against them in the local Courts for contravention of these Acts."

In three out of the four Bechuanaland Districts, the liquor laws are reported to be working satisfactorily, but a very bad account is given of Taung. The following is noteworthy: "One of the licensed houses is close to the Main Stad, and the Chief of the Batlapins cannot understand why a licence was granted, when he and his people do not wish to have hotel bars in the Native Reserves. They tell me that it was one of the late Chief Mankoroane's wishes that no liquor licences should be granted on the reserve." Surely a wish of this sort should be respected, and some form of Local Option might be introduced to meet the case. In the Transkei, in spite of the stricter regulations, a considerable amount of

evasion is still said to take place, though in Tsomo the smuggling of brandy across the Kei complained of last year has been to a great extent checked as a result of several exemplary sentences.

The general health of the natives in Cape Colony proper has been good on the whole, though small-pox in a mild form has been prevalent in East London and King William's Town. There was a very severe outbreak of this disease in Komgha, but the resulting mortality was not large. A hut-to-hut vaccination scheme was resorted to, and over 10,000 natives vaccinated. "There have been no fresh outbreaks recently, and the disease appears to have been stamped out." Tuberculosis is rife to an alarming degree in Clanwilliam and Port Nolloth, and appears to be increasing in Barkly West. The reports as to syphilis in British Bechuanaland are truly distressing. The Commissioner of Vryburg says, "Unless the matter receives the very serious consideration of the Government at no distant date, the disease will have gained a terrible hold, as there is not the slightest doubt it is spreading rapidly amongst the Bechuana tribes." For the Transkei, we quote the report of the Chief Magistrate, Mr. A. H. B. Stanford: "Since the war enteric fever, apparently introduced by natives who were serving with the troops, has become endemic in many parts of the Territories, and as natives have no idea of the necessity for isolation and other sanitary measures, the disease, when it has broken out in a homestead, has, as a rule, attacked the majority of inmates. A far more serious matter is the spread of tubercular disease. I am informed that it is becoming a rare event for a native patient admitted to the Umtata hospital to be free from some form of pulmonary complaint. There can be no question that employment at the mining centres has very largely contributed to this result, and the habits of native life, as pointed out by the Resident Magistrate of Elliotdale, encourage the development and spread of the disease, the unlighted and ill-ventilated Kafir hut being also a natural incubator of the tubercular bacillus." (We may point out that it is rather the transitional wattle and daub house than the genuine native grass hut, which is calculated to be a focus of disease.)

"Consumption threatens to become a scourge of the native races, and before long I fear that it will seriously affect the recruitment of labour. Venereal disease, reported on particularly by the Resident Magistrate of Kentani, also appears to be spreading; this again is introduced to some extent by labourers returning from the centres of European population. Efforts are made to induce all known cases to submit to medical treatment by district surgeons, but it is probable that many obtain a merely temporary or ostensible relief by resorting to native herbalists, and the disease is driven out of sight to be propagated by contagion or in reproduction."

The Chief Native Commissioner of Matabeleland (Mr. Herbert J. Taylor) also reports "an increase in the number of natives who have succumbed to pulmonary diseases and scurvy. Natives from North-Western Rhodesia do not appear to have the same resisting powers as other tribes in respect of the former disease. The climatic conditions are such that extra precautions are necessary to guard against a repetition. Representations were made in the early part of the year to the Labour Bureau regarding the advisability of selecting from those natives seeking work men of good physique, and in accordance therewith instructions in this respect were issued to their medical officer. Scurvy was responsible for a large number of deaths. This disease manifested itself in a malignant form among the North-Western boys, particularly so in the Gwanda District, where the majority of the natives employed are from the province. On the East Gwanda mines the death rate was abnormal, and the mine authorities found great difficulty in coping with it. A special investigation of the conditions under which the natives there were employed was instituted by the Government, the result of which was a complete reorganisation of the hospital arrangements on that group of mines. The mine authorities having complied with the suggestions of the Government, the disease was eventually effectually combated. The health of the natives at the present time shows considerable improvement. The new dietary scale . . . should do much to ameliorate the health conditions."

We are tempted to make many interesting extracts from the other subjects dealt with in the Cape Blue Book, but are compelled to devote our remaining space to a brief survey of the Matabeleland Report, from which we have already given one quotation. The total number of natives domiciled in this province is returned at 217,470, of whom 55,000 are living on reserves, and the population appears to be steadily increasing. The total revenue brought to account during the twelve months ending December 31, 1907, shows an increase of £2,199 over the collections for the financial year ending March 31, 1907. Of this sum, £1,833 comes from Native Tax (current) and £169 from arrears of the same.

"The indigenous native," says Mr. Taylor, "continues law-abiding. The number tried in the Magistrates' Courts was 5,658, of whom 5,248 were convicted, as against 4,853 in the previous year. Very few flagrant breaches of the law occur, the majority of cases being for contravention of local ordinances."

The natives are beginning to understand the benefit of registering their marriages, the number registered during the year being 1,782 (as against 1,286 in the preceding year), in addition to 112 marriages by Christian rites. The average amount of *lobola* paid in the marriages by native custom was £11 12s. 3d., the district with the highest average being Belingwe, with £18 18s. 8d., the lowest, Sebungwe, with £2 11s. 2d.

There has been a greater demand for labour by farmers than in previous years, and in nine districts the supply has been short, owing to the fact that, just at the time when it is most required, the natives are busy planting their own lands; and as the use of the plough is becoming more general, the difficulty may be expected to increase. A suggested solution is the employment of migratory labour from the north, where the planting is over earlier in the season.

Horned cattle continue to thrive, the increase for the past nine months being returned at 6,810. There are numerous inquiries from the Matabele with a view to the purchase of stock, and good prices are paid for breeding cattle. The usefulness of the ox as a beast of burden is being rapidly

recognised, and instances are known where natives living near mining centres hire out their bullocks to the mines for purposes of transport, and thus make a regular income.

Sheep have increased by 15,250. The increase in the number of goats is small by comparison; they are more liable to scab, which appears to be spreading in native stock. The chiefs are being continually advised to impress upon their people the necessity of changing the sites of their goat-kraals, which advice is, in many instances, acted upon. There is always a ready market for pigs, and the natives are breeding them in larger numbers. An improvement is also noticeable in the breed of poultry.

It is gratifying to know that "the attitude of the natives towards the Government continues to be satisfactory. Proof of their loyalty is demonstrated by the manner in which the tax was collected, the payment of which is, to the native mind, a symbol of allegiance. The chiefs having proved themselves worthy of the trust conferred on them, the time has arrived when, with a view to greater efficiency in native administration, the advisability of increasing their responsibilities should be taken into consideration, and in this connection certain proposals are now before the Government whereby it is intended to amend the Native Regulations."

Short as this Report is (only 15 pages including statistical tables) it includes a great variety of matter which is well worth study, and we hope to have the opportunity of commenting on subsequent issues in the pages of this JOURNAL.

We regret to learn that the Transvaal Government has decided not to continue the issue of the Departmental Blue Book, which during the years 1902-6 was annually compiled by the Commissioner for Native Affairs and was full of interesting and instructive information and District Reports. It is essential, both in the interests of Native Administration and in those of ethnographical research, that such information should be collected and published.

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